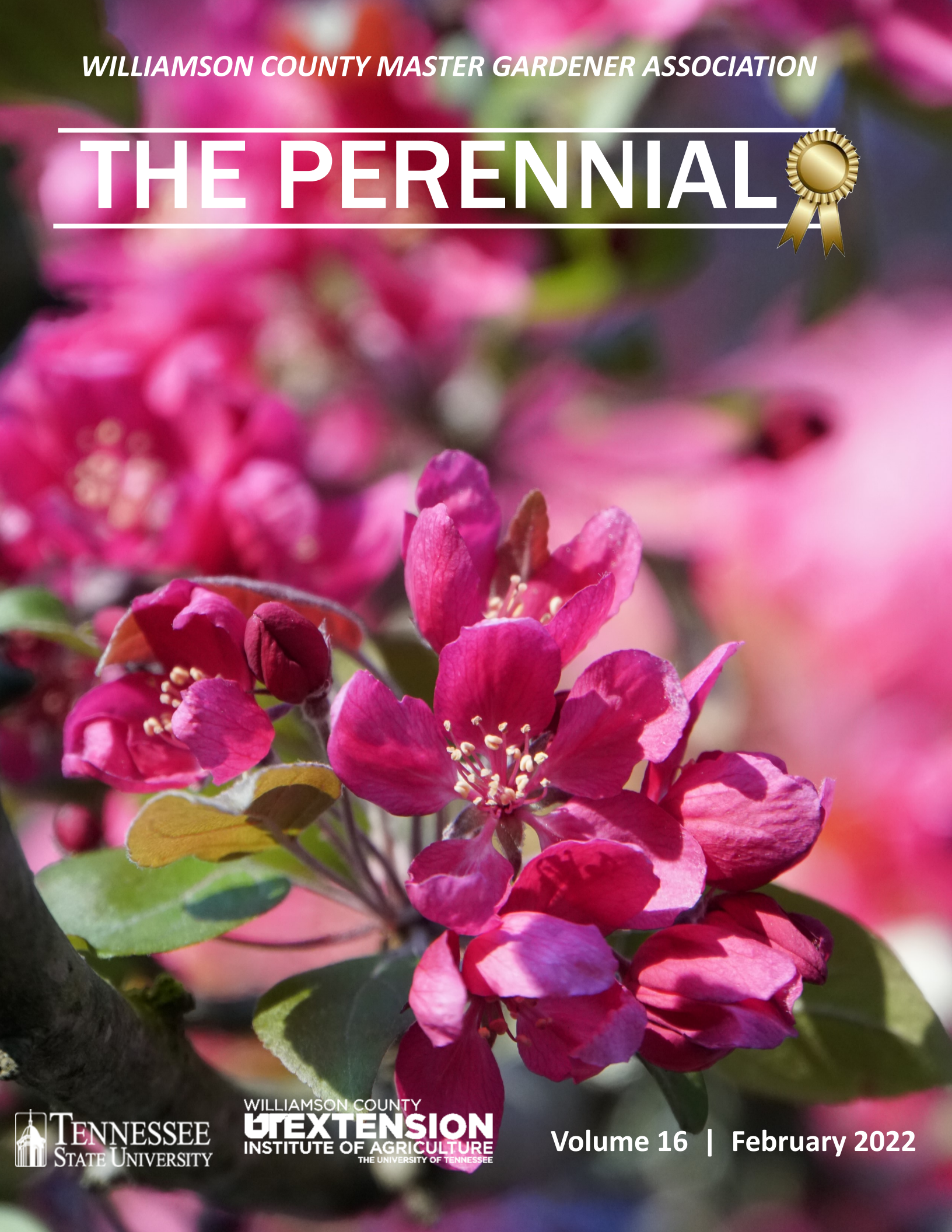


WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

THE PERENNIAL



WILLIAMSON COUNTY
EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

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Cover photo by Holly Gardner

OUR ROOTS

A Message from our President

Hope

I can't believe it's 2022 already, can you? I find it difficult to mark the passing of time in this "new normal" with many of our habits and traditions being on hold. So I find gardening such an important part of organizing my life, and giving me hope. Nature has a natural rhythm, and we are blessed to be a small part of it. Even as many of us hunker down in our homes due to cold, COVID, and a myriad of other things, we know that spring is coming, and seeds will need starting. I've always loved the almost forced hope that gardening brings; the way planting a seed makes your mind look to the future and anticipate that flower, that vegetable. I think us gardeners have a great honor and responsibility to share that hope with others; to show the simple truth that growing things is incredibly good for you.

I don't think life will ever be like it was before COVID, and we should rightly grieve that. We should also look around at what's important and figure out how to keep that not just growing, but flourishing. Our organization, our passion for nature, has not been dimmed. We just need to be creative in how we maintain that passion, and spread it around. I want to continue to embrace technology where appropriate, whether that's continuing a Zoom option for people that can't make a meeting in person, or having talks about using technology in gardening. I also want to get together again, in person, because gardening alone is not nearly as much fun. Our members need to be with the public, encouraging people to garden, offering advice and sharing the importance of the projects we work on.

So as one of my gardening heroes, Monty Don says, here's some jobs for you for the weekend: organize (and buy) your seeds, clean your equipment (sanitize!), and most importantly, dream. Dream about what your garden will be, about being out in the warm sun and getting your hands dirty. Because we will be there again, I promise.

I want to say a special thank you to the previous and current board for guiding me as I learn this new position, and for the amazing amount of work they do. Here's to hope!

WCMGA President

Matt Bergstrom

Buds, Blooms, and Bradford Pears

By Taylor Reeder, UT/TSU Extension, Williamson County

Spring is literally slapping us in the face (and by literally, I mean you probably have been whacked by a limb or two while doing your seasonal pruning). Not only is it time for pruning, but blooms will soon be leaping out of limbs all across Middle TN. Some of the most stunning displays are right in our front yards. These beautiful trees may seem delightfully docile; however, one species holds a dark secret...

We celebrated National Invasive Species Awareness Week February 28 – March 4 this year. During the week, we highlight several invasive plant and animal species that are common in our area. One of the top emerging pests is none other than the snowy, white-blooming Bradford pear. Yes, you read that right, Bradford pears are **INVASIVE!** How, you might ask, can these pretty trees with a profusion of blooms be so bad? Well, let me tell you.



Bradford pears have been a favorite tree for homeowners and landscapers for years. They line driveways and fences. You even see them in parking lots on commercial properties. They have showy white flowers in early spring and bright reddish foliage in the fall. They grow quickly

and provide excellent shade throughout our sweltering summers. All of these factors make this tree a popular choice for most southern landscapes. However, the negative qualities of a Bradford pear far outweigh the positive.

First, I don't know about you, but my opinion is that they stink! Have you ever walked by a row of Bradford pears in bloom? You may have thought you stumbled across an overflowing dumpster or that someone cleaned a fish nearby and left the carnage to bake in the sun. I'm probably exaggerating here, but Bradford pears do not have a pleasant odor.



From a structural standpoint, Bradford pears aren't very stable. Their growth habit is such that their main branches come out from the trunk at very narrow angles. This trait, combined with weak wood, results in splitting during heavy winds or snow and ice events. This makes the Bradford pear a risk for any person, animal, or object that is within striking distance of its branches.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of Bradford pears is the tendency they have to invade our cultivated and natural

landscapes. To understand this, you might want a little history on these trees. Bradford pears were originally cultivated to develop fire blight-resistant fruiting pear trees. The fruit from Bradford pears can often be sterile; however, they can sometimes cross-pollinate with other pears which ends up producing non-sterile fruit. Birds and animals will take this fruit and spread it near and far. I'm sure you've driven down the highway and seen white blooms waving at you from a stand of trees as you pass by.

Bradford pears have another issue. The top of the Bradford pear (scion) is grafted onto root stock of a pear from China that produces fertile fruit. This isn't a problem until a Bradford pear is damaged back to the root stock. Which, as we discussed earlier,

happens in Bradford pears quite often. Once the scion is damaged all the growth will come from the root stock. This growth will be vigorous and fertile and hard to control if not handled early on.

I hope this gives you some perspective on an unseemly beauty in our midst. Maybe, you are considering taking a chainsaw to your Bradford pear this spring... You won't see me shedding any tears. And when you look to replace your tree, consider some of our native blooming trees instead!

Taylor Reeder

Williamson County Extension Horticulture Agent

Want more information about Bradford pear trees?

[Bradford Pear | Home & Garden Information Center \(clemson.edu\)](#)

Check here for resources about native trees:

[Native Trees for Tennessee - UT Hort](#)

[Small Flowering Trees for Tennessee](#)

[Landscapes - UT Hort](#)

["PB1670 Dogwoods for American](#)

[Gardens" by The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service](#)

[Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants - UT Hort](#)

[Landscaping with Fruit and Nut Crops - UT Hort](#)



February 2022 Garden Chores

By Jenifferlee Dager, Williamson County Master Gardener

Welcome to the New Year! February is an interesting month that brings the end to last season's garden chores and the start of a whole new list of items. Here in middle Tennessee your garden plants are beginning to wake up from their slumber, so it's time to make sure you use the few sunny days we have to take care of final tuck-ins and seed preparations for cold weather crops and early summer plants. Let's take a look at the items that might still be left over from last season.

This is the last call to fertilize, prune, and even transplant deciduous trees and shrubs. Once the buds start to swell, your trees have started to wake up from the summer.

Fertilize: There is still time to spread a compost rich mulch around the base of trees and shrubs to nourish them for the coming season. Other options at this time of year may include pellet or granular fertilizers. Make sure to water well after spreading or deep feed by punch dropping fertilizer at the drip line. However, while most of our plants are dormant or in a slower state of growth, using granular or pellet fertilizers may not be as effective and may be somewhat of a waste, as the plants will only take up so much and the rest won't be utilized or may runoff/leach if we have any heavy rains.

Prune: This may be the last call for pruning, until after the spring bloom. Remember the goal of pruning is to not only shape your plant but to also open it up for reliable air

flow as well as healthy sun exposure. The best way to do this is by trimming all the dead and damaged branches then moving onto smaller branches. Remember, bushes



that flower in spring produced buds in the fall, so while pruning them won't hurt it will reduce the number of flowers. If you are desiring a big spring bloom, these bushes can be pruned once the last buds flower.

Transplant: The rule of thumb here is "before the buds swell." The smaller the species the easier the transplant process will be, however, if you are willing to put in the effort larger varieties may also be transplanted as long as it is "before the buds swell."

Once you have checked these items off your list it is time to start your 2022 list. Start simple, looking for damage from harsh winter months, followed by the a few simple steps of preparation.



Frost Heaves: These occur when the crown of a plant is actually pushed out of the ground due to the freezing of underground water, while not as common in middle TN as in the northern part of the country. If you notice Frost Heaves it is best to apply mulch to the exposed portion of the crown. Don't try and push the crown back into the ground as it may damage the root system.

Thirst: Check plants that have over-wintered to see if they are shriveled, this is a sure sign of thirst and requires a light watering. Bulbs that have been cold stored should continue to be kept cold and dry unless they are beginning to shrivel in the heat, cold moist peat moss can help quench their thirst until it is time to plant them outside.

Start your Seeds: This is the time to start your cool weather seeds so they will be ready to plant when the first signs of spring show and the threat of the last freeze has passed.

Remember a New Year brings with it New Life in your garden and your small efforts will help produce a beautiful change of season. Happy Gardening!

Did you know...?

Did you know any current member of the WCMGA may attend any of the Master Gardener classes?



This year the classes are being held Wednesday mornings 9am - 12pm at the Williamson County Ag Expo Park.

Class Schedule:

2/16/22 - Environmental Stewardship

2/23/22 - Botany

3/2/22 - Soils and Cover Crops

3/9/22 - Landscape Design and Herbaceous Plants

3/16/22 - Woody Ornamentals



3/23/22 - Backyard Fruit

3/30/22 - Insect Pests and IPM

4/6/22 - Plant Disease

4/13/22 - Turf and Weed Management

4/20/22 - Pollinators/Wildlife

4/27/22 - Vegetable Gardening

THE BARK

February

- **Plant now:** Sow seeds of radishes and cold-hardy lettuces. When daffodils appear, plant spinach, turnips, and peas. Cover the pea bed with clear plastic until sprouts begin to emerge; then, immediately switch to a floating row cover to protect the seedlings from weather and birds.

Indoors under lights: start seeds of herbs and annual flowers—such as ageratum, petunia, and snapdragons—that need 8 to 10 weeks to reach transplant size.

- **Buy now:** Watch for garden sales. Order seeds from catalogs.



March

- **Plant now:** In mid-March, sow hardy vegetables, such as carrots, beets, kohlrabi, radishes, leaf lettuces, and turnips.
- Transplant onions, shallots, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, white potatoes and asparagus crowns to the garden.
- Set out herbs, such as rosemary, chives, and thyme—but not tender basil!

April

- Pass by broccoli and cabbage on sale at garden centers—hot weather will soon arrive, causing plants to go to seed instead of forming edible heads.
- Thin crowded carrots, chard, and lettuce.
- Remove floating row covers from peas early in the month. Provide trellis support.
- Mulch around the base of cool-season crops to keep their roots cool and moist.

- **Buy now:** Select new azalea and rhododendron bushes while they're in bloom to make sure that the color complements your landscape.



Member Gardens

Here, we share various photos from our WCMGA members' gardens. With this issue, we get to see beautiful photos from Mary Lotus' garden taken by Mary.

If you would like to have your photos shared or your garden featured, please contact us at wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com.



Early daffodils



Tulips



Paperwhites

Gentle Spring's around the corner,
Waiting just to show her face
And to bring us flowers and sunshine;
Winter's almost run his race!
Be not, then, my friends, discouraged
That there's cold and ice and sleet;
For Springtime soon will be with us,
And the flowers we will greet:
Daffodils, so bright and yellow,
Hyacinths of varied hues,
As they nod their heads, in gladness,
Telling us they bring good news...

~Gertrude Tooley Buckingham, "Springtime," 1940s
Springtime Quotes (quotegarden.com)

THE DIRT



Newsletter and Website Articles Wanted

Special thanks to Taylor Reeder, Jenifferlee Dager, and Mary Loftus for their contributions to this issue. If you have photos or stories to share, you can get volunteer hours!

Keep contributing! Keep reading!
Keep sharing!

Upcoming Events

February 14 - 6:00pm - WCMGA meeting - Bluebirds

March 7 - 1:00pm - 2022 Garden Talk Series at Williamson County Library - Rainwater Collection Systems (Virtual)

March 14 - 6:00pm - WCMGA meeting - speaker TBD

March 22 - Academy Park Community Garden - Planting Direct Seeds vs Transplants - wcparksandrec.com

April 11 - 6:00pm - WCMGA meeting - Projects

April 23 - WCMGA Garden Festival and Plant Sale

April 25 - 1:00pm - 2022 Garden Talk Series at Williamson County Library - Gardening 101

WCMGA by the Numbers

Volunteer hours reported for 2022 so far: **89.25**

Based on values determined by Independent Sector Website:

Hours Value: **\$1,978**

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.

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