

Spotlight Project: Tipton Haynes State Historic Site

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At Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site, Master Gardeners maintain several gardens: wildflower/butterfly/pollinator gardens, a small kitchen garden, and what is called the slave garden.

In the front Nature/Pollinator gardens, our focus is variety and visual appeal for visitors to the site, AND for butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Having been designated a Certified Monarch Waystation in 2014 we emphasize native plants and those that attract and/or serve as hosts for monarchs and other caterpillars.

The Nature/Pollinator gardens contain many plant varieties, including anise hyssop, aromatic aster, native columbine, purple coneflower, orange coneflower, Tennessee coneflower, common milkweed, butterfly weed, blue anise sage, passionflower, black-eyed Susan, pipe vine, and prairie coreopsis (to name a few). These plants provide a succession of blooms through the growing season that provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds and food for caterpillars. We also have several native azaleas, oakleaf hydrangea, and summersweet (clethra) along the walkway.

In addition to those native varieties, we also plant zinnias and cosmos to provide additional nectar throughout the summer for emerging new butterflies as well as for visiting butterflies.

One of the Nature/Pollinator Gardens has mountain mint, spiderwort, joe-pye-weed and lady ferns in one area; and in another area, coneflowers, cardinal flower, 2 varieties of swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, common milkweed, aster, downy skullcap, blue lobelia, Virginia bluebell, and more.

We began documenting the types and number of caterpillars in 2015. In the last few summers, we noted successful hosting of 100+ monarch caterpillars, plus black swallowtail caterpillars, Gulf Fritillary caterpillars, and numerous pipevine swallowtail caterpillars. We also spotted close to 4 dozen monarch chrysalises.

The vegetable gardens at Tipton/Haynes consist of two small plots in the historical area. The Kitchen Garden is representative of a small garden near the house that would have grown those vegetables that need a little extra care and be handy for meal preparation. We emphasize heirloom varieties where we try using varieties grown in Thomas Jefferson's Monticello gardens. Colonel Tipton knew and corresponded with Jefferson, so we infer that maybe they exchanged gardening information.

We have some perennial plants: strawberries and rhubarb, along with herbs: sage, oregano, lavender, and rosemary. Garlic is planted in the fall around the edges. In spring we plant broccoli and cabbage, onions, carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, and chard. As it warms up, we add heirloom tomatoes, peppers, and scarlet runner beans. We also add some of the annual herbs.

The Slave Garden, as it is called, is located behind the restored slave cabin, home to George, the Haynes family's slave. It was usual for slaves to have a small garden to provide some of their own food. Historical information is scarce so we choose to plant vegetables that originated in Africa, such as okra, field peas, peanuts, and watermelon, plus some New World plants that George might have adopted: potatoes and squash.

This garden is fenced in a wattle style, using branches and tree trimmings, such as George might have used to keep out the wildlife.

Our emphasis in the kitchen and slave gardens is to display for the education of visitors to the historical site; we don't try to maximize production. We do produce quite a bit of food, though, which we share with the staff, but mostly we just have a good time.

In 2021 we were presented with a new opportunity! A new parking lot and median meant a new place to plant! The Tipton-Haynes Board requested some winter color plants, plus we wanted to provide more food for pollinators and wildlife. Our first step was to get rid of weeds, then we amended the soil, which was mostly red clay and gravel, by adding a few layers of soil conditioner.

After the site installed split rail fence around the median, we seeded the lower end with crimson clover; then in October, in the upper end, we planted winterberry holly, coralberry, beautyberry, mountain mint, amsonia, and goldenrod, as well as scattering seeds for columbine and coneflower. In 2022 we added a large native wildflower area meant to greet visitors as they entered the site, and more perennials plants at the top of the area: creeping phlox, butterfly weed, passionflower, little bluestem grass, hyssop, blackberry lily, and husker's red penstemon. As spring became summer, we saw growth and flourishing plants that gave us the feeling of success on this project.

Visit this fascinating historic site located at 2620 South Roan St., Johnson City, TN. Hours: March 1 – Oct. 31: 9am to 4pm.

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.