



Official Publication

Master Gardener Thymes

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Winter Is On The Way!

It's getting cold outside and growing season is slowing down/ending. Most of the summer blooming gardens are dying back and ready to be put to bed. If you want to have color in your garden through winter consider planting some pansies. They will bloom throughout winter until mid-May next year; and the early, passing through monarch butterflies will love the pansies!

If you need some additional CEUs for 2025 check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for learning opportunities.



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NETMGA NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING

The next NETMGA Board meeting will be on **November 3**, 6:30pm; Ron Ramsey Regional Agriculture Center, 140 Spurgeon Ln, Blountville, TN 37617

NETMGA DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP DINNER & PROGRAM

December 1, 6:30pm at Central Church of Christ, Johnson City, TN. More information on page 2 of this newsletter.

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- NETMGA News
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- Sue Stanley Article: Reflection
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NETMGA News!!

NETMGA October Membership Meeting Recap

We had a great turn out for a wonderful program on October 6 at the Ron Ramsey Regional Agriculture Center by Shaun Barr. Shaun works as the Store Manager at Evergreen of Johnson City.

There is nothing better for a gardener than watching for the first signs of spring. Shaun presented a program for the Master Gardeners on choosing and planting bulbs for Spring Blooms. A handout – The Dazzling Promise of Spring: Planning and Planting Bulbs for a Continuous Burst of Color was distributed. If you were unable to attend and would like a copy, you can email me at jbmckinnis4@gmail.com.

NETMGA Christmas Dinner and Program

The NETMGA Christmas Dinner and Program will be held on **December 1** at Central Church of Christ, 2722 East Oakland Avenue, Johnson City, TN 37601. **Note the location change!**

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. He was a big hit through seasonal songs about trees, bells and gardens - Mamaw stories, new stories, and surprising prose. Everyone enjoyed the event, so he is coming back to bring a new program to help us begin our holiday celebration.

More information coming to you soon.

Programs Survey

Thanks to all who completed the survey distributed by the Programs Committee. The survey gave helpful information regarding what you enjoyed about the 2025 programs and gave the Program Committee information on programs you would like to have for 2026. We are looking forward to another good year. We hope to have more information for you in the next newsletter.

Publicity Committee

We have a new volunteer who is leading up the community event coordination. Laurin Hagy is working with the Publicity Committee to ensure we have everything needed and coordinated at community events.

NETMGA members are working toward this goal by presenting a professional presence at local events such as Jonesboro Garden Gala, Rocky Mount festivals, Tomato Fest, Pepper Fest, and the Shire Fest at the JC Public Library.

Master Gardeners will staff at an information table, providing practical research-based information and handouts to the public. The master gardeners working at the events will also be taking information on the number of contacts, any questions that need to be answered after the event and collecting names of the visitors who may be interested in future MG classes.

NETMGA also provides Master Gardeners at other community events when asked. When new events/opportunities about community events/opportunities occur, please contact Sherry Ragsdale (srags0618@gmail.com) or Brenda McKinnis (jbmckinnis4@gmail.com or 423-946-2769). Sherry and Brenda will be working together to determine what is needed for the event. They will contact the Community Event Coordinators and proceed with the planning. We will get the get all information to the NETMGAs and distribute a signup genius if need.

2026 Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program/Training

Tuesday, January 27 through Tuesday, May 12
6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Ron Ramsey Agricultural Center
140 Spurgeon Road, Blountville, TN

The Sullivan County University of Tennessee Extension Office will host classes for the new Master Gardener Intern Training Sessions. Those interested in learning more about this dynamic program and/or registering for the classes may click on the link below.

[2026 Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program/Training | Sullivan County](#)

Mark Your Calendar!

November Herb Saplings Meeting

November 6, 7 pm at Exchange Place. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

November SAPS Program



Ian Caton, Owner of Woodthrush Native Nursery, will discuss "Native Species Diversity: Practical implications of genetic variation for nurseries, landscapes, and gardens" on Thursday, **November 20**, at 7 p.m. at BrightRidge Auditorium, 2600 Boones Creek Rd (Hwy 354) in Johnson City. 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 , or see <https://saps.us/>

We often hear that local ecotypes are best. We often hear that straight species are best. But what do these terms mean for design especially when the nursery trade is not set up to account for these differences? Our opinions of a plant are often colored by our experience with what genetic type is available in the trade, but the truth is that many of our plants are so much more than that. Even cultivars often have informative stories to tell. This lecture will explore the practical implications of genetic variations, ecotypes, and cultivars, and the real impact this can have on our expectations for how a plant will look, how it will behave in the landscape, and in some cases how it has the potential to cause harm to the broader landscape.

Ian Caton has been the owner/operator of Wood Thrush Native Plant Nursery (Formerly Enchanters Garden) in Floyd, Virginia since March 2013. Wood Thrush Native Plants is a nursery specializing in native plants of the Appalachian region including West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and North Carolina. A focus of the nursery is the introduction of new and rare native plants which are little known or underappreciated in the nursery trade. Previously Ian Caton had been an employee of Larry Weaner Landscape Associates (a landscape firm specializing in the use and promotion of native plants in landscaping) since 2001 and has an ongoing relationship with the firm and its educational arm: "The New Directions in the Landscape (NDAL)" program.

Wreath Making Workshops at Exchange Place

Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport, will hold its annual Wreath Making Workshops on Tuesday, **December 2**, from 6 - 8 p.m. and on Wednesday, **December 3**, from 10 a.m.-12 noon. Participants will learn basic wreath making techniques, the differences in the various boughs, how to embellish with natural accents, and will create a unique evergreen wreath to take home. Both beginners and experienced wreath makers are welcome.



All materials - a variety of fragrant greenery, cones, dried flowers, etc. along with wreath form and wire - will be provided. Participants should bring hand pruners and any extra materials or special decorations they may wish to add.

The workshop fee is \$40 and includes all materials and light refreshments. Space is limited. To reserve your place, first please check availability and then mail check, payable to "Exchange Place," to: Joy Moore, P.O. Box 87, Fall Branch, TN 37656. Please include your phone and/or e-mail for confirmation. To check availability or for more information, email exchangeplace.edu@gmail.com.

Registration deadline is November 29. Sorry no cancellations or refunds (though we will save your materials for you if you have to cancel.) Proceeds from the workshops go to Exchange Place's restoration efforts.

Christmas in the Country at Exchange Place

Christmas in the Country at Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport, will be held Saturday, **December 6**, from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Fresh greenery, wreaths and roping, unique folk arts and handicrafts, and traditional holiday foods will be on sale. The celebration also features demonstrations of winter time activities on the 19th century farmstead and hands on experiences for all ages. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for children under 12. For more information, 423-288-6071 or <https://exchangeplacetrn.org/> . The traditional Yule Log Ceremony with carol singing around the bonfire and a cauldron of wassail, Exchange Place's free gift to the community, begins at 4:15 p.m.

“Featured Project” – Healing Gardens at Johnson City Medical Center, Woodridge Hospital and Ronald McDonald House

Master Gardeners continue to plant and maintain gardens at the Johnson City Medical Center, Woodridge Hospital and Ronald McDonald House. Construction on the Children’s Hospital is almost complete and the barriers around those impacted gardens are coming down. We are excited to restore the gardens back their previous state.

We have gotten advance warning that construction in the Emergency Department area will impact several more gardens in the coming year. Meanwhile, we continue to get very positive feedback from patients, visitors and staff who appreciate having tranquil respite areas where they can relax and enjoy calming landscapes.

More workers are welcome at all of our facilities. Contact Barbara Voigt for more information. 423 467 2013 or voigt7b@comcast.net





Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners
<https://uthort.tennessee.edu>

Ask-A-Master Gardener

The Master Gardeners who write for the AAMG column continue to write interesting articles about all aspects of gardening.

- Joy Morrison – Wreath-making (11/6/2025)
- Wes Walker-Winterizing Garden beds (11/15/2025)
- Kate O’Lenic Extreme Pruning (11/22/2025)
- Kate or TBD writer - Feeding birds in winter (11/29/2025)

If you have a desire to research and write an Ask-A-Master-Gardener article, information/statements MUST be supported by research obtained from educational sites, NOT personal practices, blogs, opinion articles or preferences.

The following article is the next article to be published in the local newspapers.

Gardening for Wildlife (published 2025-11-01) By Tara Swiger, Master Gardener 2026

Do you enjoy the sound of birdsong in the morning? Do you delight in butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees visiting your garden? Would you love some natural help fighting off (and eating up) pests in the garden? If so, gardening for wildlife is a solution to increasing the number of birds, butterflies, and bees in your yard. Autumn is an ideal time to focus on gardening for wildlife, as the decisions you make now can provide food and shelter during the winter months, ultimately leading to an increase in birds and butterflies next spring.

Gardening for wildlife is as simple as providing the habitat that native wildlife uses. By providing the food, water, and shelter that birds, bees, and butterflies need, you can attract them to your yard and increase their local numbers. Tennessee has a certification program that is easy to use and will walk you through each step of the process. See “Create and Certify Your Own Wildlife Habitat” in Sources at the end of this article.

Afraid your small yard won’t make much of a difference? A study found that yards in both cities and suburbs that were certified as wildlife habitats “support a wider variety of bird species compared with more traditional yard landscaping (e.g., lawn-dominated yards). This suggests that landscape management for wildlife can contribute to region-wide bird diversity.”

Native plants form the foundation of any wildlife garden. Native plants are those indigenous to the area, plants that have co-evolved in a space for thousands of years. Many insects have evolved to survive only on specific native species. The most well-known of these relationships is the monarch butterfly caterpillar, which only eats milkweed. Your wildlife garden doesn’t need to be entirely native plants. Aim for 70% native plants to provide food and shelter. The seeds, berries, pollen and nectar, and leaves are all food sources for both insects and birds. You can also provide supplemental food via a well-maintained bird feeder. Keeping it clean and well stocked is vital to keeping the bird population healthy.

The next component in your wildlife garden is water. Birds need water to both drink and

bathe in, and many insects and amphibians need water for raising their young. This may already exist on your property in the form of lakes, streams, or ponds. You can also add this with a bird bath or puddling pond, or a shallow dish with water.

Wildlife needs places to hide to rest and feel safe from predators, people, and weather. The same native plants that provide food can also provide this habitat element. The more densely you plant, the more cover is provided. The most important part of providing cover is the variety of plants - from evergreen trees to thorny branches to hollow stems - diversity in planting provides cover for a variety of wildlife.

Autumn is the time of year when you can make gardening decisions that will provide cover for the winter. Many butterfly and moth species overwinter as pupae in leaf litter. So, leaving fallen leaves furnishes cover and is a vital food source for birds in spring. Leaving your perennial flower stems 12-24 inches tall creates a habitat for solitary native bees. Snags, or dead trees that are left vertical, provide a home and food to birds, especially woodpeckers.

The final step to wildlife gardening is to use sustainable garden practices. Organic gardening methods include avoiding neonicotinoid pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Managing your water resources, reducing impermeable surfaces, and turning off outdoor lights at night are all helpful. Maintaining your landscape in an environmentally friendly way ensures that the soil, air, and water that you've invited native wildlife to visit will stay clean and healthy.

Sources: "Residential yard management and landscape cover affect urban bird community diversity across the continental USA,"

https://www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/pubs/jrnl/2021/nrs_2021_lerman_004.pdf

"What is a Native Plant?" <https://theconservationfoundation.org/native-plants-101-what-is-a-native-plant/>

"Landscaping for Wildlife"

https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/Native_Gardening/landscapingfor_wildlife.shtml

"Create and Certify Your Own Wildlife Habitat," <https://tnwf.org/certify-a-habitat/> "Garden Cleanup for Pollinators" <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/garden-cleanup-for-pollinators-trim-perennial-stems-in-their-firstwinter>

"How to garden organically for wildlife," <https://wlgf.org/gardening-for-wildlife/gardenmanagement/how-to-garden-organically-for-wildlife/>

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IkIH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

Or Washington County's YouTube site:

<https://www.youtube.com/@utextensionwashingtoncounty>

Reflections

For many gardeners, fall and early winter is a time of looking back and evaluating the success or failures of the past season. In my garden, the new varieties I planted the previous year had me worried about if they would survive our cold, wet winter and make it to spring this year. The plants I was most concerned about were the Alstroemerias.

If you're not familiar with Alstroemerias, that might be because it's usually grown as a commercial plant sold to florists. I just happened to fall in love with them because it's a fabulous cut flower and it just happens to be non-toxic for pets (like my plant eating cat!)

Alstroemeria, also known as Peruvian Lily, or Lily of the Incas has a long history. It was discovered in the 18th century by a botanist, Baron Clas von Alstromer who collected the seeds from the mountains of Peru, Chile, and Brazil. He introduced it in Europe, and it became popular because of its long vase life and beautiful colors. Eventually, that led to its widespread cultivation and hybridization. The scientific name Alstroemeria is named after him.



When horticulturists began cross-breeding different species, they produced lots of new colors and varieties. This led to the Alstroemeria becoming such a staple in the floral industry today!

Luckily, my plants survived the winter and I have used them for the focal centerpiece of most of my spring, summer and early fall bouquets. Our heavy spring rains didn't drown them because they're planted in heavily composted well-draining soil. I have found the hybrids to be the best plants for my garden and for cutting and I like the two to three foot tall varieties. These plants have lasted well over two weeks in many bouquets and in the garden...pretty amazing!

Not all Alstroemerias are tall. There are lots of shorter varieties that look wonderful in a garden bed or in containers. They can even be overwintered indoors. Most flower spring to fall. If they are allowed to set seed, they will go dormant, so they have to be kept deadheaded. They don't like to be dry, but also do not like over watering.

In Zone 6 and 7 we can grow cold-hardy varieties like "Golden Tiara", "Summer Breeze", "Summer Heat" and "Summer Break". Plant them in early spring and like a lot of other perennials, give them all season to establish root systems. Plant in fertile, well-drained soil and amend heavy clay soil to improve drainage. Tall varieties need support, I use 25" diameter, tall grid supports on my plants. Established plants can tolerate some drought, but regular watering will promote better blooming. Be sure to harvest correctly, don't cut, instead pull the whole stem out from the base. If you just cut it, there will be no more blooms from that root section. I highly recommend this plant to gardeners that love to make flower arrangements!

Wishing you all a wonderful rest of the year and happy gardening!

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

Branch House Family Center Blountville
Pat Mazurkiewicz 423-323-1644
robmazur@chartertn.net

Carver Peace Gardens Johnson City
Penny Rutledge 423-612-4785
pennyrutledge2@gmail.com
Brenda McKinnis 423-946-2769 jbmckinnis4@gmail.com

Church Hill Senior Citizens Center Garden
Marcia Vandermause chscgarden@yahoo.com

Discovery Garden at Gray Fossil Museum
John Hitchcock 423-525-8587 jghitchcock25@gmail.com

Exchange Place Living History Farm Kingsport
Earl Hockin 423-817-5473 ehockin@yahoo.com

Harvest of Hope Community Garden Kingsport
Dave Rogers 423-502-2459 dave_carla@chartertn.net

Johnson City Hospitals Johnson City
Barbara Voigt 423-467-2013 voigt7b@comcast.net

Old Deery Inn Blountville
Kate O'Lenic ebkateo@gmail.com

Rocky Mount Living History Site Piney Flats
Don Davis home 423-854-0152, cell 423-943-2392
donfdavis@aol.com

Steele Creek Park Bristol, TN
Robin Feirabend 423-764-3336 Feierabe@ETSU.edu

Tipton Haynes Historic Site Johnson City
Vern Maddux 423-440-9236
vjornm@gmail.com
Betts Leach 423-571-8662 BettsL@aol.com

Unicoi County Hospital Erwin-Paused due to Flood
Gina Clark 423-956-2426 gclarkx4@gmail.com

NETMGA Yearly Projects List:

Kingsport MeadowView Home Show
Paula Peralta 916-580-7256 pjblessed1@gmail.com

Bristol PepperFest
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 wes.walker@me.com

Kingsport Tomato Festival-TBD

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



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Feed the birds!



NOVEMBER and DECEMBER 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://www.knoxgarden.org/learn)

North Carolina Arboretum Classes Schedule:

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

Asheville Botanical Gardens: [ashevillebotanicalgarden.org](https://www.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](https://www.utgardens.org/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/>

NOV 3 NETMGA Board Meeting

6:30pm in the Demo Kitchen Room at Ron Ramsey Agricultural Center; Blountville, TN 37617.

NOV 6 Herb Saplings Meeting

7 pm at Exchange Place. Program: Herbal Crackers with Susan Scheer. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time. For more info, email sapsnews@gmail.com

NOV 8 Gardening for Wildlife

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

- NOV 8 Fall Planter Workshop
10:30am. Evergreen of Colonial Heights. Design your own fall planter. Cost: \$45.
Information: 423-245-4769
- NOV 8 Fall Day of Caring at Warriors' Path State Park
- NOV 15 Propagating Houseplants
10:30am. Evergreen of Colonial Heights. Includes workshop to make your own. Cost for
workshop: \$15. Information: 423-245-4769
- NOV 20 November SAPS Meeting
7:00pm. Ian Caton, Owner of Woodthrush Native Nursery, will discuss "Native Species
Diversity: Practical implications of genetic variation for nurseries, landscapes, and
gardens." See details on pages 3-4 of this newsletter.
- NOV 21-23 Christmas Open House at Evergreen of Colonial Heights
- NOV 29 Holiday Workshops at Evergreen of Colonial Heights
10:30am. Holiday Wreath with Live Greenery
2:00pm. Holiday Porch Pot with Live Greenery
Workshop Cost: \$45. Information: 423-245-4769
- DEC 1 NETMGA Membership Christmas Dinner and Program at Central Church of Christ,
2722 East Oakland Avenue, Johnson City, TN 37601. See article on page 2 in this
newsletter.
- DEC 2-3 Wreath Making Workshops at Exchange Place
December from 6:00 – 8:00pm and Wednesday from 10:00am-12:00pm. Workshop fee
is \$40. See details on page 4 of this newsletter.
- DEC 6 Christmas in the Country at Exchange Place
10:00am – 4:00pm. Fresh greenery, wreaths and roping, unique folk arts and
handicrafts, and traditional holiday foods will be on sale. Admission is \$5 for adults and
free for children under 12. See article on page 5 in this newsletter.
- DEC 6 Holiday Workshops at Evergreen of Colonial Heights
10:30am. Holiday Porch Pot with Live Greenery
2:00pm. Holiday Wreath with Live Greenery
Workshop Cost: \$45. Information: 423-245-4769
- DEC 15 Winter Tree Keys at Warriors' Path State Park
3:30-5:30pm. Learn winter trees by their bark, buds, fallen leaves and more. Besides
gaining tree knowledge, each participant will get to take home a pamphlet-key to our
local trees. Meet in the Park Marina (indoor meeting room); participants will spend at
least half of the time "out in the field" and under the trees, so come dressed for the
weather being outside. Cost: \$5. [Event Details — Tennessee State Parks](#)