Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Board Meeting
Ramsey Agricultural Center
July 13,2026

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Karen Rowell, Janet Smith, Donna Fowler, Michelle Hejny, Sherry Ragsdale, Barbara Voight, Brenda Snyed, Carl Voight, Brenda McKinnis, Ben Staton, Nancy Schilling, Don Davis, Susie Morrison

MEMBERS ABSENT: Adam Watson, Betts Leach, Sarah Cox, Mary Cain, John Hitchcock, Melody Rose

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME
Karen Rowell called the meeting to order.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:
Karen Rowell moved to approve the minutes, and Sherry Ragsdale seconded the motion. The board approved the May minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT:
Michelle Hejny presented the budget as of 07/08/26.
Don Davis made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report and Susie Morrison seconded the motion. The board approved the report.
Michelle Hejny proposed selling Master Gardener merchandise online through a local company called Campus Chalet. A Sign-up Genius page could be created to allow members to place orders online. Members would submit their payments to Michelle, who would then collect and distribute the merchandise. She stated that a trial run for the site could be up on the internet by October. Karen Rowell stated that the new system would address the issue of excess merchandise inventory. Brenda McKinnis noted that the prices appeared reasonable; a long-sleeved shirt was priced at $40.00.
Ben Staton said his wife could use her Cricut machine to make MG shirts, which could help reduce costs. She could also produce shirts to sell at events.
Karen Rowell suggested that Michelle bring merchandise samples to the next membership and board meetings. Don Davis recommended posting photos and prices on the NETMGA website, and Michelle agreed to both suggestions.
Carl Voight asked how many shirts were currently in inventory. Michelle estimated that there were 50.

Michelle asked which payment application should be used to purchase the merchandise: Apple Cash, Venmo, or PayPal. The board voted to use Venmo and set up a trial run of the

purchasing site. Michelle said she would research how to establish a group payment account. Karen Rowell thanked her for her contributions and hard work on the project.

PROJECT REPORT AND GRANTS FOR 2026: Don Davis

Don Davis introduced Edith Early to the Board, noting that she will assist with the MG project and grants. He reported that eight projects have been approved in 2026 and that one or two projects typically do not apply for grants each year. The deadline to turn in receipts is the end of September.

Don Davis also introduced a potential MG project at the Senior Citizens Center in Lincoln Park. The site has 18 garden beds that provide vegetables for the center's lunches and Meals on Wheels. The project will require an application and the participation of at least three Master Gardeners before Davis can present it to the Board. Janet Smith added that Washington County needs an MG project for local Master Gardeners because of rising fuel costs and travel distances.

Don Davis proposed that Master Gardeners earn volunteer hours by cleaning and replanting planters at Holston Valley Medical Center and Indian Path Community Hospital. Edith Early suggested a weekend workday to help interns who struggle to earn hours because of work commitments.

Karen Rowell reported that the Harvest of Hope Garden Project had been vandalized twice, prompting its leaders to consider ending it. Don Davis said the Netherlands Inn and Derry Inn would be good places to work; he added that Derry Inn had recently lost three volunteers but gained four interns. Barbara suggested emailing all master gardeners about the projects, and Karen agreed that weekend workdays would help interns earn volunteer hours.

PROGRAMS FOR 2026: Brenda McKinnis

Brenda McKinnis stated that the next member meeting will take place on August 3rd at 6:30 p.m. at Warriors State Park. Melody Rose will deliver a presentation covering insect Identification.

The subsequent membership on October 5th will be at the Ramsey Agricultural Center. There will be a covered dish dinner at 5:30 followed by a presentation on blue berries by Gus Virgirda.

The annual Christmas dinner and membership meeting will be held on December 7. The Cattlemen Association will cater the event, and Terry Shaw will be the presenter. Dinner will cost $20 for members and $30 for guests. Gus Virgirda and Ben Staton will manage setup. Donna Fowler requested an honorarium of $350.00 for the presenter. Susie suggested that project leaders and their groups decorate each table and that the decorated tables potentially be **silent** auctioned to raise funds.

MEMBERSHIP/CERTIFICATION REPORT: Mary Cain
Mary Cain was absent from the meeting.

PUBLICITY: Brenda McKinnis (Nancy Shilling)
Brenda McKinnis reported that Master Gardeners continue to contribute articles to the "**Ask-a-Master Gardener**" column in local newspapers (**as well as in the MG Thymes newsletter and the NETMGA FB page**. She stated that she needs information concerning upcoming events from Project leaders to make sure these events get publicity and volunteers.
Ben Staton proposed hosting an MG booth at next year's 80th annual NC Rhododendron Festival. Karen Rowell supported the proposal, provided that no fees are required.
Karen said the state conference was a valuable leadership opportunity. She recommended nominating a local project for next year's best-practices award and increasing public education about Master Gardeners and gardening.

The 2026 Intern Class: Melody Rose
Melody Rose was absent from the meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS: Sherry Ragsdale
Sherry Ragsdale shared that Signup Genius is effectively promoting events and helping with volunteer recruitment.

NEWSLETTER: Betts Leach (Absent)

FACEBOOK: Sarah Cox (absent)

MENTORS: John Hitchcock
John Hitchcock was absent from the meeting.

WEBSITE: Carl & Barbara Voigt
Barbara stated that they are continually updating information and links on the site. She requests pictures whenever there are any new events.

WASHINGTON COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Adam Watson (absent)

SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT: Melody Rose(absent)

NEW BUSINESS:

Ben Staton announced that the next intern presentations will take place on July 20. He also noted that the Class of 2026 frequently meets to support one another with their gardens. Karen Rowell announced that the Eastman Garden Club is organizing tours of individual gardens and will provide additional information later.

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING plans:

The next membership meeting will be at Warrior's State Park on 08/03/26 at 6:30 pm.

Next Board Meeting Plans:

The next NETMGA Board Meeting will be at the Ramsey Agricultural Center on 09/14/26 at 6:30 pm.