



Official Publication

# Master Gardener Thymes

Volume 22, Issue 4 Jul-Aug 2025

## The Heat is On!

As I wrote the above I couldn't help but think about Glenn Fry's song; even sang a few lines of it! (Did you?) No question we are in the summertime now. So many things are in bloom and beautiful. The rain has helped keep them beautiful! And the pollinators are plentiful where I live and where I get in my volunteer hours.

How is your garden growing?

Check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for learning opportunities.



### NETMGA JULY BOARD MEETING

The next NETMGA Board meeting will be on **July 7**, 6:30pm; Mary Cain's residence: 200 Willow Creek PVT Drive, Blountville, TN 37617

### NETMGA AUGUST MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**August 4**, 6:30pm at Old Deery Inn, Blountville, TN. Details on page 4 of this newsletter.

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Meet Melody Rose!!
- June Member Meeting Recap
- Mark Your Calendar!
- Featured Projects
- Summer Tasks Article
- July/August 2025 Calendar of Events

## Meet Melody Rose, the new Sullivan County Extension Agent!

Melody will begin her new roll on July 7.

Melody grew up in a rural farming community in the Western North Carolina mountains near Waynesville. There she gained an appreciation for bluegrass music (yep, she plays); burley tobacco (strong work ethic); and the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains (HOME)!

Melody is an avid lover of the outdoors, enjoying hiking, kayaking, camping, and traveling the globe (having traveled to Croatia, South Africa, and Alaska to name a favorite few). She has hiked over 500 miles on the Appalachian Trail (including sections in GA, NC, TN, VA, VT, NH, and the Cape Breton area of Nova Scotia). She also grows an extensive garden with a focus on native Appalachian herbs. She is a wine enthusiast, certified through the *American Wine Society*, for which she is an active member, as well as the local AWS Chapter in Johnson City, Tennessee.



### University of Tennessee Extension

Melody serves as Extension Agent III and Master Gardener Coordinator in Greene County, Tennessee with the University of Tennessee Extension. Serving in this capacity, her main area of focus in Greene County has been developing the Big Spring Master Gardener Program (BSMGA) and providing research-based horticulture informational programs, along with burley tobacco, and commercial fruit and vegetable programming.

Melody currently serves on the University of Tennessee Extension's Consumer Horticulture Team (UTHort), of which she serves as the chair of the Social Media and Public Relations Team. She also serves on the statewide Tennessee Extension Master Gardener (TEMG), Sustainable Landscapes (SL), and Fruit and vegetable (F&V) teams, as well as the Statewide Tobacco Team.

She serves on the Greene County Partnership's Ag Business Committee and is actively involved with Tennessee Association of Agriculture Agents & Specialists (TAAA&S) serving as state communications chair (2012-2019).

Melody is a member of the National Association of Agriculture Agents (NACAA-of which she received the Achievement Award in 2004 and Distinguished Service Award in 2014). She served as the National Chair for the Leadership and Administrative Skills Committee, and was elected to serve as the Southern Region Director for the NACAA Board of

Directors (September 2019-2023). She was elected to serve as Treasurer in 2023. She was also appointed to serve on the Extension Journal Inc. Board in 2017, for which she now serves as Director-at-Large, having served as President in 2022.

Melody's leadership experience includes TN Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers (county chair 2000-2005 and state committee 2010-2012); Kentucky Agriculture Leadership Program (KALP) participant (2012-2014); and Leadership, Greene County participant (2010-2011), for which she was awarded the Outstanding Leadership Award. She was awarded the "Farm Gal of the Month" by *Fastline* Communications in July 2012.

Melody has worked as an agronomist for Philip Morris International Management; Extension Agent in Washington County, Tennessee; and as a Research Technician for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture before returning to the University of Tennessee, Greene County Extension in 2009. Melody holds a BS in Agriculture with an emphasis in Agronomy from Berea College, Berea KY and a MS in Agriculture Leadership, Education, and Communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

## **NETMGA June Membership Meeting Recap – Picking Lavender**

Over 30 Master Gardeners made the field trip to Midfield Lavender Farm on June 9, 2025. It is in a lovely setting in Greene County just outside Bulls Gap, TN. There was a nice porch with seating for all of us to visit and to learn more about lavender.



Jeannie, owner of Midfield Lavender Farm and our hostess gave a brief presentation and answered lavender questions prior to the gardeners strolling through the lavender fields and the wildflower area for U-Pick.

At Midfield the varieties of lavender include Royal Velvet (Culinary), Provence (Culinary), Hidcote Giant, Bridget Chloe, Super, Gros Bleu, and Riverina Thomas.

When asked about insects or diseases, Jeannie said there are only two concerns they have are - Pest – Spittle Bug - these white or black and orange (“two lined”) striped bugs are most well known for their spit-like encasing. Their foam is also found on rosemary, strawberries, and beans. While unattractive, they aren’t typically harmful to the overall plant health. Disease – Botrytis - This ultra-common fungal disease affects a range of garden plants in areas with high humidity and low airflow. It often spreads from nearby grapevines or squash plants. Remove infected leaves and stems, throw them away or burn them to prevent spread of the fungus. If growing in a pot, replant in a better drained potting mix. (But lavender prefers to be planted in the ground, in poor soil on a well-draining slope). Use a diluted neem solution spray or organic fungicide and avoid watering for a few weeks to ensure the fungus has been eliminated.

Lavender lemonade was available for our meeting as well as light snacks and water. The Lavender lemonade was made with Royal Velvet Lavender and it was delicious. Jeannie told us she placed the lavender in a tea infuser and steeps 8-12 hours. It turns a brown color. She also mentioned the longer you steep the lavender the better the flavor.

Lavender plants (hard to find varieties!) and other items were available for sale. Check their website for more information and dates remaining for U-Picks this season. Or you can sign up for Midfield’s newsletter at <https://midfieldfarm.com/newsletter-2/> so you don’t miss the U-Pick season next year.

You can get more information at their website - <https://midfieldfarm.com>

## **NETMGA August Membership Meeting.**

The **August 4th** Membership Meeting will have a lot in store. Kate O’Lenic, Project Leader at Old Deery Inn and Museum in Blountville, has written an article with more detail about the Old Deery Inn. See page 7 in this newsletter.

A few points to mention about the upcoming meeting:

- There are several entrances into the Old Deery Inn. Please enter the grounds through the black iron gates. Walk down one set of steps to a brick landing and enjoy the new fern garden. Watch for balloons. Tours will start from there.
- Tours and dinner will be divided to allow smaller groups to enjoy touring the Old Deery Inn while other groups are eating.
- You may register for:
  - Group A – Tours will begin at 6:30 pm and picnic supper of sandwiches and chips will be provided after the tour.
  - Group B – Picnic supper of sandwiches and chips will be served at 6:30 pm, when Group A completes the tour, Group B will tour Old Deer Inn.



- There is a second floor included in the tour. Narrow steps will have to be climbed. If you feel you would rather not take the steps, you may wait on the first floor until your group has finished the second-floor tour.
- After dinner and tours of the Inn, you will be free to walk outside and view the outbuildings. It can't be an August meeting without watermelon. This will be served on the grounds next to the outbuildings after dinner and tours.
- If you have any questions, please call Brenda McKinnis at 423-946-2769.

## Mark Your Calendar!

### Hamlett-Dobson Farm Fest



Hamlett-Dobson Farm Fest will provide old-fashioned family fun on Sunday, **July 20**, from 2-5 p.m. at Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport. Farm Fest celebrates the pleasures of country life as visitors step back into the nineteenth century and enjoy fresh summer food like watermelon, join in activities from bygone days like sack races, hay rides, and cakewalks. Listen to music on traditional instruments, see the farm animals, and try your hand at old time crafts. The event is part of Kingsport's Fun Fest and is free with no ticket or registration required. This is a fun, family-oriented community event and we always need volunteers to help with garden related activities. For Master Gardeners your time counts as volunteer hours. For more info or to volunteer, contact Joy Moore at 423-348-6572 or [jemoor@gmail.com](mailto:jemoor@gmail.com).

### August Herb Saplings Meeting

**August 7**, 7 pm at Exchange Place. The topic will be Garlic with Kristen Boone. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

## ***“Featured Project” – Exchange Place Living History Farm***

The Master Gardeners do a variety of things at Exchange Place Living History Farm. Our major project is to maintain the Demonstration Garden where we grow heirloom and new hybrid varieties of a wide variety of vegetables. Some of vegetables we grow are varieties that are not widely known locally including Asian yard long beans, Yacon aka Peruvian Ground Apple, and Bok Choy. We also maintain two flower beds creating pollinator attraction.



At the various Exchange Place events such as the Spring, Summer and Fall festival we man the garden so that we can answer questions about growing different vegetables and how we are able to grow vegetables 3 seasons and harvest four seasons using row cover. We also can educate about raised beds and using compost and mulch for vegetable gardening. We work for two hours on Wednesday mornings for roughly 10 months of the year.



If interested in learning more contact Earl Hockin at [ehockin@yahoo.com](mailto:ehockin@yahoo.com)





## ***“Featured Project” – Old Deery Inn***

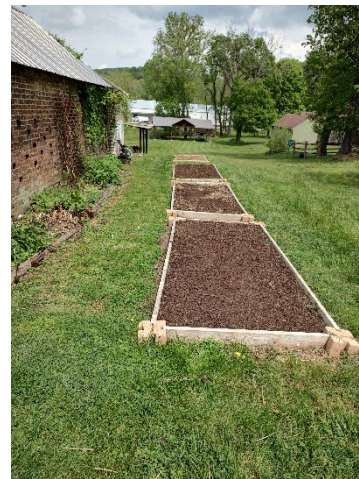
Old Deery Inn and Museum in Blountville is under the care of the Sullivan County Department of Archives and Tourism. The property is situated on Highway 126, just off SR-394. It is a gem that many people may miss as they drive by. The original building was a log cabin built between 1780 and 1790. The Inn survived fires set during the Battle of Blountville during the Civil War.

The Inn is being restored by the Sullivan County Historic Preservation Association but is still open for tours. The grounds are chock full of fascinating buildings and the museum is wonderful.

A point of interest is the Smithsonian gates on east side of the Inn. These wrought-iron gates were at the Smithsonian Institute from 1879 until 1910. Also fascinating are the guests who stayed at the Inn, including Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Andrew Johnson, Louis Phillipe Orleans, the King of France, and the Marquis de LaFayette. The inside doors have been autographed by three Tennessee governors, including Frank Clement, Buford Ellington, and Lamar Alexander, and the front door by President Jimmy Carter.

This site became an official Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Association project in June 2024. We will be maintaining and enhancing existing gardens and creating new areas to reflect the history of the site. Our first priority is to remove invasive plants, clean up the existing gardens and create or revise gardens to better reflect 1800s life.

There are 4 raised bed areas that are being reimaged. One will become a dye garden, another will be used as a medicinal garden, a third will be planted with flowers appropriate for the period and the 4th will be representative of a so-called slave garden.



We also cleared out an area surrounded by a split rail fence which will become a pocket prairie.

The areas right off the street behind the Smithsonian gates have already been converted into native fern gardens which we gathered from the caretaker's mountain cabin. And the grounds by the lower kitchen of the inn is in the process of transforming into a formal herb garden.



We'll be adding some evergreens and groundcovers to diversify more of the grounds. As requested by the folks at the Department of Archives and Tourism, we are using native plants as much as possible.

There is a lot of work ahead for the amazing team working on this huge project. We would greatly appreciate additional help in making this a NETMGA showpiece.

Anyone interested in helping can contact Project Leader: Kate O'Lenic  
Email: [ebkateo@gmail.com](mailto:ebkateo@gmail.com).

## **Summer Tasks to Keep Your Summer Garden Singing**

- From Proven Winners

### **Water!**

Keep a close eye on your gardens and containers to make sure your plants aren't wilting between waterings.

### **Weed!**

Weeds grow faster than the pretty plants. Staying on top of them by pulling them before they spread.

### **Feed!**

Annual flowers should be fed regularly throughout the whole growing season so they have enough energy to continue growing and producing flowers.



## **(Summer Tasks Continued)**

### **Watch out for garden pests!**

Insects and four legged pests are active all summer long, so keep your eye peeled for any issues that might crop up.

### **Remove spent perennial blossoms.**

Many types of perennials are commonly deadheaded, meaning their spent flower stems are trimmed off, to encourage rebloom and tidy up the plant's appearance.

### **Support leaning plants and vines.**

By now, your plants have grown much taller and might be starting to lean over on their neighbors. If they are leaning to the point where their stems might break, or they are smothering nearby plants, it's time to stake them up.

### **Mulch getting a little too thin?**

Sometimes finely textured mulches break down before the season is over and need to be reapplied in summer. Mulch keeps the plants' roots cool and retains soil moisture.

### **Add a pop of color where it is needed.**

No matter how many plants you pick up at the garden center in spring, it seems there's always a spot or two in the summer garden where you need a little more color

### **Take pictures and enjoy the fruits of your labor.**

Be proud of your work and show it off! Kick back and enjoy the beauty you have created in your outdoor living spaces.

**Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners**

<https://uthort.tennessee.edu>

## Projects List

**Boundless Playground at Warriors' Path State Park** Kingsport  
Gwyn Duncan 423-239-0460 [geduncan@charter.net](mailto:geduncan@charter.net)

**Branch House Family Center** Blountville  
Pat Mazurkiewicz 423-323-1644  
[robmazur@chartertn.net](mailto:robmazur@chartertn.net)

**Carver Peace Gardens** Johnson City  
Penny Rutledge 423-612-4785  
[pennyrutledge2@gmail.com](mailto:pennyrutledge2@gmail.com)  
Brenda McKinnis 423-946-2769 [jbmckinnis4@gmail.com](mailto:jbmckinnis4@gmail.com)

**Church Hill Senior Citizens Center Garden**  
Marcia Vandermause [chscgarden@yahoo.com](mailto:chscgarden@yahoo.com)

**Discovery Garden at Gray Fossil Museum**  
John Hitchcock 423-525-8587 [jghitchcock25@gmail.com](mailto:jghitchcock25@gmail.com)

**Exchange Place Living History Farm** Kingsport  
Earl Hockin 423-817-5473 [ehockin@yahoo.com](mailto:ehockin@yahoo.com)

**Harvest of Hope Community Garden** Kingsport  
Dave Rogers 423-502-2459 [dave\\_carla@chartertn.net](mailto:dave_carla@chartertn.net)

**Johnson City Hospitals** Johnson City  
Barbara Voigt 423-467-2013 [voigt7b@comcast.net](mailto:voigt7b@comcast.net)

**Old Deery Inn** Blountville  
Kate O'Lenic [ebkateo@gmail.com](mailto:ebkateo@gmail.com)

**Rocky Mount Living History Site** Piney Flats  
Don Davis home 423-854-0152, cell 423-943-2392  
[donfdavis@aol.com](mailto:donfdavis@aol.com)

**Steele Creek Park** Bristol, TN  
Robin Feirabend 423-764-3336 [Feierabe@ETSU.edu](mailto:Feierabe@ETSU.edu)

**Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site** Elizabethton  
Sarah Cox 423-213-9024 [mrs.sarahecox@gmail.com](mailto:mrs.sarahecox@gmail.com)

**Tipton Haynes Historic Site** Johnson City  
Vern Maddux 423-440-9236  
[vjornm@gmail.com](mailto:vjornm@gmail.com)  
Betts Leach 423-571-8662 [BettsL@aol.com](mailto:BettsL@aol.com)

**Unicoi County Hospital** Erwin-Paused due to Flood  
Gina Clark 423-956-2426 [gclarkx4@gmail.com](mailto:gclarkx4@gmail.com)

### NETMGA Yearly Projects List:

**Farm Expo**  
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 [wes.walker@me.com](mailto:wes.walker@me.com)

**Kingsport MeadowView Home Show**  
Paula Peralta 916-580-7256 [pjblessed1@gmail.com](mailto:pjblessed1@gmail.com)

**Bristol PepperFest**  
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 [wes.walker@me.com](mailto:wes.walker@me.com)

**Kingsport Tomato Festival-TBD**

**Master Gardeners:  
Report your hours each month!!**



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ADVISOR Chris Ramsey  
423-646-9043  
[cwramsey@utk.edu](mailto:cwramsey@utk.edu)



### 2025 COMMITTEES

MEMBERSHIP/CERTIFICATION  
Mary Cain  
423-361-0223  
[cainm01@yahoo.com](mailto:cainm01@yahoo.com)

PROJECTS Don Davis  
423-854-0152  
[donfdavis@aol.com](mailto:donfdavis@aol.com)

MENTORS John Hitchcock  
423-525-8587  
[jghitchcock25@gmail.com](mailto:jghitchcock25@gmail.com)

### 2025 CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

**Coming Soon**

PROGRAMS/PUBLICITY  
Brenda McKinnis  
423-946-2769  
[jbmckinnis4@gmail.com](mailto:jbmckinnis4@gmail.com)

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## Feed the birds!





## JULY and AUGUST 2025 Calendar of Events

**Covid-19 occasionally affects events. Please note that some programs, events and tours may require masks for participants. Before going you might want to confirm that event has not been cancelled or postponed.**

CHECK THE SITES BELOW MONTHLY FOR CLASSES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS:

Monday Musings, Greene County TN Extension

Information and Registration: <https://sites.google.com/utk.edu/mondaymusings/home>

Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum Classes/Workshops: [Learn — Knoxville Botanical Gardens \(knoxgarden.org\)](https://knoxgarden.org)

North Carolina Arboretum Classes Schedule:

<https://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/adult-education-classes/>

Asheville Botanical Gardens: [ashevillebotanicalgarden.org](https://ashevillebotanicalgarden.org)

Tennessee Native Plant Society Seminars: <https://www.tnps.org/tnps-speakers/>

Appalachian Highlands Chapter of Wild Ones:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/783213076410695/about>

Tennessee Valley Chapter of Wild Ones/Programs and Events:

<https://tnvalleywildones.org/programs-events/public-programs/>

UT Gardens Classes: [UT Gardens - Event Registration](#)

Wild Ones Webinars: <https://wildones.org/webinars/>

**Orchid Society of East Tennessee** meets first Sunday of every other month (Feb. through December), 2 pm Gray Community Center.

<https://www.facebook.com/OrchidSocietyOfEastTennessee/>

JUL-AUG Summer in the Park at Warriors' Path State Park

Get information and details here: [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)

JUL 6 Fantastic Fungi at Rocky Fork State Park

9:30am-12:30pm. Get information and details here: [Tennessee State Parks — Tennessee State Parks](#)

JUL 7 NETMGA Board Meeting

6:30pm at Mary Cain's residence; 200 Willow Creek PVT Drive, Blountville, TN 37617

- JUL 11        The Secret Life of Butterflies Walk at Rocky Fork State Park  
10:00-11:00am. Get information and details here: [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)
- JUL 13        Medicinal Plants Nature Walk at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park  
9:00-10:00am. Get information and details here: [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)
- JUL 19        Medicinal Plants Nature Walk at Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park  
9:00-10:00am. Get information and details here: [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)
- JUL 20        Hamlett-Dobson Farm Fest at Exchange Place Living History Farm  
2:00-5:00pm; 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport. See article on page 5 in this newsletter or for information: [Farm Fest – Exchange Place \(exchangeplacetn.org\)](#)
- JUL 25-27    Wild Herb Weekend – NC Herb Association  
Valle Crucis, NC. Details, Registration, etc. : <https://www.ncherbassociation.org/wild-herb-weekend-2025>
- AUG 4        NETMGA General Membership Meeting at Old Deery Inn in Blountville.  
See article on page 4 in this newsletter.
- AUG 7        Herb Saplings Meeting  
7 pm at Exchange Place. The topic will be Garlic with Kristen Boone. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time. For more info, email [sapsnews@gmail.com](mailto:sapsnews@gmail.com)