

*Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Board Meeting*

Ramsey Agricultural Center

Date: November 3, 2025

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Karen Rowell, Susie Morrison, Janet Smith, Michelle Hejny, Sherry Ragsdale, Barbara Voigt, Brenda Snead, John Hitchcock, Melody Rose, Gus Vizgirda, Carl Voigt, Brenda McKinnis, Nancy Shilling

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Adam Watson, Don Davis, Betts Leach, Sarah Cox, Donna Fowler, Mary Cain

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

Karen Rowell called the meeting to order.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

After the following correction was noted, the Board approved the minutes: The word absent was removed from the Website section because Carl Voigt was absent, but Barbara Voigt was not. Susie Morrison made the first motion to accept the minutes, and Sherry Ragsdale seconded the motion.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Michelle Hejny presented the budget as of 11/03/2025.

The board approved the treasury minutes after Nancy Schilling made the 1<sup>st</sup> motion and Brenda McKinnis seconded the motion.

**PROJECT REPORT AND GRANTS FOR 2025: Don Davis**

Don Davis was absent from the meeting. However, there were updates on some of the Master Gardner Projects throughout the area:

- Melody Rose stated the Sycamore Shoals Project will be shut down until Spring 2026. She is currently in discussions with the director of Sycamore Shoals to develop a comprehensive plan to reopen the project.
- Brenda McKinnis informed the board of a new project that will be taking place at the Carver Peace Garden. Reagen Sparks, an ETSU student, is donating 15 4x8 raised beds through a grant she wrote from ETSU to reduce hunger. Gardeners who rent the new raise beds will agree to donate a percentage of their produce to organizations who feed the hungry such as Second Harvest and Manna House. Reagen was part of Community Heath class under the direction of Chris Honeycutt who came to Carver to teach one session to the children in the after-school program last fall. Chris Honeycutt (Class of 2023) has formed a partnership with Carver Master Gardeners to develop health community projects with the children's program in the future.

- John Hitchcock stated that a meadow is being created at the Discovery Hands on Museum. The master gardeners have begun spreading native plant seeds harvested from the Discovery Garden in the new area near the fossil digs. This will be an ongoing project until the meadow is established.
- Sherry Ragsdale reminded the Board of a fall clean up event at Warriors State Park on November 8<sup>th</sup>. She stated that there will be a Genus Signup email sent to Master Gardeners who wish to participate.

### **PROGRAMS FOR 2025: Brenda McKinnis**

The December meeting will be held on December 1, 2025, and is the annual Christmas dinner. Eugene Wolf will provide entertainment for the evening. It will be held at the Central Church of Christ beginning at 5:30 pm. Olive Garden Restaurant will cater the dinner. The cost will be \$15.00 per person and a Genus Signup to participate in the dinner will be sent soon. Dues will be collected as well as the cost of the dinner at the door. Brenda also presented the results of a survey sent the Master Gardeners concerning the membership programs presented throughout the year. She said the survey was positive and included useful suggestions, like holding meetings at different project sites to encourage volunteerism.

The annual NETMGA Awards Program will be held on 02/02/26. Members will receive their certification certificates and award pins for volunteer hours. Gus Vizgirda suggested that members or project leaders state the project accomplishments that they were most proud of at the meeting. Karen Rowell agreed and offered the idea of a scavenger hunt concerning information about the current 14 MG projects.

### **MEMBERSHIP/CERTIFICATION REPORT: Mary Cain**

Mary was absent but the following information concerning dues and membership was available:

Mary will be sending out membership forms in November to verify personal information, remind members to log hours to get certification, and collect annual dues. The dues will be \$25.00 and \$35.00 if the dues are late. Members will have until 12/31/25 to report their volunteer hours for 2025. A vote could be held during the membership meeting in February to move the reporting deadline to 12/01 to assist Melody Rose in creating yearly reports for the University of Tennessee.

### **PUBLICITY: Brenda McKinnis (Nancy Shilling)**

Brenda McKinnis/Nancy Shilling are currently developing programming for Membership meetings using the survey data.

### **2026 Intern Class Report: Melody Rose**

The 2026 Intern Class will be a night class. Melody will conduct interviews with applicants once the applications are completed to ensure that applicants are aware of the volunteer requirements and goals of the Master Gardener Program.

Interns will be given information on how to log in for all information concerning the class including UT lectures and chapter readings. Barbara Voigt, Carl Voigt, and John Hitchcock helped with creating the new database.

Interns will be required to visit all MG Projects to get a better understanding of how Master Gardeners support state parks, museums, and communities.

**COMMUNICATIONS: Sherry Ragsdale**

Sherry Ragsdale stated that everything was going well with the Genius Sign up Program. She stated the program has a \$200.00 annual renewal fee.

**NEWSLETTER: Betts Leach (Absent)**

**FACEBOOK: Sarah Cox (absent)**

**MENTORS: John Hitchcock**

John Hitchcock stated that there was currently no updated news concerning the mentorship program.

**WEBSITE: Carl & Barbara Voigt**

The Sycamore Shoals Project will be removed from the website until it is reinstated.

**WASHINGTON COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Adam Watson (absent)**

**SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Melody Rose**

Melody Rose gave out forms to be filled out by members who consistently work with children at the board meeting. These forms include the code of conduct, TN Extension Statement of Principles, and Tennessee Law on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse. She will also send out the same forms to any member who is not present. Karen Rowell stated that the forms were particularly important due to liability concerns. Melody would like the completed forms returned to her 12/01/25.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- John Hitchcock stated that he had been asked to serve on a consultative panel for the Washington County Farmers Organization. The members of this panel assist people with gardening questions.
- Melody Rose offered “the Welcome Home Series” as a source of information to newcomers to the area. Brenda McKinnis stated that the series would be a useful

source of information for members when they are writing MG articles for the local newspapers.

- Karen Rowell requested the following information for the February Membership meeting:
  1. Impact Numbers – total hours of Master Gardeners interacting with the public.
  2. Meeting Numbers- what percentage of MG attending meetings.
  3. Total volunteers hours for all 5 counties.
- Carl Voigt requested a list of all the counties that are a part of the NETMGA.
- Karen Rowell suggested creating an outreach program to contact members who are not attending meetings, paying dues, or not recording their hours.

**NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING plans:**

The Annual NETMGA Awards meeting will be held at The Ramsey Agricultural Center at 6:30 pm on 02/02/26.

**Next Board Meeting Plans:**

The next Board meeting will be at The Ramsey Agricultural Center at 6:30 pm on 03/02/26.