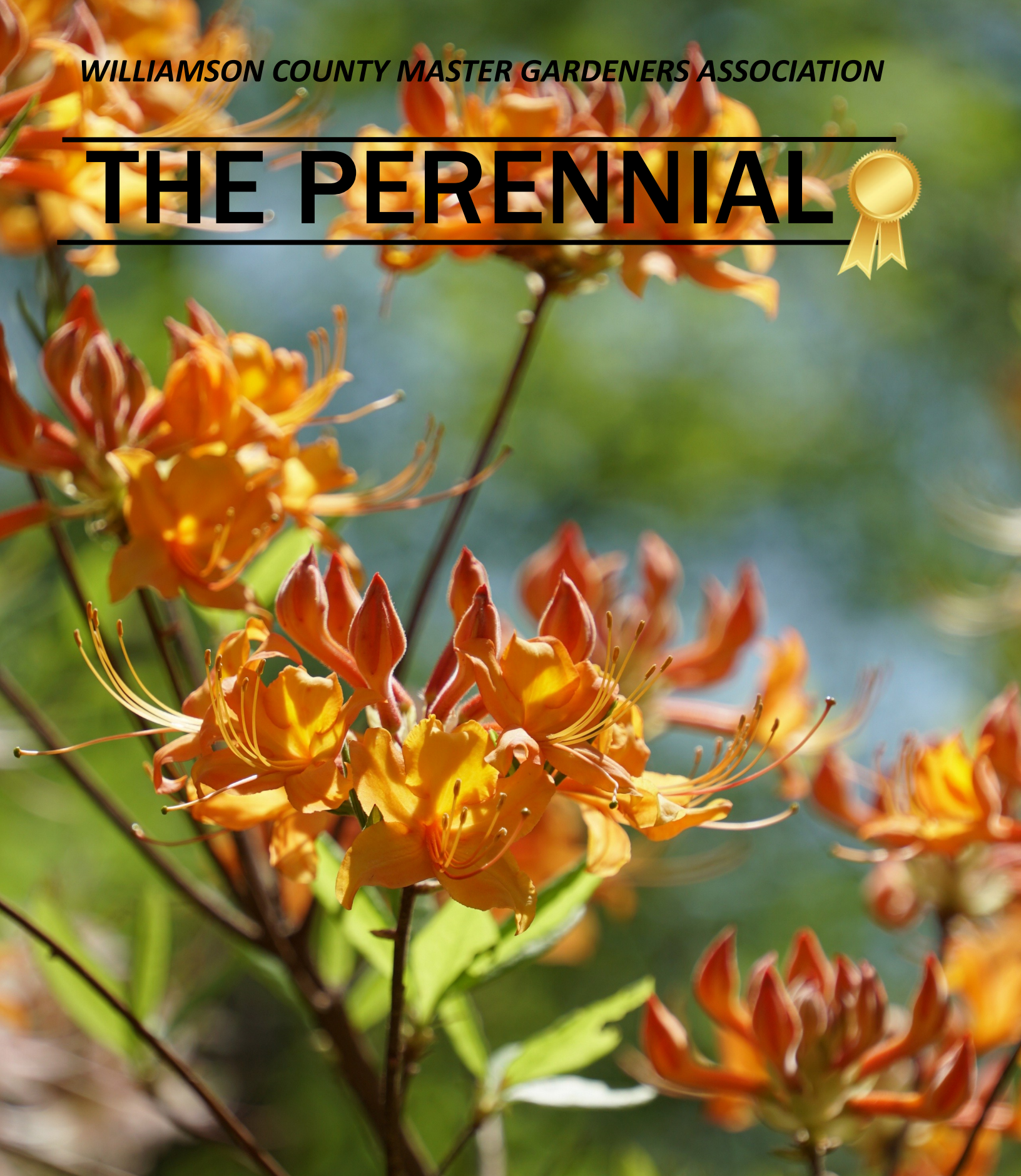


WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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# THE PERENNIAL

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Cover photo by Holly Gardner

# A Message from our President

I've always been proud to be a Master Gardener, but these last few months have led me to reflect even more on the importance of the work we do to serve our community. As many of you know, the WCMGA board is conducting a Project Audit. Myself and our Director of Projects & Volunteers, David Miller, have met with each Project Lead to better understand the unique needs and mission of each project along with corresponding budgets.

Like many of you, I've also served on committees and volunteered on several projects, but this audit process has been eye-opening to say the least! I'm just in awe of you. Your dedication, your passion, the depth of your knowledge and willingness to share that with each other and our community is astounding to me.

With 2026 being the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our association, I'm even more blown away by those of you who've served for 10 or 20 years. It's an incredible legacy of service and I know Williamson County is better for it.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do to make a difference. I'm looking forward to celebrating with you at our annual WCMGA Picnic on Sept. 12. Be sure to mark your calendars because it will be our best one yet!

*Kristy Bergstrom*

President, WCMGA

Giving Garden



Carter House



Junior Gardener Camp



Williamson Co. Diagnostics Team



Garden Festival and Plant Sale



Young Scholars



Period Enslaved Garden at Carnton



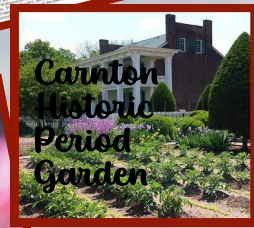
Speakers Bureau



McLemore House



Carnton Historic Period Garden



The Perennial



Williamson County Fair



# Companion Planting in Vegetable Gardening

By Cheryl Carlson, WCMGA Member and UT Diagnostics Team Member

Companion planting offers a blend of scientifically supported and anecdotally observed benefits. Companion planting can be used to attract beneficial bugs, repel harmful bugs, attract pollinators, and enhance the flavors of vegetables. It also can be used as living mulch, offering shade at times to extend growing times of certain vegetables.

## Using Companion Planting to Reduce Pests

When I'm planning my garden, I research what pests are particular to each type of vegetable I am planting. There are several ways to decrease pests that want to share in your harvest and through companion planting, we can decrease or eliminate the use of pesticides and insecticides in vegetable gardens.

**Attracting Predatory Insects** - Some bugs are predatory and will eat the pests that want to share in your harvest! For example, with various squash crops, squash bugs are a common complaint and controlling the amount of or eliminating them is the goal. Research confirms that tachinid fly species parasitize squash bugs by laying eggs on adult bugs; the larvae then develop inside the host.

Planting herbs such as dill, fennel, and cilantro around your squash plants and letting them flower will attract predatory tachinid flies to your garden. The flowers are excellent nectar sources for adult tachinid flies.

**Repelling Pests with Aromatic Plants** - Some bugs are repelled by the strong scents of particular plants and chives' sulfur-rich aroma may help confuse or deter aphids and spider mites when planted with pepper plants.



Photos by Cheryl Carlson



**Supporting Pollinators** - Many of our summer vegetable plants, such as squash, cucumbers, melons, and beans, need to be cross pollinated, so attracting pollinators is a priority in gardening! Flowers such as marigolds and nasturtiums provide nectar and pollen and are great for attracting pollinators. As a bonus, nasturtiums and some marigolds are edible as long as they are free from pesticides.



**Enhancing Flavor and Plant Health** - Some plants can enhance the flavor of other plants. Basil and tomatoes are a classic pairing and basil reportedly enhances the flavor of tomatoes while also acting as a repellent to various tomato pests. The strong aromatic oils in basil deter hornworms, whiteflies, and aphids that want to gorge on your tomato plants.

### **Living Mulch and Soil Support**

**Living Mulch** - Companion planting is great living mulch. Planting thyme and oregano can suppress weeds and increase soil structure as they form dense mats. Their flowers also attract hoverflies (syrphid flies), parasitic wasps, ladybugs, and lacewings, which feed on pests such as aphids.

**Nitrogen Fixation** - Legumes (peas and beans) are nitrogen fixers; they host nitrogen-fixing bacteria (Rhizobium species) in their root

nodules. These bacteria convert atmospheric nitrogen into forms plants can use and they provide a natural way to increase nitrogen in your soils.

Legumes can support soil fertility, especially when their roots are left in place after harvest and pair well with heavy feeders like tomatoes, broccoli, and sweet potatoes.

### **Maximizing Space and Moderating Microclimates**

Planting shorter plants under taller plants can increase the efficient use of garden space while offering some shade to

plants that might need it to extend their growing season. Planting spinach under peppers, broccoli, or tomatoes combine well and can extend the spinach growing time by providing



partial shade as temperatures rise. Also, putting cilantro under tomato plants may provide some shade and extend the growing season since cilantro is more of a cool-season crop. It's used in making salsa, so having it more available when tomatoes ripen is a good idea!

### **Confusing Pests Through Plant Diversity**

Some bugs use visuals to hone in on desirable plants to nibble on. Planting a variety of plants in an area, instead of a large block of one crop, can create visual confusion for harmful bugs and deter them from attacking your vegetable garden. For example, I plant my squashes in different parts of my garden with other plants in between. This makes it harder for squash bugs to locate their favorite hosts.



### **Start Small and Observe**

There are so many reasons to incorporate companion planting in your vegetable garden, but every garden is unique! Don't be daunted. Just try a bit at a time and note the results! Over time, you'll develop a system that supports healthier plants, fewer pests, and a more resilient garden ecosystem. Happy gardening!!



**Want more information?**

[Trap Crops,](#)

[Intercropping and -](#)

[University of Tennessee system](#)

[Companion Planting | UT Vegetable Production](#)

[Companion Planting | Extension | WVU](#)

[Companion planting in home gardens | UMN Extension](#)

[Gardening with Companion Plants \(Home Garden Series\) | WSU Extension](#)

## THE VINE: News

The Williamson County Master Gardeners Association and project leader, Andy Hazelton, received a Special Recognition award at The African American Heritage Society's 25th Annual Black Tie Event which took place on Saturday, February 7, 2026 at the Embassy Suites in Cool Springs. This is the organization's annual fundraiser to benefit AAHS, the McLemore House Museum, and the Merrill-Williams House. It is a night of celebration, honors, awards, music, and dancing! The award was received for the work at the McLemore House. See the excerpt from the event's program below:



### **Williamson County Master Gardeners Association & Andrew Hazelton**

The African American Heritage Society would like to honor and recognize the Williamson County Master Gardeners Association for their support of the McLemore House Museum in providing and maintaining landscaping plants and landscaping services at the historic home since its last renovation 5 years ago. Andrew Hazelton has been the primary landscape gardener for the museum and the organization would like to give special recognition to Andrew whose dedication and diligent work keeps the grounds looking great!



Andrew Hazelton moved to Franklin, Tennessee as a child in 1992 and attended schools in both the Franklin Special School District and Williamson County Schools. After graduating, he proudly served in the United States Navy from 1999 to 2004 as an Electronics Technician Third Class Petty Officer on the USS Ticonderoga.

Following his military service, Andrew returned to Franklin and built a career rooted in his passion for the outdoors and community. He is now a local landscape gardener and owner of Middle TN Lawns, serving exclusively the Franklin, Tennessee area.

Andrew has been an active volunteer with the Williamson County Master Gardener program since 2011, contributing countless hours to local horticultural education and community projects. Since 2021, he served as the McLemore House Project Leader, further demonstrating his commitment to preserving and enhancing Franklin's historic and natural landscapes.

According to statements on the WCMG website, they are keeping history alive. "Historical sites often have a large need for grounds maintenance with little assistance. In addition to the

McLemore House, WCMGs support and maintain some gardens at Carnton Plantation and also maintain the Heirloom Fruit Orchard and Vegetable Garden, the Kitchen Herb Garden and the Flower Gardens at the Carter House."

The mission of the WCMGA is to provide research-based horticultural education, while promoting environmental stewardship, via community volunteerism, delivered by a dedicated and skilled volunteer network. The WCMGA's vision is provide useful research-based horticulture information to Williamson County residents and communities and are part of the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office. The African American Heritage Society is appreciative to WCMGA for their continued dedication and support to the McLemore House Museum and its role in telling the story of formerly enslaved Harvey McLemore and showcasing his 1880 built home.



For more information about the AAHS and the McLemore House, check out the following links:

[AAHS– Understanding Our Past | Celebrating Our Future Projects – AAHS McLemore House](#)  
[wcmga.net/the-mclemore-house/](http://wcmga.net/the-mclemore-house/)

Our February meeting featured Sarah Ruzic with Tennessee Kitchen Gardens. A proud “garden nerd,” she started her first vegetable patch in a remote village in Guatemala in 2005 and has been designing and redesigning gardens in Tennessee since 2012.

After a decade of balancing her career as a high school English teacher with her passion for gardening, she founded Tennessee Kitchen Gardens to share the joy of growing your own food with her community. Sarah and her team offer individualized coaching, seasonal garden care, as well as design and installation services for raised bed gardens and irrigation. Sarah and Tennessee Kitchen Gardens were also featured four months ago on Nashville Public Television’s *Volunteer Gardener*.

She and Abi Tapia, Designer and Director of Garden Operations, discussed raised bed gardening. They have designed, built, and maintained over fifty gardens across Middle Tennessee and have coached many gardeners with what has worked (or not) in their vast experiences.

For more information, check out these links:

[Tennessee Kitchen Gardens | Start Growing Today](#)

[Raised Bed Kitchen Garden | Volunteer Gardener](#)

[Vegetables and Herbs | UT Hort](#)  
[How to Construct a Raised Bed in the Garden - PSU](#)





Katy Kilbourne of the TN Forestry Division returned to speak in March on invasive pests after giving an incredible talk last June on invasive plants. Katy is a forest health specialist for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Division of Forestry.

She oversees a range of projects aimed at protecting Tennessee's forests and forest products. Katy gained her experience with invasive pests as a plant inspector for two years in southern middle Tennessee and then eight years as a State Plant

Pathologist. During this time, she worked to prevent the spread of invasive species within the nursery trade, assisted with implementing the state firewood certification program and quarantine, and organized statewide and national surveys.

Through her work, Katy also facilitated stronger collaborations between government, non-profit, and private industries to advance common objectives in combating invasive species through networking, outreach initiatives, and educational endeavors.

She began her presentation sharing ways we can protect ourselves from ticks as they are very bad this year. She continued by sharing information about several invasive pests, which plants and trees are impacted, and how the pests can be controlled.

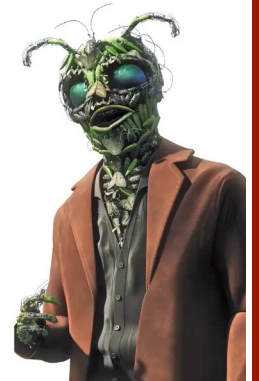
She finished by reviewing invasive plants, which include species that are non-native, adaptable, cause harm, grow aggressively, and seed prolifically. These include such plants as kudzu, Callery pears, Tree of Heaven, Autumn Olive, and Mimosa trees.









Keeping TN's Forests Healthy & Productive

Protecting TN Forests by Identifying Pests and Pathways

Katy Kilbourne, Forest Health Specialist  
02/24/2026

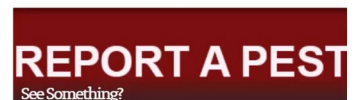


> American Dog Tick (Wood Tick)	> Asian Longhorned Tick	> Black Legged Tick (Deer Tick)	> Brown Dog Tick	> Gulf Coast Tick	> Lone Star Tick
					
<b>Transmits:</b> Tularemia and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	<b>Transmits:</b> Unknown, new invasive species	<b>Transmits:</b> Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Powassan virus	<b>Transmits:</b> Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	<b>Transmits:</b> Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	<b>Transmits:</b> Ehrlichiosis, tularemia, Heartland virus, STARI, Alpha-gal Syndrome

For more information:



- [Tennessee Invasive Plant Council](#)
- [Invasive Pests of Tennessee | TN CAPS](#)
- [Pest Plants](#)
- [TN Report a Pest](#)
- [Ticks | CDC](#)
- [Protect TN Forests | Protecting, Conserving, and Enhancing TN's Forests](#)





## WCMGA and The Habitat Connection Partner to Plant 100 Trees By Kristy Bergstrom

On Saturday, March 28, 17 WCMGA members and interns partnered with local non-profit, The Habitat Connection, and Franklin First United Methodist Church's Creation Cares team to plant 100+ native bare root tree saplings along Berry's Chapel Branch riparian buffer zone.

The site is located near one of WCMGA's most active projects, The Giving Garden, and included persimmon, witch hazel and indigo bush plantings that day.

Participants enjoyed an introductory talk by naturalist Kay Matthews about the importance of these trees and how they will help bring back native biodiversity. Large amounts of invasive plants including Japanese honeysuckle and privet were also safely removed to allow the native trees to thrive.

The native habitat restoration of this area began nearly nine years ago and was the first time WCMGA partnered with these organizations. Organizers were deeply appreciative of Master Gardener support and hope to include WCMGA in future restoration events this fall.

To learn more about The Habitat Connection's regeneration efforts in Williamson County, visit <https://www.thehabitatconnection.org>.



Photos provided by Kristy Bergstrom

On March 28th, WCMGA was represented well by Kathie and David Altknecht and Mary Holt at the Brentwood Library Arbor Day celebration.



Photo by Rachel Fortuna

Our April association meeting featured the annual presentations from our project leads, highlighting each of our major projects. We introduced a refreshed format this year; it was more focused, more streamlined, and enriched with insights into project goals, community impact, greatest needs, and even some fun facts about the projects. This format also gave us a great opportunity to share meaningful details with our members and interns, helping them explore which projects might be the best fit for their interests and skills. WCMGA President, Kristy Bergstrom, shared a link to the full presentations by email to membership.

We also presented our service awards, honoring members who reached key volunteer-hour milestones and celebrating those who have been dedicated members of our association for many years.

Our years-served awards included:

10-year Member: Mary Pemberton (pictured), Valerie Silver (pictured), Ella Eivazova (pictured), Patsy McFadden, Brent Nikolaus, and Bonnie Nikolaus

15-year Members: Ron Novak (pictured), Bill Gombos, Andy Hazelton, and Mike Seitz



Photos by Holly Gardner



We appreciate each and every member and their service!



Photo by Rachel Fortuna



Our Hospitality Committee decorated the refreshments table in their usual fabulous way! Pictured at right are DeeAnna Carney and Mary Poge.

On Saturday, April 18th, there were two opportunities to showcase our association and the great things our Master Gardeners do for our community.

Karin Bailey & Carrie Moeller staffed the booth at the Arbor Day celebration in Franklin. They were available to answer questions for those attending the festival.

Rachel Fortuna stopped by to support our volunteers and snag a photo.

We also had a large presence at the Tractor Supply location in Thompson's Station for their Community Gardening Day. We partnered with them for this community event to help educate Williamson County residents in the Thompson's Station and Spring Hill area about ways to start a garden, what plants to purchase, what to start from seed, pest control, and watering, and to answer whatever gardening-related questions shoppers had.

Pictured above are Corinne Ruty, Sue Boyer, Martha Hansen, Sunny Sargent, Mike Mead, Sande Sullivan, Laura Weller, and Tennille Melcher.

Pictured at right are Tennille Melcher and Lisa Forsythe.

There was a station for cleaning garden tools and plenty of information about UT Extension Services, soil samples, composting, companion planting, our plant sale (of course), and 4-H activities.



Photo by Rachel Fortuna



Photos by Sunny Sargent



A special thank you goes out to project leaders Sunny Sargent, Sande Sullivan, and Laura Weller for recommending and leading this new project, as well as, Tractor Supply Store Manager Naomi Imgrung and Assistant Store Manager Mike Mead for their support. And, a thanks to David Miller for his help with setup.



Our members and interns (guided by Arts and Crafts sub-committee leader, Joanne Fuller) were hard at work in April creating arts and crafts masterpieces for our Garden Festival and Plant sale.



## Did you know...?

Online entry for competitive events the Williamson County Fair goes live at 10:00 a.m. on June 15. Online entry for everything except Livestock and SYHO Vocal Competition runs June 15-July 24.



Competition categories include agriculture, creative arts, culinary arts, and cultural arts. (There are also livestock, youth department, pageants, and vocal completions). All entries must be pre-entered online. No entries will be accepted that have not been pre-entered.

Master Gardeners have been very successful with their entries in past years.

Will you enter this year?

There is horticulture, floriculture, adult floral arrangement, fairy gardens, canned goods, pies, breads, photography, needlework, quilts, and much more. New this year...stained glass.

For more information:

[2026 Williamson County Fair Competitive Events Information and Registration](#)

You can review the full catalog here and pick out some possible opportunities to shine!

[2026 Williamson County Fair Competition Catalog](#)



# There's Something Strange on the Pumpkin Leaf!

By Cheryl Carlson, WCMGA Member

My grandkids planted the seeds with me last year for the Marina di Chioggia pumpkin at my daughter's house. We like to use this pumpkin in our Smokey Gouda Pumpkin Soup. Everything had been going along fine, and we had two pumpkins developing nicely!

You can see we had basil planted with the pumpkin and there are nasturtiums on the other side too! Then August and hot humid weather rolled in.

I received an "emergency" call from my grandkids!

I got the call not just from concerned grandkids but from neighborhood kids, as well, who came to investigate. It was decided...Grandma needed to be informed!

"Grandma, there's something strange on the pumpkin leaves!", they cried. "It looks like black bumps."

Answer: Squash bug egg masses!

What are you going to do? Go bug bustin'!

Squash bug egg masses are clusters of egg deposited most frequently under the pumpkin or squash leaves or near the stems. They begin as a pale off-white color that darkens to brown or maroon.

When squash bug egg masses and/or squash bugs are seen, take action. Egg masses can be easily removed by wiping or using duct tape. Capture nymphs and adults found and drop in soapy water. Be sure to check the underside, as well as, the top of leaves. Kids love doing this!



They now know to either wipe off the egg mass and crush them or remove the leaf and crush and also destroy any squash beetles.

With these preventative measures, as with all vegetable plants, scouting needs to be done AND if done vigilantly can really keep squash infestation down. Kids and grand-kids can be part of scouting, which they really enjoy!

This was a great educational opportunity and the pumpkin plant was saved, as many neighborhood elementary school age kids eyes were keeping watch!

You'll also notice in the first picture that trellising is good in order to keep the pumpkin plants off the ground because the vines being on the ground could give moist shelter to the bugs.

For more information about squash bugs and other garden pests, check out these websites:

[You Can Control Garden Insects - UTHort.org](http://www.uthort.org)

[Squash bug - Agricultural Biology](#)

[Be on the lookout for squash bugs! | Illinois Ext | UIUC](#)

[Squash bugs | UMN Extension](#)



#### TASKS FOR MAY

- Keep on the regular control sprays for fruit crops (see June).
  - Harvest cool-season crops and scout for pests/disease (see below).
  - Seed succession plantings of beans and sweet corn. See [Sweet Corn for the Garden \(D 61\)](#).
  - Prepare for early season fertilization on small fruits-blueberries and blackberries are often fertilized about a month after bud break.
  - Prepare beds for transplants. Black plastic can warm the soil and speed early growth. Make sure that irrigation is provided if plastic mulch is used. Sometimes natural mulches, such as straw, are applied a few weeks after planting as they can reflect light and 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.  
See [Garden Plant Management \(W 346-D\)](#).

#### Getting Started with Scouting

Properly controlling pests and diseases in the garden and orchard relies upon preventative cultural and spraying practices. But, it also depends on close observation to be able to quickly address any issues that crop up.

- Do it frequently, at least once or twice a week.
- Inspect in a Z pattern if large, or every plant if you have a small garden.
- Make sure to check the interior of the plants and the underside of leaves, don't just glance over the plants.
- Look for signs of insects and patterns of disease.
- Know your friends from your enemies. Be able to ID beneficial insects.
- Take a hand lens, markers and bags for samples and a camera.
- Do your own research on [pests \(PB 595\)](#) and [diseases \(W 316\)](#) but don't be afraid to send in samples to your [local Extension office](#) or the [UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center](#).

#### Getting Started with Scouting

Our gardens and landscapes are complex ecosystems that contain plant-feeding pests and their natural enemies that manage those pest populations. It is important that we know how to identify these beneficials that are working for us in protecting our plants with two key types.

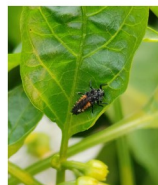
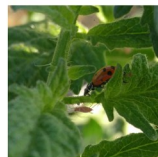
**Predators:** These beneficials can range from spiders and lacewings to assassin bugs and lady beetles that all eat pests. Be sure to understand the life stages of these predators as many adults may look drastically different than their immature stages. In fact, the immature stage, called larvae, (think teenagers) of these lady beetle predators are actually the most voracious feeders! On the upper right is an adult eating an aphid and in the middle is a larvae lady beetle.

**Parasitoids:** These beneficials include parasitic wasps and parasitic flies that control pests in another interesting way. They lay eggs inside the pest that incapacitate and eventually kill the pest through their feeding and using their host (the pest) as a source of support. One common example are the beneficial wasps that lay eggs inside hornworms. The parasitized caterpillar (shown on bottom right) ceases feeding and will later die as a result of the parasitoid feeding.

Tips to conserve and protect beneficials:

- Plant a variety of flowers or other crops that have a wide bloom period through the growing season
- Provide water and shelter (leaf litter, brush piles, etc.)
- Scout often and only apply pesticides when pest populations reach damage thresholds
- Use pesticides that are specific and lower risk to pollinators while strategically spraying during dusk or dawn

More information can be found at: [tiny.utk.edu/beneficials](http://tiny.utk.edu/beneficials)



The 2026 Tennessee Home Fruit and Vegetable Calendar also has some great information on scouting in the May section. Check it out here:

[Tennessee Home Fruit and Vegetable Garden - 2026](#)



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# Spider Plants: The Easiest Houseplant You'll Ever Grow (And Propagate!)

By Tennille Melcher, WCMGA Member

If you're new to the world of houseplants and wondering where to start, I've got just the plant for you: the trusty spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*). Whether you're looking to add a pop of greenery to your space or you're a little unsure of your green thumb, the spider plant is one of the most forgiving and easy-to-grow plants out there. Plus, it's a champion at reproducing, meaning you'll soon have a jungle of these beauty queens hanging out in your home.

Let me walk you through just how easy it is to grow and propagate spider plants, especially if you're living in Tennessee's Zone 7b (updated from 7a in 2023), where our seasonal changes can keep us on our toes.



Photos provided by Tennille Melcher

## Why Spider Plants are the Best for Beginners

First off, let's talk about why spider plants are perfect for those who are just starting out with houseplants. If you're prone to forgetting about your plants every now and then (no judgment here, we've all been there), the spider plant will forgive you. It's super low-maintenance and can thrive with minimal attention.

Spider plants love indirect sunlight, which is ideal for indoor spaces. A nice spot by a window, but not directly in the sun, is perfect. If your windows face north, no problem—these guys are perfectly happy with a little less sunshine. In fact, they'll be just fine in bright, indirect light and can even survive some shady spots. They're basically the "chill" houseplant of the bunch. So, no need to worry about overzealous sunbathing or sunburns here!

Watering? Not a hassle either. Spider plants are more tolerant of a little neglect in the watering department. Let the soil dry out a bit before watering, and avoid letting them sit in standing water. They hate soggy feet, so make sure their pot has good drainage. A general

rule of thumb: water when the top inch or two of soil feels dry. If you're not sure, err on the side of under-watering—they won't hold it against you.

If you're in Tennessee like me, you know that temperatures can vary widely between seasons. Thankfully, spider plants aren't picky about that either. They thrive indoors, even when the

weather outside is frightful. And while they can live happily outside in the warmer months, they're best kept inside during the chilly Tennessee winters (when temperatures dip below 50°F). Just make sure to bring them back indoors before the frost hits.

### **Propagating Spider Plants: The Fun Part**

So, let's talk about the fun part: propagation. If you're anything like me, you'll quickly fall in love with your spider plant and want more of them (it's just how it works). The good news is that spider plants are really easy to propagate, meaning you can quickly multiply your plant collection—without any fancy tools or complicated techniques.

How do they propagate? Simple! Spider plants grow little offshoots, often called "pups," that hang down like tiny, baby spider plants. These pups are basically clones of the mother plant, and all you have to do is snip them off and let them grow their own roots. It's so simple, you might feel like you're cheating.

#### **Here's how to do it:**

**Find a Pup:** Look for a baby plant that's grown on a long stem. This will be your "pup." These pups will often look like tiny little versions of the parent plant, and they typically form after the spider plant has been well taken care of.

**Snip It:** Using a clean pair of scissors or pruning shears, snip the pup from the stem. Don't worry if there's a little stem left attached to the pup—it'll be just fine.

**Root It:** You can root the pup in two ways: water or soil. If you choose to root it in water, just place the pup in a glass of water, making sure the base of the plant is submerged but not the leaves. Change the water every few days. Alternatively, you can plant it directly in a small pot with soil. Either method will work, but I personally like the water method because it's fun to watch the roots grow!



**Wait for the Roots:** In a few weeks, you should start to see some roots developing. Once they're about 1-2 inches long, the pup is ready for its permanent home—be it in a new pot or back with the parent plant.

And boom, you've got yourself a new spider plant! You can keep propagating as much as you like, giving your friends and family little green gifts or filling your own home with lush greenery.

## The Spider Plant Is Your New Best Friend

There you have it! Growing and propagating spider plants is a breeze. They're the perfect plant for beginners, with very few requirements and tons of rewards. Whether you're new to gardening or just want a plant that'll thrive even when life gets busy, the spider plant is an ideal choice. And don't forget about propagation—it's an easy way to create more plants and share the love.

If you're ready to grow a mini jungle in your home, grab a spider plant (or two), and let the fun begin. Your green thumb may be just beginning, but with a spider plant, you're already winning. And remember, there's no such thing as too many spider plants—trust me, they'll make your house feel like a calming oasis.

Happy planting, friend!



There is an old horticultural story about the person who wrote to a horticultural expert asking how much fertilizer to put on a certain plant. The answer was, "Ask the plant." In other words, rules and advice must be adapted to your plant growing under the conditions of its particular spot. Not only is your garden different from mine, even though I may live next door, but the place by your front door is different from the place by your back door...

There is a tremendous amount to be learned from books, and no gardener can do without them, but your plants, too, will teach you. I have always thought that to be a good gardener, first of all you must have a green heart, and next you must have a green mind. These combined with a little muscle are needed to produce a green thumb and a beautiful garden.

~Gertrude S. Wister, *Hardy Garden Bulbs*, 1964

[Garden Quotes | The Quote Garden](#)



# THE BARK: Monthly To-do List

## MAY

- Harvest cool-season crops and watch for pests/disease (see June).
- Direct seed cucumbers.
- 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.



Photos by Holly Gardner

- 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.
- 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.
- Bring your houseplants outdoors to help rejuvenate them. Check them for any diseases or insects.
- Remove any dead flowers from your plants to encourage new growth.
- Plant bulbs for a summer of color, including early- to late-blooming varieties of daylilies.
- Fertilize your annual and perennial flower beds.
- Water early in the morning and deeply, avoiding leaves.
- Make sure that crops and beds have plenty of mulch during dry spells.

# 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.
- Plant heat-loving herbs, including basil, rosemary, and Mexican tarragon.
- Harvest your vegetables as soon as they are ripe for freshest taste, to prolong production, and to avoid pest issues. Beans, peas, squash, cucumbers, and okra are often ready.
- Plant annuals that can take the full sun during hot summer months, including celosia, portulaca, vinca, and some coleus.
- Some of the latest warm-season crops to be planted are often watermelons and pumpkins, as well as sweet potatoes.
- Add bright color to the landscape with perennials, including zinnia, coneflowers, daylilies, salvia, and blue sage.



Photos by Holly Gardner



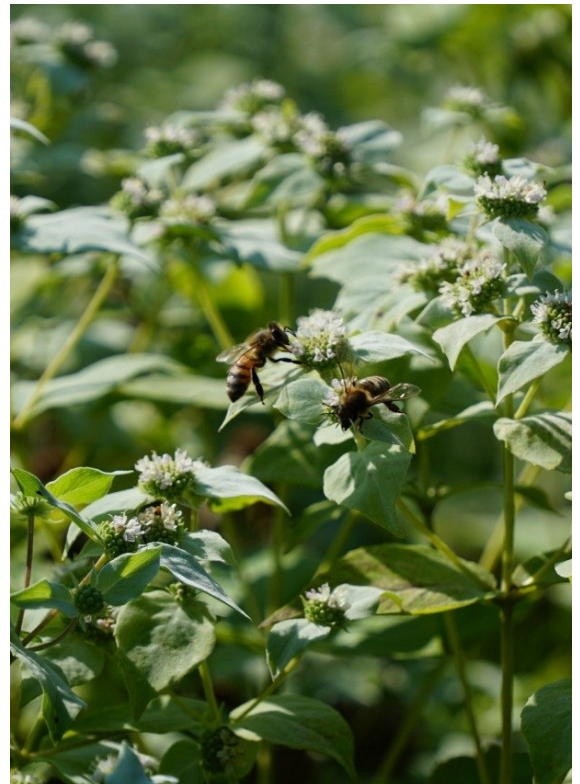
- You can still be succession planting corn and beans.
- Harvest Irish potatoes when two-thirds of the tops have died down. Store in a cool, dark place.
- Make sure your irrigation system is functioning well and manage weeds.
- Scout for any issues with pests or disease at least weekly.
- If conditions support disease infection, or if you see signs of disease, a protective spray program may be needed.
- Pinch your annual and perennial herbs to promote bushier growth.
- Do not remove the foliage of spring bulbs until it has yellowed and dried.
- Stake any tall plants to help prevent any damage. If you have areas where grass simply doesn't grow well, consider a ground cover.

# 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 over head watering.
- Manage fertility through proper side dressing and in-season fertilizer applications
- Continue to manage weeds.

- Check irrigation. The hot July temperatures in Tennessee make it necessary to keep up moisture levels in containers and borders. Do not neglect your container plants; they need more water than those plants in the ground.
- Water early in the morning and deeply to avoid drought stress.
- 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.
- 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.
- Prune your shrubs and trees if necessary. Do not heavily prune your spring-flowering shrubs.
- Remove any dead or diseased plants from your garden immediately. You can replace them with new plants.

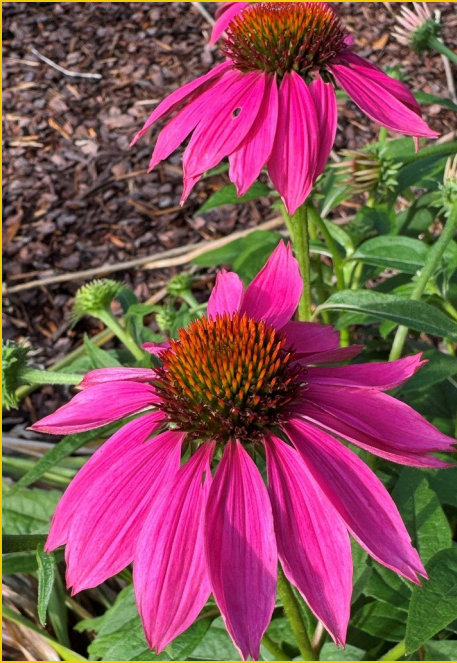


Photos by Holly Gardner



Another good resource is the [2026 Tennessee Home Vegetable and Fruit Garden Calendar](#)

## Member Gardens



What a multitude of gorgeous blooms from Michelle Keith's garden last year!

## Member Gardens (continued)

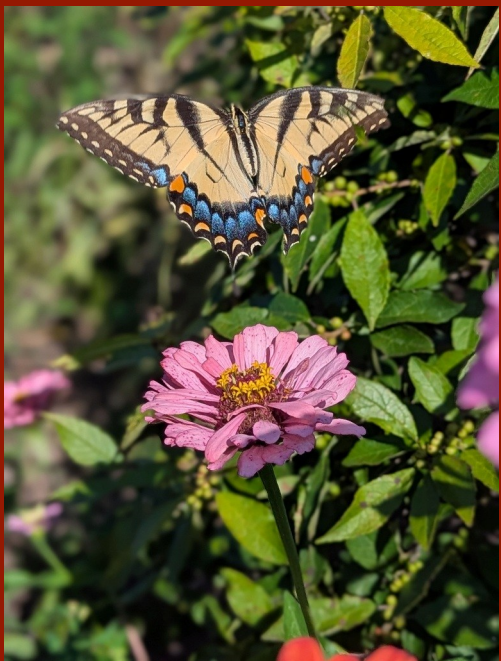


From Francie Owens: Shaggy Mane mushrooms (above left) – They look fresh and beautiful the first day, then they turn black and drippy and are gone after that. So fun to see.

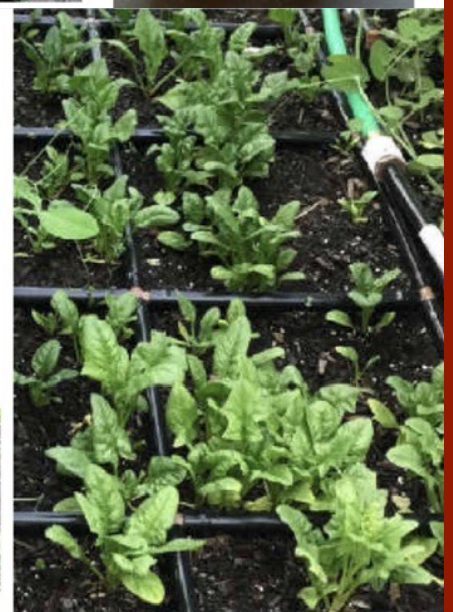
A crowd of bees on a poppy (above right).



Some of last year's fall garden harvest pictures from Cheryl Carlson



Lovely butterfly and zinnia from the garden of Carol Murphy



## Member Gardens (continued)

Columbines from Judith Berthaud's garden.



Sunshine yellow  
and perfectly pink  
peonies from Mary  
Holt's garden



We love the variety of photos from our Master Gardeners! We appreciate everyone who sends them in and shares their stories! Keep them coming!!

If you would like to have your photos shared or your garden featured, please contact us at [ThePerennialWCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:ThePerennialWCMGA@gmail.com). If you submitted some photos, but have not seen them yet, please stay tuned as they will appear in upcoming issues.

# Continued Growth

## UT INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE HANDS-ON CLASSES

Learn a new skill, try a new method, or develop a new passion.

The Williamson County Extension's hands-on classes provide opportunities to experience agriculture, horticulture, and much more.

**Agriculture   Mechanics   Craft Products   Horticulture**  
**Preservation   Outdoors**

### [Hands-On Classes Williamson County](#)



### **Landscape Irrigation - June 2, 2026**

**Description** - Learn the ins and outs of your irrigation system. We will discuss setting up zones, the different types of irrigation systems, and much more. Get ready to gain practical skills in a fun and welcoming environment!

### [Landscape Irrigation | Williamson County](#)

### **Canning - June 16, 2026**

**Description** - Learn the equipment needed, where to find reliable recipes, when and how to use water bath and pressure canners, the latest tested technology, time-saving techniques, etc.

### [Canning | Williamson County](#)

### **Blueberry and Elderberry Workshop - June 25, 2026**

**Description** - Join us on the farm for a workshop all about growing blueberries and elderberries in Middle Tennessee. Learn the dos and don'ts of production from local experts!

### [Blueberry & Elderberry Workshop | Williamson County](#)

### **Seed Saving - July 16, 2026**

**Description** - Come learn how to save seeds from your garden plants year after year. Knowing how to save seeds can give you peace of mind and a tradition to pass down for years to come.

### [Seed Saving | Williamson County](#)

Preregistration and payment is required for all classes. Classes may be purchased as a series or individually. Some classes may be free. See links above for more information. For questions, please contact **Taylor Reeder** at [treeder2@utk.edu](mailto:treeder2@utk.edu).

**Also, check out the UT Extension publication, Welcome Home: Gardening in Tennessee!**

### [PB1919 Welcome Home: Gardening in Tennessee](#)



# Friends of WCMGA - Upcoming Events

## 2026 Tennessee Master Gardener Conference

May 27-29, 2026 | Knoxville

[2026 Tennessee Master Gardener Conference | Master Gardener Program](#)

[2026-TEMG-state-conference-Final-full-session-outline](#)

University of Tennessee  
Institute of Agriculture  
2026 Friday Office



**Hours for Horticulture** This virtual series features monthly LIVE interactive visits and conversations with our Extension horticulture team to address your garden and landscape challenges in real time.

June 12, 2026

July 10, 2026

August 14, 2026

September 11, 2026

10:00 am EST/9:00 am CST

Sign up here: [2026 UT Extension Horticulture May Food Production Series AND Friday Office Hours Sign-Up](#)

University of Tennessee  
Institute of Agriculture  
Fruits of the Backyard Field Day  
June 9, 2026



Anyone, from home growers to commercial producers, is welcome to attend the free event, which will take place at the Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center located at 1000 Main Entrance Drive in Spring Hill.

[Fruits of the Backyard - Calendar](#)

[2026 Field Day Schedule](#)

[Fruits of the Backyard Field Day Scheduled for June 9 | Institute News](#)



## Tranquility Open Garden

Saturday, June 13

2:00 pm - 6:00 pm

801 Hillsboro Road – Franklin, TN

(Rain Date – Sunday, June 14)

This is a must-see garden! Cornelia Holland is well known for her extraordinary contribution to the UT Gardens in Knoxville, where more than 500 Hosta varieties from her personal collection were divided, dug, and transplanted to establish the Cornelia B. Holland Tranquility Hosta Garden. Her generosity helped create one of the Southeast's premier public shade gardens, now recognized by the American Hosta Society as a reference garden. Visitors to her home garden will see the same thoughtful plant selection and peaceful design that inspired her generous gift.

# THE DIRT

## May

- \* **May 2 - 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. - WCMGA Garden Festival and Plant Sale** - Grounds of the Williamson County Ag Expo Park - [WCMGA Garden Festival and Plant Sale](#)
- \* **May 11 - 1-3 p.m. - Library Garden Talk Series** - Williamson County Library - “Color Your Seasons Beautiful” - Register [HERE](#)
- \* **May 11 - WCMGA meeting - 6 p.m. - NOTE: Change of location - Williamson County Library** - Speaker: Rita Venable, Author of **Butterflies of TN** - “Three Really Good Reasons to Plant Trees for Butterflies (native trees)”
- \* **May 21 - 10 a.m.-12 p.m. - Library Garden Talk Series** - Brentwood Library - “Sow A Bounty of Butterflies” - Presented by Francie Owens - Register [HERE](#)

## June

- \* **June 1-5 - Junior Gardener Camp**
- \* **June 1-5 and 8-12 - Young Scholars Institute**
- \* **June 8 - 1-3 p.m. Library Garden Talk Series:** “Understanding the Fundamentals of Scouting Your Landscape ” Williamson County Public Library - Register [HERE](#)
- \* **June 8 - WCMGA meeting - 6 p.m.** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park - Speaker: TBD
- \* **June 11 - 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. - Library Garden Talk Series** - Brentwood Library - “Trees of Tennessee Arboretum Walk” - Presented by Williamson County Extension Agent, Taylor Reeder. - Register [HERE](#)

## July

- \* **July 13 - 1-3 p.m. Library Garden Talk Series:** “Nature’s Architecture: Plants That Provide Beauty and Wildlife Support All Year” Williamson County Public Library - Register [HERE](#)
- \* **July 13 - WCMGA meeting - 6 p.m.** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park - Speaker: Joy Boven, Owner of Wonder Gift and Garden - “Native Plants”

## August

- \* **August 3 - 1-3 p.m. Library Garden Talk Series:** “Grow a Bird-Friendly Backyard with Native Plants” Williamson County Public Library - Register [HERE](#)
- \* **August 7-15 - Williamson County Fair** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park
- \* **August 10 - WCMGA meeting - NO Meeting** (Visit us at the WCMGA booth at the Williamson County Fair!)



## Newsletter and Website Articles Wanted

Special thanks to Kristy Bergstrom, Cheryl Carlson, Sunny Sargent, Holly Gardner, Mary Holt, Francie Owens, Carol Murphy, Tennille Melcher, Judith Berthaud, Rachel Fortuna, Lisa Forsythe, and Michelle Keith for their contributions to this issue.

Great job on sending articles, news stories, and photos! Keep up the good work!  
We cannot do this without you!  
If you have photos or stories to share, you can get volunteer hours!

[ThePerennialWCMGA@gmail.com](mailto:ThePerennialWCMGA@gmail.com)

Keep contributing!

Keep reading!

Keep sharing!

**WCMGA by the Numbers**  
Total Volunteer hours reported so far  
for 2026 = 10,970

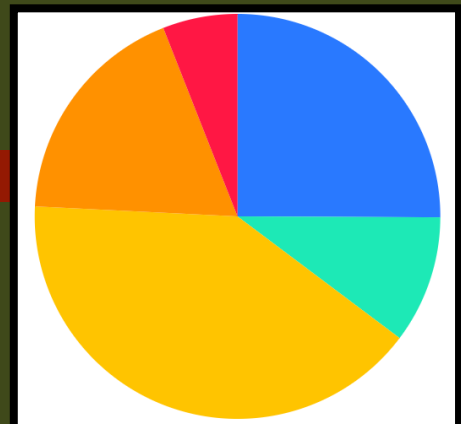
Based on values determined by  
Independent Sector Website:  
Hours Value: \$367,382.96

- Community Food Production and Education
- Administrative and Organizational Support
- Community Outreach Events
- Youth Horticulture
- Sustainable Landscape Management

### 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 University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) and the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office.



## Contact Us

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