

AAMG Spotlight: Sycamore Shoals State Park

Sycamore Shoals State Park is one of the most historically significant sites in Tennessee. It has played a pivotal role in not only Tennessee's history, but also in the American revolution. Today, this historic site invites visitors to relive history and enjoy a variety of historical, cultural, and recreational experiences. There are events almost every month of the year that are educational, relaxing, and fun. The visitor center has an interpretive museum, a theater bookstore, and a gift shop that is filled with historical replicas and other items of interest.

The grounds have a replica of Fort Watauga behind the visitor center near the Watauga River. The fort has furnished cabins which demonstrate 18th century life on the frontier. The 'Friends of Sycamore Shoals' dress up like the colonials and go about the daily life as it was on the frontier. They also reenact historical events that happened at the fort during that time. There are more than 2 miles of trails for hiking and dogs are welcome. Near the fort there is an amphitheater where the saga of Sycamore Shoals and other reenactments are performed each year.

The outdoor attractions are the Tennessee Urban Forestry certified arboretum and North American Butterfly Association monarch waystation. There is a pollinator garden near the amphitheater and a kitchen garden behind the fort.

There are many on-going opportunities to volunteer at the park. Removing invasive/non-native plants, helping in the pollinator garden, or working in some of the other gardens. For example, the butterfly garden is large, and much help is needed for weeding. We have had a few non-master gardeners enjoy helping in the garden a couple of times during the last season. Every little bit is very much appreciated. Workday for the butterfly garden is Thursday mornings from 8AM to 12 noon. For more information contact Carol Ludiker at jaxlud26@gmail.com.

In 2010 a grant from the Elizabethton/Carter County Community Foundation was obtained to complete perimeter and inside garden paths for access and efficient maintenance of the pollinator garden. Members of other Master Gardener Classes help to maintain the following gardens: Pollinator Garden, Herb Beds outside the kitchen cabin of Fort Watauga, and Kitchen Garden just behind the Carter Mansion, the oldest frame house in Tennessee.

APRIL 22

Join us for the 2nd annual Spring Open House here at the park. Also take in a variety of outdoor organizations and groups that will be set up in the Visitor Center and outside the park. Represented will be Master Gardeners, our very own in-house butterfly/bird expert, other neighboring State Parks and sites, and many more. So plan on joining us for a fun-filled day of indoor and outdoor activities to kick off your Spring!

Annual Plant Auction: Doors open at 8:15 am to view plants and register. Auction begins at 9:00 am.

For more information about the park, go to: <https://tnstateparks.com/parks/sycamore-shoals>

Question for AAMG: If I don't have a basement, how do I keep potatoes stored?

Answer: First, make sure there are no nicks or cuts in the potatoes. Damaged potatoes should be used within a month of harvest. Remove excess soil. Clay soil should be washed off. Make sure the potatoes are completely dry before storing. Potatoes need dark, cool, moist storage conditions. Ideally, the temperature should be 40 – 50 degrees F with 95% humidity. White potatoes will keep for up to 9 months in these conditions. Thin-skinned and red potatoes don't keep as long. Possible alternatives to a basement include garages, enclosed porches, or sheds. It is important to ensure that the potatoes do not freeze or get too cold. It may be necessary to use insulated containers. For more information, see "Storage Guidelines for Fruits & Vegetables" found at <https://chemung.cce.cornell.edu/resources/storage-guidelines-for-fruits-vegetables>.

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.