



Official Publication

Master Gardener Thymes

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Spring Is Bustin' Out All Over!

Spring is my favorite season! I love feeling the ground thaw, seeing the plants breaking through, and watching the first blooms appear.

We could still see some cold temps overnight so be careful about planting summer annuals and certain vegetables too soon.

If you are working on your CEUs for 2026 be sure to check out the area learning opportunities in this newsletter.



By the way...in the above title replace Spring with June; did anyone besides me sing that line ("June is Bustin' Out All Over", from the Broadway Musical, Carousel!)

NETMGA MAY BOARD MEETING

The next NETMGA Board meeting will be on **May 4**, 6:30pm; Ron Ramsey Regional Agriculture Center, 140 Spurgeon Ln, Blountville, TN 37617.

NETMGA JUNE MEMBERSHIP MEETING

NETMGA Membership Meeting will be **June 1** at Karen Rowell's home. See page 2 in this newsletter for information.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- NETMGA News
- Mark Your Calendar!
- Featured Projects
- Other Events
- May/June 2026 Calendar of Events

NETMGA News!!

NETMGA April Membership Meeting Dinner Recap

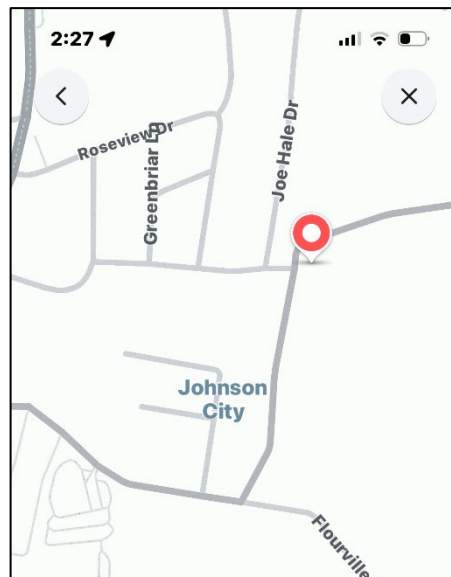
The April 2026 Membership Meeting started off with a wonderful covered dish dinner. There were over 60 attendees at the meeting and Donna Fowler and her team greeted everyone who attended with smiling faces. The food was DELICIOUS. One of the 2026 Master Gardeners Interns was very impressed by the assortment and delicious food that was provided by the current Master Gardeners. Mary Ann Lovelace and her team did a great job serving the food. Decorations were perfect as usual, pulled together by Susie Morrison and her team.

Kim Whiston, Owner of Rockhouse Gardens, Gray/Sulfur Springs Road in Jonesborough, presented an interesting program on landscaping with pollinators. Kim is a native of northeast Tennessee and has been gardening and working with plants all of her life. She presented a wonderful program showing the attendees many different varieties of flowers, shrubs and tree pollinators. Check out her Facebook page, Rockhouse Gardens.

June NETMGA Membership Meeting

June 1, 2026 – Location - Karen Rowell's Home. Parking will be available, with shuttle service from Boones Creek Baptist Church parking lot, across from the church on Joe Hale Drive, to Karen's home via the Extension Van. Social time, Purple Martins, and Planning for Transplanting. Bring your camp chair. Snacks and water will be provided.

Watch for Signup Genius with more information closer to the event.



Membership Meeting Events for the remainder of the year:

- August – Warrior Path State Park – picnic, program TBD
- October – Ron Ramsey Potluck - Small Fruit Care – Fall – Winter
- December – Christmas Dinner

Ask-A-Master Gardener

Understanding Tree Roots - Tree Root Girdling

By Patty Neas, Master Gardener

There are three beautiful red maples on our farm. One day I spotted something abnormal at the root flare of all three trees. Several 2-inch diameter roots were circling the trunks! I knew that wasn't good news!

Characteristically, tree roots “flare” at the tree trunk base sometimes called the root crown. Naturally, tree roots spread outward and downward. Stem girdling roots (SGRs) unnaturally wrap around the tree trunk base. SGRs are most common on maples, American beech, pines, oaks, and poplars.

In addition to seeing girdling roots at the base of a tree, there are other tell-tale signs that your tree is in danger. Sometimes girdling roots are not visible but underground. Leaves may be browning or dropping early. There could be dieback of limbs and canopy. Perhaps there is no root flare or there are flat sides on the tree trunk. Be alert for these and other symptoms of a stressed tree.

The girdled tree is stressed because it is slowly being starved. The sap transports sugar, water, and nutrients throughout the tree. Encircling roots can slow or stop this vital cycle. There are many reasons for SGRs. Planting too deeply seems to be an epidemic. Trees grown in pots may already have circling roots. Another primary reason is planting the tree improperly. In addition to planting too deeply, planting in compacted soil, or building volcanoes of mulch around a tree can all have tragic results.

Prevention is worth a pound of cure. Purchase wisely. Examine carefully, ask questions and ensure the tree doesn't have circling roots. Ask how long it has grown in the pot. Look for any signs of roots that are beginning to circle. Ask an employee to remove the tree to inspect its roots. Even when choosing a ball-and-burlap tree (B&B) dug from the nursery, make sure it was not grown too deeply. Plant correctly. If you hire the installation, observe and make sure the trees are installed correctly. Be sure the roots are spread and carefully remove any that are beginning to circle so they can grow normally. Dig the correct size hole. A hole too small can cause circling to begin. Plant in a location where curbs or other barriers won't hamper root development. Make sure the root flare or collar is at or slightly above ground level. You want to see that trunk flare not a straight trunk emerging from the ground! Always use the surrounding soil and do not backfill with organic matter. Mulch correctly. Over the years, watch your trees for any problems. For more detailed information on proper tree planting, follow this link: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/FNR/FNR-433-W.pdf>

Help is available. Your local University of Tennessee Extension agent can examine the girdled tree and give knowledgeable advice. For larger diameter girdled roots, a certified arborist can advise you on the amount of damage, best treatment or removal if needed. Attend to any tree girdling roots, distress, leaf, limb, and crown loss now. The smaller the girdling roots, your probability of saving the tree is higher. Many times, removing the smaller girdling roots can restore the tree to health. Removing roots must be done

carefully. They are nourishing some part of the tree. Pull away some of the soil to visibly and carefully cut or chisel the root. Be careful not to damage any other parts of the tree. Normally, do not cut the roots during the growing season - wait until dormancy. This University of Minnesota video shows how to remove a girdled root: <https://youtu.be/OVuo5NjFLs?si=Ao10QHfrnlqmBuxf>

Expensive and sad lessons can be learned too late. Planting is not the end of our responsibilities to our landscape trees. The good news is, instead of discovering girdling roots when it's too late, we can be proactive and plant healthy trees correctly. There will be no heartbreak years later, only happy gardening!

Resources:

"Understanding Tree Roots," <https://cmg.extension.colostate.edu/Gardennotes/659.pdf>

"Girdling Roots: To Cut or Not to Cut," <https://extension.psu.edu/girdling-roots-to-cut-or-not-to-cut>

"Free the Flare: Maintain Visible Root Flare for Tree Health," <https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/2024/01/12/free-the-flare-maintain-visible-root-flare-for-tree-health/>

"Mulching Landscape Trees," https://extension.psu.edu/mulching-landscape-trees#:~:text=Mulch%20can%20provide%20the%20following%20benefits:%20*,bark%20death%20*%20Disease%20*%20Rodent%20damage

The most recent articles written and published by the Master Gardener's and local newspapers were: 1) *Gardening in Small Spaces* written by Earl Hockin; 2) *Keystone Plants* written by Kate O'Lenic; 3) *Dealing with Extreme Weather* written by Earl Hockin; 4) *Companion Planting: Working with Nature in Your Garden* written by Brenda McKinnis.

You can find these articles and more at the NETMGA.net site, under the Ask-A-Master Gardener Tab. <https://www.netmga.net/ask-a-master-gardener/>

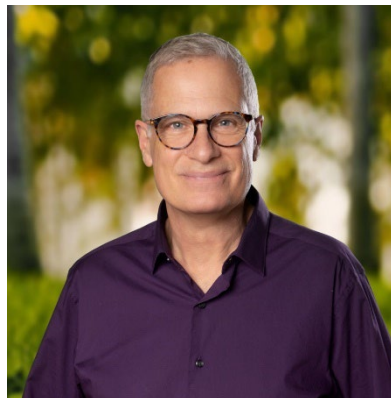
Mark Your Calendar!

May Herb Saplings Meeting

Herb Saplings meeting, **May 7**, 7 pm at Exchange Place. Topic: Doctrine of Signatures: An Introduction to the Doctrine of Signatures, exploring its history and how Appalachian herbalists have understood and used this concept over time. Presented by Charlotte and Timothy Test, Traditional Naturopaths and Master Herbalists who operate Horse-n-Bear Ranch, their herb and goat farm, and The Herb Peddler, their farm-based apothecary. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

SAPS May Program - “Rhodwood: Crafting a Dream in the NC Mountains”

Jay Sifford, garden designer, writer and speaker, will present “Rhodwood: Crafting a Dream in the NC Mountains” on Thursday, **May 21** at 7 p.m. at Kingsport Higher Education Center, 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; see <http://saps.us/> or email sapsnews@gmail.com



Jay Sifford is documenting the crafting of his personal mountain garden in the Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina. Featured in Fine Gardening and Southern Living, his Zone 7a mountain garden continues to reveal new beauty as he experiments with nature's plant palette. Named after the hundreds of rhododendron native to the property when he bought it, this talk shares his seasonal journey in creating this oasis.

Jay Sifford, www.siffordgardendesign.com, is a garden designer, writer, speaker, and frequent podcast guest, who believes great gardens are built on four cornerstones: art, magic, story, and horticulture. He has a love affair with plants, but also approaches garden design from a psychological, philosophical and spiritual standpoint. Named ‘North Carolina’s Most Outstanding Landscape Designer 2021’ by LuxLife magazine, he has won numerous awards by Houzz, and a Perennial Plant Association award of merit in 2024 for his personal garden. He has been featured in Fine Gardening, Southern Living, Better Homes and Gardens, and Country Gardens as well as in several books. Jay cultivates a 300-square-foot courtyard garden in Davidson, NC, and a mountain escape in the western part of North Carolina where he nurtures a sunny, stylized meadow atop a septic field and a shade garden underneath a canopy of mature rhododendrons.

June Herb Saplings Meeting

Herb Saplings meeting, **June 4**, 7 pm at Exchange Place. Herbal Salts with Susan Scheer. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners

<https://uthort.tennessee.edu>

“Featured Project” – Church Hill Senior Center Garden

The Church Hill Senior Center Garden has begun its 17th growing season. We continue to grow a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, and small fruits which are all donated back to the community. Each year, we plant a few new varieties to see which do best in our ever-changing climate. The lunch program at the Senior Center, Meals on Wheels, and the food pantry run by Of One Accord Ministry are all recipients of the garden’s produce.



Our typical workday, barring weather disruptions, is Monday morning. Garden chores begin in February, planting begins in March and harvesting continues through October. We have already enjoyed a workday with the Volunteer FFA students who came to lend some strong young backs and help spread our “homegrown” compost for the season. They earned some TN Promise hours toward their free two years of community college and we enjoyed the interaction of the generations. Our highly visible location on Main St continues to attract locals who stop by to ask gardening questions.

The gardeners are currently in the process of refurbishing our native perennial beds. A variety of native perennials and pollinator attracting annuals are spread throughout the grounds. The garden remains pesticide free. We provide nesting boxes for bluebirds and tree swallows who help with bug control, and utilize row covers, companion planting, “good” predatory bugs, garden toads, and old-fashioned hand (and vacuum!) removal of plant pests



We always welcome new Master Gardener volunteers so that our community outreach may continue. If you are interested in becoming part of the tradition of service to the elderly and those in need in the community, please contact us at chscgarden@yahoo.com or join us one Monday morning to help us grow and harvest.

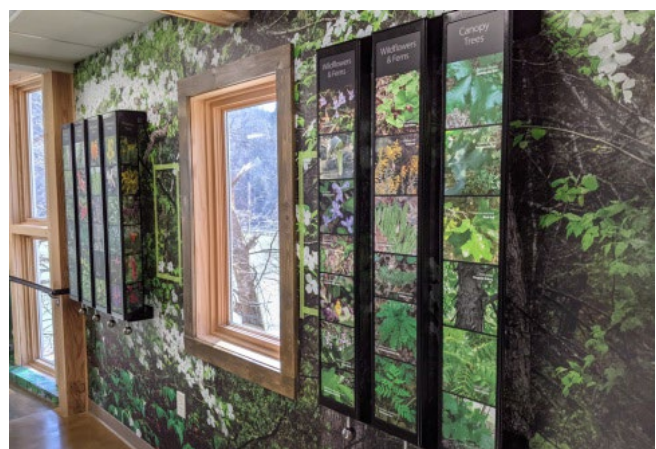
“Featured Project” – Native Plants Garden - The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park

The Native Plants Garden at The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park, in Bristol Tennessee, was begun in 2019 to accompany a native plants exhibit contained within the Nature Center itself. While there are several garden projects around The Nature Center that require significant volunteer work, our primary efforts this year will be on enhancing and maintaining our educational Native Plants Garden focused exclusively on the native plants of our region.

The roughly 6,500 square foot Native Plants Garden was established in an overgrown area next to The Nature Center. Beginning in 2019 we cleared as many of the undesirable plants as possible and documented over forty native plant species already existing in the garden area. Since then, we have added many new species, created paths through the garden area, and begun adding plant labels identifying representative specimens of most of the native species. We now have over 100 species documented in the garden. We work closely with the Nature Center naturalists to identify and prioritize other species to be added.



Representative plants are labelled with attractive signs containing their common and scientific names, and printed trifold guides for garden visitors are being developed. Our plan is to have brochures for all seasons of the year, as well as ones covering special topics such as traditional uses of native plants. We have recently added an educational display case outdoors next to the Native Plants Garden.



In the future we will be establishing a Native Ferns Garden to complement the Native Plants Garden on the other side of the building. In addition to cleaning out the existing unwanted vegetation and preparing new beds for the plants, we'll be identifying species to be added, sourcing and planting the ferns, and developing educational materials for the garden.

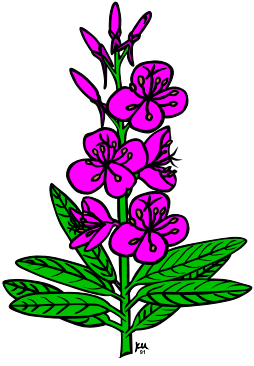
This ongoing project offers volunteers the opportunity to help with further planning, development, and maintenance of the garden in the coming years. Volunteers are needed to help acquire and plant new specimens, as well as to maintain control of the inevitable re-emergence of undesired plants (i.e. weeding!). We also need help with maintaining the paths and performing other tasks. Other important roles for volunteers are to help maintain our plant database, to compile educational information for all the species exhibited, and to assist in the development of the printed plant guides. In addition, information in the educational display case will be maintained and updated by volunteers.



The Nature Center at Steele Creek Park has many wonderful exhibits, all focused on the flora and fauna of the region. An extensive herbarium collection, started several years ago by Friends of Steele Creek volunteers, is housed at The Nature Center and the Explorers' Library, which contains one of the largest collections of regional natural history books and journals within a 100-mile radius, and is available to volunteers and members. Steele Creek Park also hosts a certified Native Trees Arboretum, a Monarch Watch Waystation Garden, and an educational apiary. In 2025 The Nature Center received full accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums.

The staff does extensive programming, both on-site as well as outreach, especially in the area schools. Jeremy Stout, the full-time Nature Center Naturalist (and City of Bristol Tennessee arborist) has done presentations on Native Plants in the Landscape for Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener classes.

For more information about The Nature Center and Steele Creek Park visit the Friends of Steele Creek Nature Center and Park website: www.friendsofstelecreek.org or Facebook page: [@FriendsOfSteeleCreekPark](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfSteeleCreekPark). If you think you'd like to become a gardens volunteer, contact Project Leader Robin Feierabend at mail@friendsofstelecreek.org or (423) 764-3336.



Plant Sale



Saturday May 9, 2026

**9 am to 1 pm
(rain or shine)**

at

**Fischman Gallery
133 N. Commerce St.
Johnson City, TN**



All plants and seedlings are home-grown
with tender loving care by members of

Shady Oaks Garden Club

www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org



Shady Oaks Garden Club presents:
"Petals and Pathways"
Garden Tour

and Plant Sale

Sat. May 23, 2026

10 am to 3 pm

Tour some of Johnson City's most
amazing gardens.

\$15

Tickets can be purchased at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) or
at 112 Belmeade Dr. on the day
of the tour.

www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org

Heavy rain date Sun. May 24

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 Hands On! Discovery Center
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 State 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!



MAY and JUNE 2026 Calendar of Events

CHECK THE SITES BELOW MONTHLY FOR CLASSES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS:

Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum Classes/Workshops: [Learn — Knoxville Botanical Gardens \(knoxgarden.org\)](https://www.knoxgarden.org/)

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/>

Evergreen of Johnson City Seminars: www.evergreenofjc.com

Evergreen of Colonial Heights Seminars: www.egardenplace.com

Tennessee State Parks: [Happenings | Tennessee State Parks](https://www.tnstateparks.com/happenings)

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/>

MAY 4 NETMGA Board Meeting
6:30pm at Ron Ramsey Agricultural Center; Blountville, TN 37617.

MAY 2 Houseplants Transitioning Outdoors
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended. Register:
<https://evergreenofjc.com/events/category/seminars/> or call 423-282-3431.

MAY 7 Herb Saplings Meeting
7 pm at Exchange Place. Topic: Doctrine of Signatures: An Introduction to the Doctrine of Signatures. See details on page 4 of this newsletter.

MAY 16 Growing Flowers in Containers
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended. Register:
<https://evergreenofjc.com/events/category/seminars/> or call 423-282-3431.

- MAY 21 May SAPS Meeting
7:00pm. Jay Sifford, garden designer, writer and speaker, will present “Rhodwood: Crafting a Dream in the NC Mountains” at *Kingsport Higher Education Center, 300 W. Market Street, Kingsport, TN*. See details on page 5 of this newsletter.
- MAY 22 Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site Gala
6:00pm. Cost: \$35 per plate. Information: <https://www.tipton-haynes.org/events/gala-052226> or call 423-926-3631.
- MAY 23 All About Hydrangeas
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended. Register: <https://evergreenofjc.com/events/category/seminars/> or call 423-282-3431.
- MAY 23 Tropicals
10:30am. Evergreen of Colonial Heights. Registration is highly recommended. Register: <https://egardenplace.com/events/> or call 423-245-4769.
- MAY 30 Living Fences/Screens
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended. Register: <https://evergreenofjc.com/events/category/seminars/> or call 423-282-3431.
- MAY 30 Roses
10:30am. Evergreen of Colonial Heights. Registration is highly recommended. Register: <https://egardenplace.com/events/> or call 423-245-4769.
- JUN 1 NETMGA Membership Meeting
Karen Rowell's home. See information on page 2 of this newsletter.
- JUN 4 Herb Saplings Meeting
7 pm at Exchange Place. Topic: Herbal Salts with Susan Scheer. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.
- JUN 6 Perennials for Pollinators
10:30am. Evergreen of Johnson City. Registration is highly recommended. Register: <https://evergreenofjc.com/events/category/seminars/> or call 423-282-3431.
- JUN 13 Dragonfly Day at Warriors' Path State Park
9:30am-2:00pm. Pre-registration required. Cost: \$5. Information: [Dragonfly Day - 16th Annual | Tennessee State Parks](#)