

Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Board Meeting

Ramsey Agricultural Center

Date: January 5, 2026

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Karen Rowell, Susie Morrison, Janet Smith, Mary Cain, Donna Fowler, Michelle Hejny, Sherry Ragsdale, Barbara Voight, Brenda Snyder, John Hitchcock, Melody Rose, Don Davis, Carl Voight, Brenda McKinnis, Nancy Schilling, Paulina Peralta, Gus Vizgirda

MEMBERS ABSENT: Adam Watson, Betts Leach, Sarah Cox

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Karen Rowell called the meeting to order.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

After reviewing the November 2025 minutes, Don Davis moved to approve them as presented. Mary Cain seconded, and the board agreed.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Michelle Hejny presented the budget as of January 5, 2026. Sherry Ragsdale moved to accept the report; Mary Cain seconded, and the board approved.

PROJECT REPORT AND GRANTS FOR 2025: Don Davis

Don Davis reported that some projects are being reimbursed for materials. Michelle Hejny requested receipts for these materials. The picket fence bought for Rocky Mount may need to be returned since it cannot be installed now. Melody Rose noted that the Sycamore Shoals project is suspended but hopes it will resume in spring. Barbara Voight asked for website updates on all NEMGA projects, especially Branch House due to limited information.

PROGRAMS FOR 2025: Brenda McKinnis

Brenda McKinnis reported that in 2025, the Christmas dinner and Awards Banquet had the highest member attendance, while the Midfield Lavendar Farm meeting had the lowest. She noted 43% of master gardeners did not attend any meetings. Karen Rowell suggested researching reasons for low attendance. Susie Morrison pointed out members are focusing on projects, and Mary Cain added that interest in specific speakers or topics drives attendance. Karen questioned how to boost involvement in both projects and meetings. Don Davis requested a report on 2025 project site work hours, which Melody Rose agreed to provide.

Karen Rowell stated that the primary objective of NETMGA across all projects and programs is to educate the public about effective gardening practices. Brenda McKinnis identified the following upcoming initiatives as strong examples of public education:

- The Greater Kingsport Home Show – March 6th–8th
- Area Farmers Markets

Karen Rowell further recommended that members should record the number of visitors attending these booths.

Brenda McKinnis announced that the February Membership Meeting will feature the annual Awards and Certification Program. Project Leaders will submit details on best practices from their projects. This will be a potluck dinner.

MEMBERSHIP/CERTIFICATION REPORT: Mary Cain

Mary reported that there are currently 158 NETMGA members. She stated that she is still having the following issues with some members: Nonpayment of dues and no recording hours. They are finishing certification in 2 weeks. Members who do not record their hours or pay their dues may be removed from the UT Roster. Members who pay their dues but have not recorded hours would be considered inactive.

Barbara Voight asked how award pins should be displayed. Nancy Shilling suggested buying a cap. Barbara offered attaching a ribbon or piece of cloth to a membership name tag.

PUBLICITY: Brenda McKinnis (Nancy Shilling)

Brenda McKinnis stated that they were currently looking for members to draft articles for the “Ask a Master Gardener” column in local newspapers.

2026 Intern Class Report: Melody Rose

Twelve individuals have enrolled in the program. Susie Morrison and Earle Hockin are providing assistance with the evening classes. Certified members are not permitted to attend these classes for CEU hours, as the content has already been covered during their respective intern classes.

COMMUNICATIONS: Sherry Ragsdale

Sherry Ragsdale stated that everything was going well with the Genius Sign up Program.

NEWSLETTER: Betts Leach (Absent)

FACEBOOK: Sarah Cox (absent)

MENTORS: John Hitchcock

John Hitchcock stated that there were no updates concerning the mentorship program.

WEBSITE: Carl & Barbara Voigt(absent)

Barbara stated that there were over 24000 hits on the NETGMA website. Additional links have been added to the site including Contact information, how to become a Master Gardener, and Reporting project and CEU hours.

WASHINGTON COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Adam Watson (absent)

SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Melody Rose

Melody Rose stated she will be emailing out several opportunities for master gardeners to earn both project and CEU hours.

NEW BUSINESS:

The 2025 Intern Class is organizing a plant sale at the Exchange Place in April to raise money for NETMGA. Gus Vizgirda stated that they already have 180 plants growing in greenhouses. Melody Rose is assisting the class in following all the rules /regulations concerning selling plants to the public.

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING plans:

An Awards / Certification Banquet will be held at the Ramsey Agriculture Center on 02/02/2026 at 5:30 pm. This will be a potluck dinner.

Next Board Meeting Plans:

The next board meeting will be a potluck luncheon on 03/02/2026 at 12:00 pm at the Ramsey Agricultural Center in the Demo Kitchen Room.