



Official Publication

# Master Gardener Thymes

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## Fall Will Be Here Soon...

Cool evenings, cicadas buzzing during the day and katydids in the trees at night...these are the harbingers that remind us of the season soon to arrive. This is a great time to grow fall veggies such as cabbage, kale, broccoli, etc. These crops love the fall weather, just as they love early spring weather. Or you can plant mums and pansies if you are looking for fall color in your flower garden. Extra bonus: the pansies will bloom throughout winter through mid-May next year; and monarch butterflies love pansies!

Don't forget to check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for learning opportunities.



### NETMGA SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

The next NETMGA Board meeting will be on **September 8**, 6:30pm; Ron Ramsey Regional Agriculture Center, 140 Spurgeon Ln, Blountville, TN 37617

### NETMGA OCTOBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**October 6**, 6:30pm at Ron Ramsey Regional Agriculture Center, Blountville, TN. Details on page 3 of this newsletter.

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- August Member Meeting Recap
- Mark Your Calendar!
- Featured Projects
- Ask a Master Gardener
- Sue Stanley Article on Filler Plants
- September/October 2025 Calendar of Events

## NETMGA August Membership Meeting Recap – Old Deery Inn

The August Membership Meeting was held at the Old Deery Inn in Blountville on August 4. After the hot days of July we had a very nice cool evening for the picnic and tour of the Old Deery Inn. What a wonderful evening it was! Over 60 people, master gardeners and guests, attended a summer picnic and tour of the Old Deery Inn. Kate O'Lenic, Master Gardener Project Leader for Old Deery Inn and her team have done an amazing job getting the grounds in order at this historical site and master gardener project since June of 2024.

There are 4 raised bed areas that are being reimagined. They will soon be a dye garden, a medicinal garden, a third to be planted with flowers appropriate for the period, and a representative of a so-called slave garden. Several areas have been cleared. One which will become a pocket prairie article. (See the Ask-A-Master Gardener article in this newsletter)

The gardeners have completed a lot more than mentioned in this article and so much more being planned! Thanks to Kate and her team for providing this updated garden and historical site for our August meeting.



## Mark Your Calendar!

### **NETMGA October Membership Meeting.**

Who doesn't love watching for color after a long cold INDOORS winter. Shaun Barr from Evergreen in Johnson City will present a program on spring bulbs. The meeting will be held on **October 6** at the Ron Ramsey Center.

We will begin with a covered dish meal, so get your fall cooking ideas ready. More information will be sent with Signup Genius for this meeting.

### **NETMGA December Membership Meeting**

Eugene Wolfe will be with us again this year to present our program for the holiday season.

Last year, Eugene Wolf brought his one-man look at Christmas to celebrate a ritual whose joy is in our bones. Through seasonal songs about trees, bells and gardens - Mamaw stories, new stories, and surprising prose, he brings it together to open new things to celebrate in 2025.

The meeting will be held on **December 1** at the Ron Ramsey Center.

### **September Herb Saplings Meeting**

**September 4**, 7 pm at Exchange Place. Program: Sassafras, Herb Society of America's 2025 Notable Native Tree, with Sue Cadwallader. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

### **7th Annual Bristol PepperFest**

The 7th Annual Bristol PepperFest will be held on Saturday, **September 6th** from 2p-7p at the Downtown Center (aka Farmer's Market) in Historic Downtown Bristol (TN). In honor of Doug Hilton who inspired the event, NETMGA will ALWAYS have a kiosk at this event...free of charge.

### **September SAPS Meeting: "Soil – It's Not Just Dirt"**

Naturalist Margery Winters will present "Soil – It's Not Just Dirt" on Thursday, **September 18**, at 7 p.m. at the Kingsport Center for Higher Education, 300 W. Market Street, Kingsport, TN 37660. Sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS) the program is free and the public is invited. For more information phone 423-348-6572, email [sapsnews@gmail.com](mailto:sapsnews@gmail.com) or see <http://saps.us/>.

Rarely discussed by gardeners, soil is, nonetheless, the foundation of a garden. Each tablespoon of healthy soil is alive with millions of creatures, many working to keep your



plants healthy. Learn about the different types of soils, the connections between soils and plants, how organic matter makes healthy soil, and why you should care about this intriguing ecosystem.



Margery Winters is a long-time naturalist and instructor at Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, CT where she is delighted to be able to share her passion for earth science and nature with students of all ages. She manages the Nature Center's native plant gardens and is an advocate for the role of natives in our designed landscapes. She is a Master Landscape Design Consultant and past chair of the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut Landscape Study Program.

Margery serves as on several land use boards in Simsbury, CT. She is chairman of their Inland Wetland / Conservation Commission, a member the Open Space Committee, and serves as past president of the Simsbury Land Trust.

## **Exchange Place Fall Folk Arts Festival**

Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport, will hold its 53rd annual Fall Folk Arts Festival on Saturday, **September 27**, from 10 am to 5 pm, and Sunday, **September 28**, from 12 noon to 5 pm. This celebration of pioneer arts and crafts and the harvest season will feature artisans demonstrating and selling a wide array of traditional folk arts, along with autumn plants and seasonal crafts. The festival will also offer old timey foods, live music, and children's activities as well as demonstrations of harvest time activities on an 1850s farm, such as sorghum making, spinning and weaving, blacksmithing and hearthside cooking. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for children under 12. For more information: call 423-288-6071, email: [epfestivals.gf@gmail.com](mailto:epfestivals.gf@gmail.com) or visit: <https://exchangeplacetn.org/>. To volunteer to staff a shift at the SAPS/Master Gardener table, please contact Joy Moore at 423-348-6572 or [jemoor@gmail.com](mailto:jemoor@gmail.com).

## **Wildlife Weekend at Steel Creek Park**

Come out to the Nature Center at Steel Creek Park for the Wildlife Weekend on Saturday, **October 11**, from 10am to 4pm and earn some CEU hours. The native plant and pollinator gardens there are Master Gardener projects maintained by both Sullivan, TN and Washington County, VA chapters. There will be workshops presented on Saturday by Washington County Master Gardeners on: bee houses, monarchs, pollinators, and winter sowing. The Wildlife Weekend runs from Sat., October 11 to Sun., October 12 and also has many other activities including hiking trails, nature crafts, and an amateur photography contest. Bring your family to enjoy an autumn day in the park and earn some CEUs. Details about workshop schedules will be listed at a later date. There is a \$2.00 parking fee per car at the entrance gate.

## ***“Featured Project” – Discovery Garden at the Hands-On Museum in Gray***

The Discovery Garden is located at the Gray Fossil Site and the Hands On! Discovery Center. NETMGA adopted this project in January 2021 before the garden area was open to the public. The Hands On! Discovery Center Discovery Garden is approximately 10,000 square feet of native shrubs, trees, grasses, flowering perennials, and vines. It serves as a sustainable pollinator garden and a learning experience for the 90,000 visitors to the museum each year. The garden formally opened in May 2022 and was certified as a Monarch Butterfly Waystation that same year.

Many of the plants in the garden are identical to or in the same family as ones that existed at this site over 4 million years ago. Our Master Gardeners enjoy a great relationship with the museum staff and coordinate plantings with them to ensure that any new plants are representative of plant fossils found on the site. Our volunteers typically meet Friday mornings and on other days for special projects and events

We are continuing to help the Gray Fossil Site with maintenance of the water fountain near the museum entrance, addition of landscaping around the main entrance sign, and maintenance of the rock display also near the entrance to the museum. We have also added more water lilies, water irises, and hyacinths to the fountain. We hosted arborist Ed Sheffy of RowanTree Service in March of this year to show us the latest techniques in tree and shrub pruning. We have also harvested seeds from the garden and conducted a seed viability program with garden visitors.

Priorities in maintaining the garden are:

- Relevance to the paleontological history of the site
- Inspiring wonder and creating drama through the use of texture, size, fragrance, and color of the plants in the garden
- Maintaining a habitat for insects, birds, and small mammals and modeling sustainable gardening practices
- Maintaining a “community of plants” for museum guests to enjoy
- Sharing our knowledge of these plants with the museum visitors and summer camp youth, as well as conducting garden tours during museum events



Our 2 Monarch caterpillars found on August 27th



LtoR: Suzanna Berry, Linda Frederick, Lisa Disner, John Hitchcock and Ed Sheffy



Entrance sign landscaping



Water Irises at the Gray Fossil Site Water Fountain



## ***“Featured Project” – Warriors’ Path State Park***

The Fall Day of Caring at the Boundless Playground will be held Saturday, Nov. 8 (rain date Nov. 15). Workdays will be held Wednesday, Sept. 10, 1-3pm and Wednesday, Oct. 8, 1-3pm.







**Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners**

<https://uthort.tennessee.edu>



## **Ask-A-Master Gardener**

If you missed the article on Meadowscaping/Prairies read a portion of the article here, then visit the NETMGA website AAMG tab (This link will take you to the lawns article, then scroll to the article – Meadowscaping -- <https://www.netmga.net/ask-a-master-gardener/lawns/>). Here you will find several articles written by your fellow Master Gardeners. The AAMG articles are published in regional weekend newspapers and are available to you on the NETMGA website. Master gardeners work very hard to be sure you and our community have interesting and accurate information.

*Meadowscaping* (published 2025-06-14)

By Kate O'Lenic, Master Gardener

Meadowscaping is applying the principles of a meadow to your landscape. It's very much like returning a grass lawn back to a natural state. Meadows are a mixture of about 50% grasses and 50% flowers, both perennials and annuals. Native plants are used to ensure success and provide the best resources to pollinators.

There are quite a few benefits for homeowners and nature when lawn is converted to a meadow. Meadows require very little maintenance once established. There is no need for fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides. No weekly mowing and no watering are required. That saves money and time. You'll also get to enjoy the beauty of a succession of flowers and the winter color and movement of native ornamental grasses.

The benefits to nature are impressive, too. Meadows work hard. The plants infiltrate and filter stormwater, store carbon, return nutrients to the soil, build soil through breaking down over time, and provide food, protection and shelter for animals and other plants.

Choose a location with the plants in mind. Many meadow plants thrive in full sun with good soil drainage. If you only have part sun and wet areas for the meadow, make sure your plant selections will grow in those conditions. You can start small with a patch of lawn. That way you can see what works best in your location and what you like best about the meadow. Then you can expand your site a bit at a time.

## Growing My First Filler Plants

I've been growing all kinds of flowers in my gardens for over 20 years, but I've never grown any filler plants to go with them. This season I picked three to try and learned a lot from the experience!

After doing seed research online, I discovered that most of the best filler plants are easy to grow from seed. Many seed companies have interesting varieties available. I really liked the looks of the Celosia plants at Johnny's Seeds best and chose three types to try: Celosia Sylphid (light lime), Celosia Ruby Parfait (dark purple) and Celosia Sunday Mix (a combo of red, yellow, and orange).

I started all of these plants from seed in the grow room under lights in March and after hardening off, planted them outside in early June in full sun. Because these were going to be tall, up to four feet, I needed to have a good support system in place. Since I was only growing twelve of each plant in a small garden space, I chose to plant each of the three varieties in two rows of six plants each with stakes at each end and garden string around each group of twelve at two heights – 12" and 36". That made it easy to slide the string up if I needed more height. These plants got liquid fertilizer every two to three weeks and they all grew stick straight with big fluffy heads!

One of the things I love about these plants besides being beautiful: they're clean in a vase. They don't dirty the vase water and combine beautifully with my Alstroemerias, Coneflowers, Zinnias, Rudbeckias, Salvias, Roses, Garden Phlox, and Peony's in a vase and in the garden. The Celosias also last at least 10 days in a vase. And for those who have pets, they are non-toxic to cats or dogs.

Another excellent feature of Celosias is you can easily dry and use them in dried flower arrangements or added to wreaths. The process is easy to do at home.



You need to cut the stems in the morning after the dew has evaporated and before it starts to get hot. Choose mature flowers that haven't set seed yet. Cut the stems long enough for your vases and gather bundles of no more than eight stems at a time to allow for good air circulation. Use a sturdy rubber band to tie them together. (The plants are going to shrink as they dry, and the rubber band will shrink with them.) Remove the leaves below the rubber band; they can often cause mold. Hang the bundles upside down in a warm, dry, dark location. Keeping them in the dark will help preserve the flower colors better. I keep a fan on in my grow room and the lights out to help dry my flowers faster. The flowers will dry in two to three weeks and will be ready for arrangements!

Happy Fall Everyone!

- Sue Stanley, MG since 2006. Gardening in Knoxville TN



## 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:

### **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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## Feed the birds!





## SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER 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/>

SEP 4            Herb Saplings Meeting

7 pm at Exchange Place. Program: Sassafras, Herb Society of America's 2025 Notable Native Tree, with Sue Cadwallader. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time. For more info, email [sapsnews@gmail.com](mailto:sapsnews@gmail.com)

SEP 6            Planting Fall and Winter Containers

10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431

- SEP 6            The 7th Annual Bristol PepperFest  
2:00-7:00pm at the Downtown Center (aka Farmer's Market) in Historic Downtown Bristol. See additional information on page 3 of this newsletter.
- SEP 7            Rocky Fork Cleanup-September '25  
2:00-3:00pm. This event will be held on the first Sunday of every month, with the goal of keeping Rocky Fork's trails and creeks free of litter. Meet Park Ranger Cory Franklin at the Park Ranger Station (280 Jennie Moore Rd.). From there we will go to our cleanup location. [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)
- SEP 8            NETMGA Board Meeting  
6:30pm in the Demo Kitchen Room at Ron Ramsey Agricultural Center; Blountville, TN 37617.
- SEP 13           Fall Festival at Evergreen of Johnson City  
10:00am-3:00pm.
- SEP 13           Sorghum Festival and Breakfast at Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site  
8:00am-4:00pm (Breakfast 8:00-11:00am). Local volunteers will be showing the step by step process of making sorghum, including having a mule turning the mill; and watch them cook down the juices into sweet molasses. Admission with breakfast is \$10.00 per adult and \$5.00 for kids under 12 and without breakfast is adults \$6.00 and kids \$3.00. Tipton-Haynes members are free! [Tipton-Haynes Historic Site | Upcoming Events](#)  
[Sorghum Festival and Breakfast](#)
- SEP 18           September SAPS Meeting  
7:00pm. Naturalist Margery Winters will present "Soil – It's Not Just Dirt". at the Kingsport Center for Higher Education, 300 W. Market Street, Kingsport, TN 37660. See details on page 3 of this newsletter.
- SEP 19-21      2025 Fall Roan Mountain Naturalists Rally  
Information: [Home | Friends of Roan Mtn.](#)
- SEP 20           Fall Blooming & Early Spring Blooming Perennials  
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431
- SEP 20           Sassafras Moon Herbal Festival.  
9 am – 3 pm. Free herbal festival, free classes, herbal vendors. Downtown Erwin, TN. Information: <https://www.herbalachia.com/sassyfest>.
- SEP 27           Grow Your Own Fruit Trees  
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431



- SEP 27      National Public Lands Day Volunteer Work Day 2025-Sycamore Shoals State Historic Park  
9:00am-12:00pm. help with maintaining the Patriot's Path Walking by pulling invasive plants such as English Ivy and Japanese Stiltgrass as part of the autumn trail maintenance. Meet at the Picnic Area beside the Park Visitor Center. [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)
- SEP 27-28    Exchange Place Fall Folk Arts Festival  
See details on page 4 of this newsletter.
- OCT 4        Bonsai  
10:30am. Learn how to enjoy this indoor Japanese. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431
- OCT 4-5      Harvest Festival at Rocky Mount State Historic Site  
10:00am-5:00pm. Information: [Rocky Mount State Historic Site Events: Seasonal Tours, Festivals & Family Activities — Rocky Mount State Historic Site](#)
- OCT 6        NETMGA General Membership Meeting at Ron Ramsey Ag Center in Blountville.  
See article on page 3 in this newsletter.
- OCT 11       Planting Fall Bulbs  
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431 Note: Shaun will be speaking on this topic at the October Master Gardener Meeting.
- OCT 17       Haunting on the Mount at Rocky Mount State Historic Site  
Information: [Rocky Mount State Historic Site Events: Seasonal Tours, Festivals & Family Activities — Rocky Mount State Historic Site](#)
- OCT 18       Trees and Shrubs for Fall and Winter Color  
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended; call 423-282-3431
- OCT 24       Haunting on the Mount at Rocky Mount State Historic Site  
Information: [Rocky Mount State Historic Site Events: Seasonal Tours, Festivals & Family Activities — Rocky Mount State Historic Site](#)
- NOV 8        Fall Day of Caring at Warriors' Path State Park