

**WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION**

# THE PERENNIAL



**WILLIAMSON COUNTY**  
**UT EXTENSION**  
**INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE**  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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# OUR ROOTS

## A Message from our President

Dear Fellow Master Gardeners,

This has got to be the strangest year I've ever experienced. Fluctuating temperatures, torrential downpours, devastating tornadoes and now a life-threatening medical emergency. But, have you noticed how many people are getting serious about gardening? Not because they love pretty flowers, or suddenly wanted a new hobby, but because everyone is fearful of finding enough food to feed their families. The supply chains have been seriously disrupted and it will take a long time to get this all straightened out. So, the best option is to grow your own healthy food.

As proof that this is going on right now, here in Williamson Co, try to buy seeds from your favorite vendors or potting mix from the big box stores. Territorial, Baker Creek and Johnny's all say "Sorry, but we're sold out and not taking more orders". Seeds in the big box stores are picked over, leaving you the available options of celery (not happening here), asparagus (3 years from now to harvest isn't what we need), or artichokes which have challenged the most experienced gardeners for low yield. Oh yeah, and kale. How much kale can we consume????

But I see this as an incredible opportunity for our WCMGA. I've been starting lots of extra seeds and when I have enough plants, I post on my neighborhood site to "come and get it". I leave boxes of plants at the end of my driveway with a note about checking out the website if they need information on how to get started, how to maintain their crops, how to maximize the yield. We can't get out and visit folks, but we CAN share our knowledge with folks just beginning to dip their toes in the gardening pool with these small Victory Gardens. This is where we, as Master Gardeners, can fill a real void in our own communities. Reach out to your community and offer assistance and guidance, albeit from a safe distance.

I see this as a very unique opportunity to stimulate a whole new group of gardeners and perhaps generate even more interest in the WCMGA.

Please stay safe. We're not out of the woods by a long shot.....it may take many more months before the "all clear" is sounded. Keep in touch with each other and lend a hand (from a distance) as needed. I miss you all tremendously!

**WGMGA President**



# Victory Gardens Cropping Up During Pandemic

By Kristy Bergstrom WCMGA

Nurseries and garden centers across the country are reporting higher vegetable plant and seed sales thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic – and, without even knowing it, ordinary citizens are joining a 100-plus year’s long tradition of growing “victory gardens.”

Originally known as the war garden movement, the concept of gardening through economic crisis (or “panic gardening” as my husband and I have coined it!) emerged during World War I as nations began rationing food, recruiting agricultural workers for military service and diverting transportation resources to the war effort. With countless farms overseas transforming into

battlefields, forestry expert and multi-millionaire businessman Charles Lathrop Pack realized an opportunity for average citizens to contribute to the war effort through gardening. A proponent of self-sustainability, Pack formed the U.S. National War Garden Commission to encourage residents to utilize any available land for planting, harvesting, fertilizing, growing and storing their own vegetables, fruits and herbs. At the time, this proved critically important as a severe food crisis was emerging in Europe.

In March 1917, just weeks before the U.S. officially entered World War 1, Pack launched a national campaign for “victory gardens”- and, little did he know, his idea would spark a global movement. Along with the United States, the governments of Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany created propaganda posters encouraging citizens to “sow the seeds of victory” by planting gardens on any available space. The movement spread quickly thanks to women’s clubs, civic organizations and local chambers of commerce whose members planted gardens at private residences, companies, schools, parks, vacant lots and city rooftops. Governments even provided novice gardeners with instructional pamphlets on how, when and where to sow seeds along with disease and pest prevention tips. The campaigns proved so successful that governments eventually turned their attention to providing canning and food drying manuals so that residents could preserve surplus crops. By the end of 1918, more than eight million new gardens were planted in the United States alone with average citizens



generating an astonishing 1.45 million quarts of canned fruits and vegetables.

Interestingly enough, the U.S. was also in the midst of another pandemic that same year. In an article published by *The New York Times* on March 25, 2020, "Sowing the Seeds of Victory: American Gardening Programs of World War I" author Rose Hayden-Smith noted that while "the victory garden program may be more than a century old, the parallels right now are pretty stark. You have to remember, we lost more Americans to the (Spanish) flu than we did to the battlefield. Gardens flourished on the home front because people were eager to build their own community-based food security, and to cultivate something beautiful and useful in times of great stress and uncertainty."

By the spring of 1942, U.S. citizens faced new challenges as World War II spawned the introduction of food rationing. Residents were once again called upon to grow their own fruits, vegetables and herbs not only to supplement their own rations, but to share with friends and neighbors while the government diverted agricultural resources overseas. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt even planted a victory garden on the White House lawn. Building upon the 1917 campaign, the government distributed millions of pamphlets advising gardeners of ways to maximize production through succession planting and recording seed germination rates, diseases and insect products to improve year-over-year results. By the end of the war, an estimated 20 million families planted victory gardens, which produced 40 percent of the all the fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States at the time.

Throughout both world wars, the Victory Garden campaign served as a way to boost morale, protect



our country from food shortages and ease the burden on conventional farmers working to feed troops and civilians overseas. Even though the government's promotion of victory gardens officially ended with World War II, the movement is seeing a resurgence with today's pandemic and subsequent global economic crisis. With new reports of global food shortages predicted within a few months, the need may be more dire than we could have imagined.

While our neighbors and friends have been panic buying toilet paper and groceries, my husband and I have coined a new phrase in our household: "panic gardening." When we completed the Williamson County Master Gardener program last year, we made plans to significantly expand our

backyard vegetable garden. We purchased seeds in January and started clearing more sod in our backyard for the new beds. With the coronavirus outbreak spreading at an alarming rate in February, we both grew concerned about our nation's food supply chain and soon kicked our plans into high gear. We bought even more seeds and throughout March and April added three more 4x8 raised beds and two hexagonal pollinator beds, expanding our vegetable garden space by four times what was already in place. Since I'm also immune-compromised, we wanted to grow enough food to decrease our trips to the grocery store while also having plenty to share with friends, family and those in need. Little did we know, we were building our own victory garden –

and, in the same tradition of those gardens that cropped up all over the world during wartime, we've encouraged our neighbors and friends through word-of-mouth to do the same by offering our seedlings and expertise.

In a book he wrote for the National War Garden Commission in 1919, Charles Lathrop Pack said "the seeds of victory insure the fruits of peace." I think that rings true today as shoppers clear out the shelves of grocery stores. As master gardeners, we can do our part to promote peace here at home and around the world by growing our own food and sharing the surplus with those around us. It costs very little to share your seeds and experiences with your neighbors. So go on, panic garden this year to your heart's content!

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## Nice progress at the "Victory Garden" of Matt and Kristy Bergstrom



## WCMGA at the Fair

The WCMGA Fair booth was featured in this photo last year that was submitted to the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE). The photo was submitted by Terri Kimbel, Administrative Coordinator for the WC Fair. Representatives from the Williamson County Fair Board traveled to San Antonio, Texas for the annual IAFE convention in November and collected several awards, including the second place for this photo in the section for “Competitive Exhibits-General Display”.



As we get more instruction about what is in store for the coming **Williamson County Fair**, be on the lookout for volunteer requests. This annual project is fun and fulfilling, but it takes a lot of people to make it run smoothly. As more information is released, WCMGA will put out the call for 2020 Fair volunteers.

# Do you follow UT Master Gardeners on Instagram?



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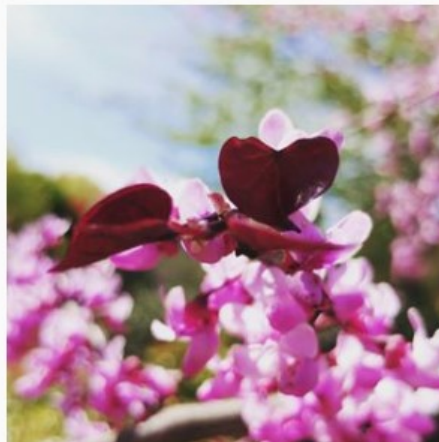
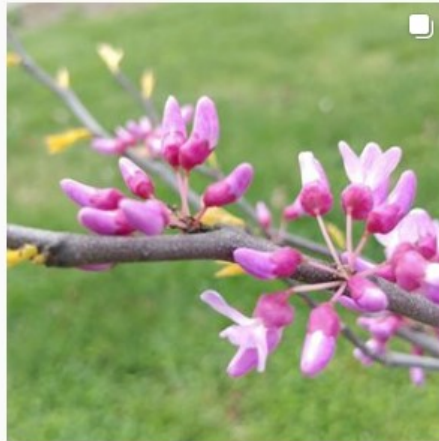
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UT Master Gardeners

"Helping Tennessee Grow Better Communities"

Find all things horticulture and gardening on our website!

[www.uthort.com](http://www.uthort.com)



# THE BARK

## MAY

- Harvest cool-season crops, and watch for pests/disease (see June).
- Seed succession plantings of common warm-season, direct seeded crops, such as beans and sweet corn. Some of the sweet corn cultivars that prefer warmer soil conditions may be best saved until this month.
- Prepare beds that will be covered in plastic prior to planting transplants. Black plastic can warm the soil and speed early growth of transplants. Make sure that irrigation is provided if plastic is used. Sometimes natural mulches, such as straw, are applied a few weeks after planting as they can reflect light and actually slow soil warming.
- Continue transplanting warm-season crops. Peppers and eggplants prefer even warmer soil conditions than tomatoes and are often planted later. Make sure that young transplants are watered in and given a starter fertilizer solution to support early growth.
- Set up your irrigation system as transplants are placed in the garden. Drip irrigation is best to maintain dry leaves and reduce disease risks.
- Set up stakes, trellises, cages and support systems for your plants. It is best to have these set up at or soon after planting.
- Don't let weeds get started in the garden — take control early with mulches and proactive management.

## JUNE

- Be on the lookout for maturity in the first corn and bean plantings.
- Manage soil after cool-season crops are removed. Those areas may be a location for a summer cover crop, such as buckwheat, to prevent weed growth and add organic matter. If a warm-season crop is planted immediately after cool-season crops are removed, make sure to follow a crop rotation that moves to a different family.

- Some of the latest warm-season crops to be planted are often watermelons and pumpkins, as well as sweet potatoes.
- You can still be succession planting corn and beans.
- Make sure your irrigation system is functioning well and manage weeds.
- Scout for any issues with pests or disease at least weekly.
- If conditions support disease infection, or if you see signs of disease, a protective spray program may be needed.

## JULY

- Consider succession planting of zucchini or later season tomatoes.
- Pick tomatoes, beans, corn and other warm-season crops.
- Manage irrigation as needed, but try to reduce leaf wetness and overhead watering.
- Manage fertility through proper side dressing and in-season fertilizer applications
- Manage weeds.
- Scout frequently for insect or disease issues and spray as needed.
- Select cool-season crops and cultivars for fall and make seed order.
- Some cool-season crops (Brussels sprouts, cauliflower) will likely need to be seeded in July if you are starting your own transplants.
- Pumpkins should be seeded according to maturity. A 100-day pumpkin seeded on July 1 would be estimated to mature October 11. However, it is common in our Mid-South climates for pumpkins to mature a few days earlier than listed.

## 2020 TENNESSEE HOME VEGETABLE GARDEN CALENDAR

The complete *UT Extension publication*  
**W-436** can be accessed [here](#).

# Newsletter/Website Articles Wanted

You can earn volunteer hours by writing about a garden you visited, a technique you tried which worked (or did not), or your enthusiasm for some special plant, or any interesting garden topic.

Keep contributing. Keep reading. Keep sharing. Please send your contributions to: [wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com](mailto:wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com).

Check out our amazing  
WCMGA [website!](#)

Also, look [here](#) for  
important links to many  
of your favorite  
gardening resources!

# THE DIRT



## Looking for speakers!

All members are highly encouraged to pass along suggested topics AND the expert speaker who could present topics of interest. Email recommendations to Ryan Palmer at [rpatenn@comcast.net](mailto:rpatenn@comcast.net)

## WCMGA Mission

The mission of the Williamson County Master Gardeners Association (WCMGA) is to provide research-based, horticultural education, while promoting environmental stewardship, via community volunteerism.

WCMGA operates under the umbrella of UTIA and the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office.

# Contact Us

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