

***Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Board Meeting***  
**Ramsey Agricultural Center**  
**Date: March 2, 2026**

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Susie Morrison, Janet Smith, Mary Cain, Donna Fowler, Michelle Hejny, Barbara Voight, Brenda Sneyd, John Hitchcock, Melody Rose, Don Davis, Carl Voight, Brenda McKinnis, Paulina Peralta, Gus Vizgirda, David Sneyd, Sarah Cox

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Karen Rowell, Nancy Schilling, Sherry Ragsdale, Adam Watson, Betts Leach

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

Susie Morrison called the meeting to order.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

After reviewing the January 2016 minutes, Donna Fowler made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. John Hitchcock seconded, and the Board approved.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Michelle Hejny presented the budget as of March 2, 2026

Mary Cain said several people asked that their certificates be mailed. Mary said two (2) stamps cost seventy-five (.75) cents each. Donna Fowler said people who want their certificates mailed need to pay the mailing cost.

Melody Rose said she was not going to mail them because they needed to come by and pick them up, or the Project Chairs can deliver them.

Susie Morrison asked the Board to vote on having the Project Managers deliver them or that members would pick them up at the Ramsey Center. Don Davis made a Motion to vote on the proposal and John Hitchcock seconded the Motion. The Board approved the proposal.

**PROJECT REPORT AND GRANTS FOR 2026: Don Davis**

John Hitchcock asked if we approved of the mini grants. Don Davis answered eight (8) projects a year, sometimes nine (9) are approved for three hundred and fifty dollars (\$350). Project leaders must apply to get those grants. Michelle Hejny made a motion that all applications need to be in by April 15, 1926, and receipts need to be turned in by October 15, 2026.

**Donna Fowler asked who accepts the applications? Don said it was Karen Rowell, Susie Morrison, and he approve the applications.**

**Mary said if the project leaders had no receipts, there would be no money. Don said he has sent out the applications.**

**Susie Morrison made a request that projects applications after the first eight (8) projects have been approved, and any other applications must wait until May to receive a grant for more money.**

**Don made a motion to accept the changes in policy; Michelle seconded the motion and the Board voted to approve.**

**Don asked about the criteria for projects because several projects have been accepted but were not carried forward into the next year. The major criteria are that leadership and work force must be made up of Master Gardeners. Don mentioned two (2) possible new projects: the Netherland Inn and Eden's Farm. The Netherland Inn is an historical site in Kingsport that was a port on the Holston River in the 1800s and would involve landscaping. Eden's Farm is in Gray, Tennessee. It is a wedding venue and a farm. One hundred percent (100%) of the proceeds go to charities, particularly children's charities. The discussion was concerning the type of business since this is on private land and not free to the public. One of the arguments was about this being free labor for a business and whether we can teach classes there. Melody Rose said Master Gardeners cannot work on private property. Don said we could do a group tour there so we could check it out. Don suggested holding a membership meeting there and Brenda McKinnis stated that all the membership meetings have been scheduled for this year. Susie Morrison suggested we put this to a vote at the meeting in May.**

#### **PROGRAMS FOR 2026: Brenda McKinnis/Donna Fowler**

**Brenda McKinnis stated that the next membership meeting will be at the Ramsey Center on April 6, 2026.**

**Kim Whiston, owner of Rockhouse Gardens, will present a program on landscaping with pollinators.**

**Brenda McKinnis talked about the pollinator class and the Shady Oaks Garden tour on May 23, 2026.**

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

**Mary Cain stated that currently there are 128 members that have met all requirements to retain the designation of Master Gardener. One person did not pay their dues and six (6) have not registered enough hours. She said only project hours are currently listed for certification, should we combine CEU hours with project hours for certification.**

**Don asked what would be easier for us. Susie said we will defer the vote on that until May.**

**Mary Cain asked how the non-sanctioned projects are monitored. Fifty percent (50%) must be sanctioned projects. Melody Rose said people need to take responsibility for their hours for certification, including their non-sanctioned hours.**

**Michelle Hejny stated that an email needs to be sent out to members concerning this responsibility. Regarding the banquet, Mary Cain should we change superlatives? Currently members receive leaf pins for over 100 hours, and Barbara stated that people are also recognized for 3 years, 5 years, 10 years, 15 years, and 20 years. Melody states that we should always recognize the new members at the banquet.**

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

**Gus Vizgirda will be authoring an article for "Ask a Master Gardener" regarding using copper wire on apple trees.**

**COMMUNICATIONS: Sherry Ragsdale (absent)**

**Brenda McKinnis said the sign-up genius is working well.**

**NEWSLETTER: Betts Leach (Absent)**

**FACEBOOK: Sarah Cox**

**Sarah Cox said she needs information because 49 people want to be a part of the Master Gardener's Facebook, however, only Master Gardeners can join. John Hitchcock offered to give Sarah a copy of the membership roster so that she could coordinate that.**

**There is a list of 7 administrators for the Facebook Page. Susie Morrison said to remove anyone who is not a member as administrator and add Melody Rose. Melody is also going to develop a link of garden information for the public to access. Sarah Cox will only approve comments on our Facebook page. Newsletter, Facebook, and Website should coordinate projects together.**

**MENTORS: John Hitchcock**

**John is currently in the process of selecting mentors for the current 18 class members.**

**2026 Intern Class Report: Melody Rose**

**New interns will be graduating in April.**

**WEBSITE: Carl & Barbara Voigt**

**Pictures were added regarding the Awards Banquet in February of Golden Leaf recipients and recent graduates for the 2025 class.**

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

**SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Melody Rose**

**Melody Rose requested a workday for Master Gardeners at the Northeast Tennessee Research and Education Center to create a garden of plants, native to Southern Appalachia, on March 28. The garden will be used to collect research data to inform the public statewide concerning native plants.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**John Hitchcock and Gus Virgirda introduced a program entitled “Digging Deeper” Advanced Skills from the NETMGA Masterclass Series. They presented an outline of the criteria of the program. Susie deferred voting on this until the Board Meeting in May.**

**NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING plans: Monday, April 6, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Ramsey Agricultural Center.**

**NEXT BOARD MEETING: Monday, May 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at the Ramsey Agricultural Center.**