

WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

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# THE PERENNIAL

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Cover photo by Holly Gardner

# Warriors in the Garden

By Anita Tilley, WCMGA Member, UT Williamson County  
Diagnostics Team



While it sometimes seems like insect pests are everywhere in your garden, actually only about 1% of all insects in our area are considered pests, including aphids, scale, squash bugs, and mosquitos. The other 99% are considered either beneficial or neutral. Of that 99%, 10% are predators of other insects. These are the warriors of the garden.



A good example is the ladybug, a member of the beetle family Coccinellidae, which includes over 6,000 species of small, dome-shaped insects. The most familiar to us is the little red bug with black dots, often *Coccinella septempunctata*, the seven-spotted lady beetle. The family name Coccinellidae comes from the Latin word *coccineus*, meaning scarlet, a nod to their often bright red coloring. Not only do ladybugs target aphids as a food source, they also choose areas with abundant aphid populations to lay their eggs, ensuring their larvae have plenty to eat.



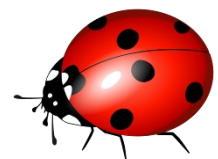
In about 3-5 days, the eggs hatch into the fierce looking larvae. The larvae are often compared to tiny alligators. The new little army of larvae immediately begin to eat more than their own weight in aphids each day for 2 to 3 weeks.

*Hyperaspis Ladybeetle*



*Hyperaspis larvae eating scale*

Another type of lady beetle, the *Hyperaspis* ladybug, targets scale insects on ornamental plants like holly, dogwood, camellia, and crepe myrtle. These ladybugs are shiny black with red spots. Their larvae hatch looking like little scaly helmets but quickly develop a fluffy coat making them resemble little tufts of cotton. At this point, they look very much like the mealy bugs they hunt. But on close examination, they move much more quickly as they go about searching for mealy bugs and scales to eat. A family of the



Hyperapis will take care of scale on a crepe myrtle or magnolia, not only the first year, but for years to come as they will overwinter.

If you are interested in inviting warrior bugs into your garden, you must first restrict the use of chemical insecticides. Remember that predators follow the prey. If you are patient, they will come, often sooner than you might think.

For more information about beneficial predators and other beneficial insects:

[Beneficial Predators--UC IPM](#)

[Natural Enemies: Predators and Parasitoids | Home & Garden Info](#)

[Pollinator Conservation Biocontrol: Beneficial Insects | IPM and Pollinator Conservation](#)

[Beneficial Bugs | Insects | Illinois Extension | UIUC](#)

[Attracting Beneficial Insects](#)

[Beneficial Insects](#)

[Beneficial Insects | CALS](#)



Our Williamson County Diagnostics Team offers phone and onsite support for Williamson County homeowners and gardeners. We have thousands of archived, research-based reference documents and books, plus access to the amazing repository of UT Extension publications.

Click [here](#) for more information on how to get your insect and/or disease question answered.

You may also contact us here:

Email: [wilcodxteam@gmail.com](mailto:wilcodxteam@gmail.com)

Phone: 615-790-5721

Or, visit the Extension Office (Williamson County Ag Expo Park, 4215 Long Lane, Suite 200, Franklin, TN 37064)

WCMGA members who are interested in helping people with their horticulture questions, come join our team!! You may contact us in any of the ways listed above.

“My little bit of earth in the front garden is one of the places that I find my bearings.

The rhythm of my day begins with a cup of coffee and a little bit of weeding or dreaming.”

Betsy Cañas Garmon  
[The Quote Garden](#)



# The Corpse Flower: One of the Most Spectacular Flowering Plants in the World

By Elvira Eivazova, WCMGA Member

The world's two most famous and largest flowers are corpse flowers *Amorphophallus titanum* (Titan Arum) and *Rafflesia arnoldii*, both native to Southeast Asian rainforests. They are known not only for their enormous size, but also for their foul, rotting-flesh scent which attracts pollinators like flies and carrion beetles.

Corpse flowers such as Titan Arum have a single large, unbranched flowering structure, while the *Rafflesia* is a parasitic plant that lacks leaves and roots, sucking out nutrients from a host plant. Due to its parasitic nature, *Rafflesia* cultivation represents a significant challenge.

*Amorphophallus titanum* was discovered in 1878, but remained rare at the time due to the difficulty of its cultivation. One of its remarkable features is that it blooms very infrequently and unpredictably. The blooming event may happen once every three years or once every 10 years, and lasts between 24 to 48 hours. Such rare events attract crowds of visitors eager to view such an unusual plant, as well as to experience the flower's unique, powerful odor, which resembles rotting flesh.

The Titan Arum is considered to have the world's largest unbranched inflorescence, a cluster of flowers arranged on a stem that is either branched or unbranched. The outer portion of this inflorescence is a purple, vase-like sheath called the spathe, Figure 1. This surrounds the spadix, a red column-like structure that holds hundreds of tiny flowers hidden beneath the protective covering of the spathe.

Titan Arum plants are displayed in botanical gardens across the world, as well as in the United States. For instance, it bloomed just recently at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden in New York City



Figure 1. *Amorphophallus titanum*.  
Credit: U.S. Botanic Garden, Washington, DC

(2025), The Huntington in California (2025), and in the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, DC (2017, 2021 and 2024).

In Middle Tennessee, two Titan Arum plants, Athena and Zeus, are taken care of by Austin Peay State University's Biology Department. Athena bloomed during the summer of 2025 at APSU's green house, and Zeus bloomed in 2022 and then in 2024 while on display at the Nashville Zoo, Figure 2 and Figure 3. The zoo itself has six Titan Arums of its own, including one of Zeus's siblings, Carmen, which bloomed in 2020 (Colby Wilson, APSU, 2024).

The corpse flower does not have an annual blooming cycle. The bloom emerges from a huge underground stem called a "corm," Figure 4. The plant blooms only when sufficient energy is accumulated. It requires very special conditions, including warm night and day temperatures and a high humidity, making botanical gardens well suited to support this strange plant outside of its natural range.

On the Titan Arum, female flowers are found at the base and male (pollen producing) flowers are found higher up, (Kang L. et al, Scientific Reports, 2023), Figure 5. The flowering period of two days is divided into a female flowering phase in the first night and a male flowering phase in the second night. The intensity of the odor picks up during the first night, followed by pollen release during the second night.



Figure 2. Zeus before flowering, Nashville Zoo, 2024

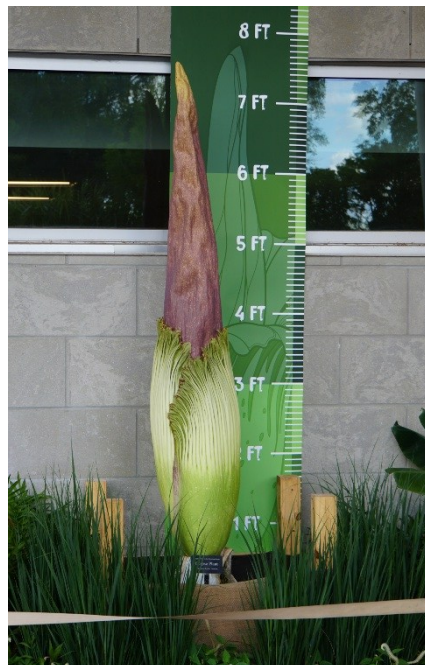


Figure 3. Zeus while on display, Nashville Zoo, June 2024  
Photo by Holly Gardner



Figure 4. A "corm", from which the flower develops.

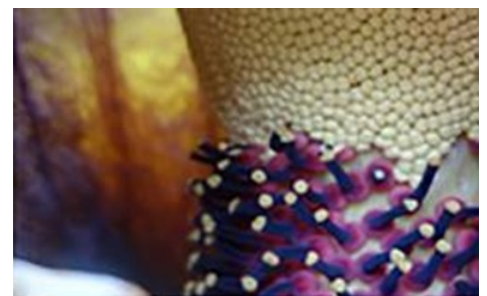


Figure 5. Male (yellow) and female (purple) flowers.

Unfortunately, the corpse flower is currently listed as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is estimated that fewer than 1,000 individuals remain in the wild. The main reasons for the decline are logging and the conversion of the plant's native forest habitat to oil palm plantations. Botanical gardens across the world are working together to preserve the genetic diversity of these plants by sharing pollen, seeds and plant materials.

The life cycle of the Titan Arum is complicated and is pictured below, Figure 6.

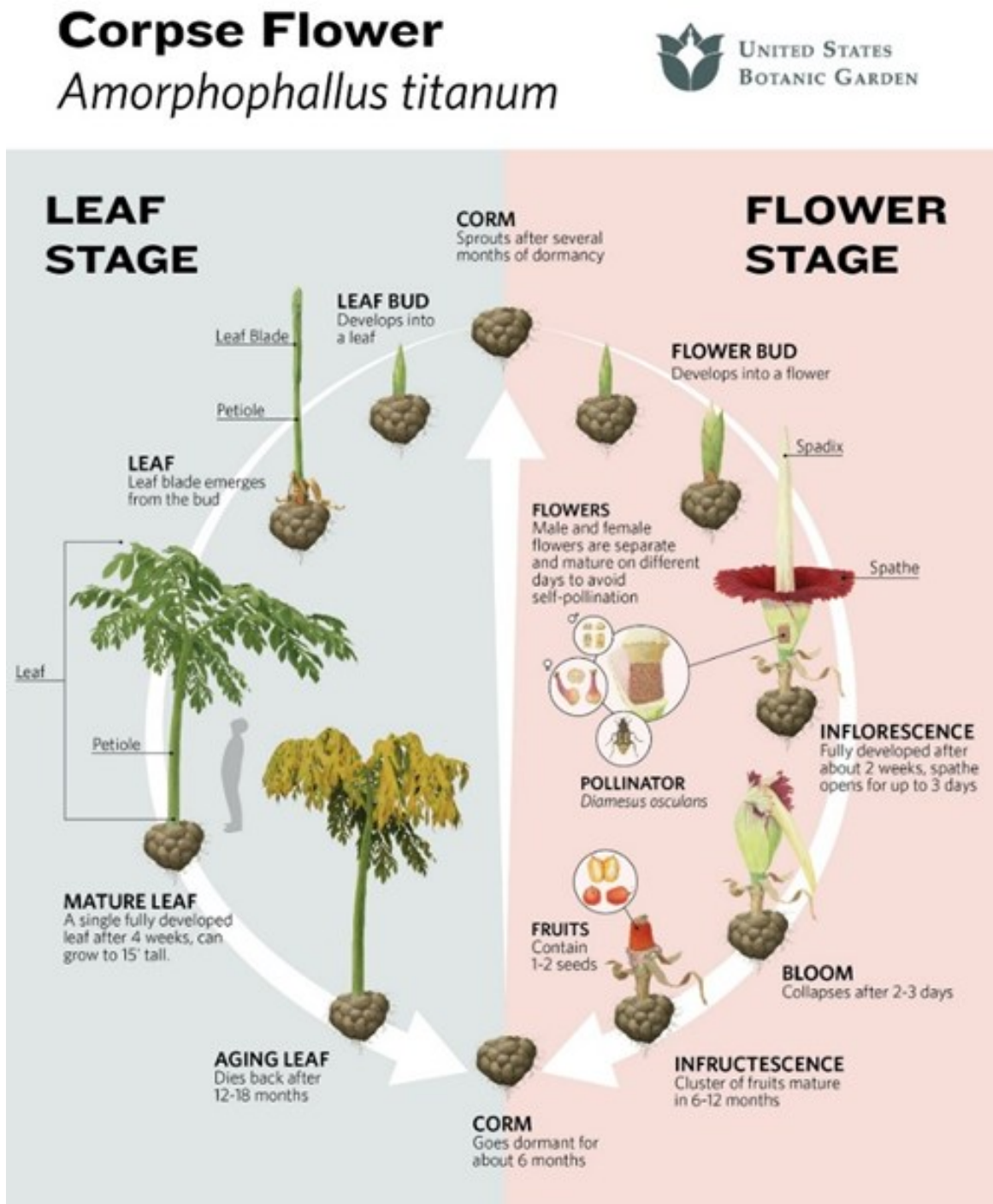


Figure 6. Life cycle of the Titan Arum. Credit: United States Botanic Garden.



# THE VINE: News



Playing off the Williamson County Fair’s 2025 theme, “Summer Nights and Fair Delights,” the WCMGA booth celebrated the often-overlooked world of nighttime pollinators. Visitors were greeted with glowing decorations and educational displays highlighting nocturnal creatures such as moths and bats that quietly sustain our gardens after sunset.

Our member and class intern volunteers were there each night to answer questions from the public about gardening and the Master Gardener program.



Photos by Holly Gardner



Photo by Rechel Fortuna

We appreciate our volunteers and their willingness to share their love of gardening and the program with others.

In addition to welcoming visitors to our booth, WCMGA members once again played a vital role in the fair’s operations. The team, led by Ryan Palmer, assisted with check-in for the vegetables competition. Volunteers carefully processed and tagged each entry, ensuring that every tomato, pepper, and squash was properly recorded.



They also supported the judging process and ribbon assignments, helping maintain the fairness and efficiency that make the competition a highlight of the fair.

See page XX for more fair coverage including competition winners.



In September, we gathered for our annual picnic at a new venue, the Old Mill Barn at Wagner Berry Farm.

It was a beautiful day and the spacious setting allowed us to welcome not only members, but also their significant others and interns,



Photos by Holly Gardner

making the event feel like a true celebration.

The rustic charm of the barn, paired with the farm's scenic backdrop, created the perfect atmosphere for fellowship.

Tables were filled with award-winning barbecue pork and chicken and homemade potluck dishes.

A delicious cake was provided by Martha Wagner. Music was performed by Grammy-nominated Nashville singer/songwriter, Tom Wurth, who is known for his soulful blend of country, folk, and gospel influences. Several door prizes such as garden tools and gift cards were given away to attendees.

The presence of family members reminded us that the Master Gardener program is sustained not only by members' dedication, but also by the support and encouragement of loved ones.

The farm was a perfect setting and several people mentioned they were looking forward to coming back in the spring to pick strawberries.

A big THANK YOU to our Hospitality Committee for all the beautiful flowers and decorations and for taking the extra time to set up and tear down.



Photos by Holly Gardner



Photos by Rachel Fortuna



Wagner Berry Farm is located at 4923 Ollie Chunn Road,  
Spring Hill, TN 37173

Phone:931-486-0337

Email:mjwagner57@yahoo.com

[Wagner Berry Farm](#)

[Wagner Berry Farm - The Old Mill Barn](#)



Tom Wurth - [Tom Wurth](#)

At our October WCMGA meeting, we were pleased to feature Karin Bailey, a fellow WCMGA member who was recently awarded the Horticultural Therapist Registered (HTR) credential through the American Horticultural Therapy Association, the national authority advancing horticultural therapy through professional standards, the HT-BC certification, evidence-based education, and a connected practitioner community. Karin brings a rich interdisciplinary background to this emerging field, holding degrees in both industrial-organizational psychology and special education, along with extensive experience supporting learners and



Photo by Holly Gardner

cultivating therapeutic, plant-centered environments.

Her presentation offered a thoughtful window into the expanding field of horticultural therapy, blending her own experiences with the certification process with an introduction to foundational theories such as Stress Reduction Theory and biophilia, along with several of the models practitioners use to guide therapeutic programming.

For more information:

[AHTA.org](https://www.ahta.org)  
[Horticultural Therapy and the AHTA](#)

Beautiful and festive autumn decorations and flowers were provided by our wonderful WCMGA Hospitality Committee.

Pictured at above right are DeeAnna Carney and Mary McBean.



Pictured at right are Mary Pogge, Mary Pemberton, Mary Holt, Mary McBean, and Mary Ann Callahan.



Photos by Rachel Fortuna

We also welcomed several new Board Members during the October meeting, as the membership cast their votes for the 2026 leadership team.

More information about our newly-elected members will be included in our February 2026 issue of *The Perennial*.



# WCMGA Winners at the Williamson County Fair



The 2025 Williamson County Fair once again demonstrated how horticulture brings the community together and our WCMGA members played a central role in that success. Member's entries showcased not only gardening skill but also the joy of nurturing something from seed to show table.

Here are a few examples:



Cheri Liddell



Cheri Liddell



Cheri Liddell



Deanna Butler



Deanna Butler

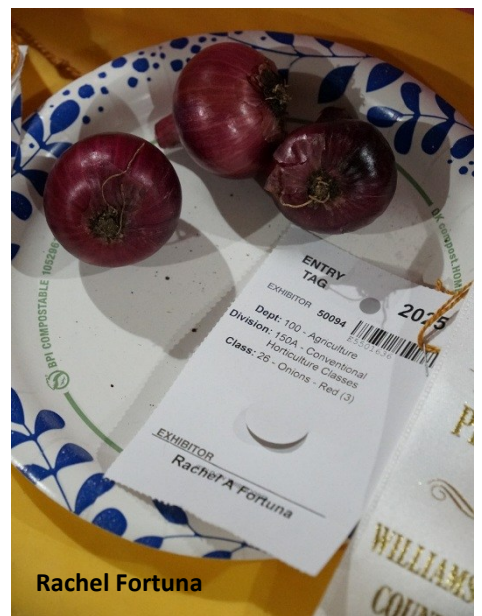


Susan Ramsay



Susan Ramsay







Susan Ramsay



Kristy Bergstrom



Kristy Bergstrom



Deanna Butler



Carolyn Kirchner



Susan Ramsay



Carolyn Kirchner



Rachel Fortuna



Rachel Fortuna



Carolyn Kirchner



Susan Ramsay

Photos by Holly Gardner

I encourage all master gardeners to consider entering in the horticulture and floriculture competitions for the Williamson County Fair. I have found it to be a great learning experience, and it helps me to pay attention to my plants in new and different ways. The online registration is easy, even for a technology-challenged person like me, and there is no fee for entries in these divisions. Go to the fair website for details about rules, divisions and number required for each type of entry.

This year in floriculture I got a ribbon for purple basil, a pot of marigolds, and a rabbits' foot fern. In horticulture, I won a ribbon for an unusually shaped vegetable (a curvy python bean), and under the "other" vegetable category, (a very long python bean.) There was no separate category for paw paws, but I entered some under "other fruit" and got a ribbon there.

Susan Ramsay



Photos provided by Susan Ramsay

## Bonus Fair Coverage: Spotlight on Master Gardener Susan Ramsay

By Tammy Lenox, WCMGA Intern

For Susan Ramsay, gardening has always been a way of life. She grew up with parents who tended a vegetable garden, so it was natural for her to keep her hands in the soil. In 2005, at the encouragement of her sister, she joined the Master Gardener program and she's been an active and enthusiastic member ever since.

Over the years, Susan has stayed current with the program. Recently she and several of her fellow Master Gardeners were honored as 20+ year veterans. She loves the informative presentations at monthly meetings, but just as much, she enjoys visiting with fellow gardeners and sharing knowledge.

Two events in particular hold a special place in her heart: the plant sale and the county fair. At the plant sale, Susan says the real joy comes from contributing to the event and seeing the excitement in people's faces as they discover new plants. "I love helping people learn and giving advice. It brings me joy," she explains. The fair, on the other hand, combines two of her favorite things: people-watching and the educational component of gardening...winning ribbons is an added bonus!

For the past three years, Susan has entered vegetables and flowers in the fair, treating each entry as both a learning opportunity and a chance to share knowledge, skills that come naturally after more than 30 years as a school teacher. "It tickles me to win a ribbon! It's so much fun!" she says. This year she proudly earned multiple awards, including the "Other Vegetable" and "Unusually Shaped Vegetable" categories. Her husband, Neal, is also a gardener with a passion for hardscaping, and together they entered several categories, both bringing home ribbons including one for a notably long bean affectionately dubbed "Big Mama."

Susan's favorite garden space is her shade garden, where she grows hostas, ferns, trilliums, and other foliage plants. The feeling of peace and rest is her favorite thing about this space. She's also passionate about spring ephemerals, which she calls "a renewal of life after the dormant winter is over." Susan would like to start a food forest of berries, fruit shrubs, and trees.

In addition to her work in the garden, Susan has enjoyed joining the Master Gardener Speakers Bureau, giving presentations at meetings and at the Brentwood and Franklin libraries on topics such as shade gardening. With her teaching background, it's no surprise she thrives during the Q&A sessions, turning them into lively, interactive learning moments.

For Susan, gardening is more than a hobby. It's a lifelong pursuit of beauty, knowledge, and community.



# Falling for Incrediball® Hydrangeas: A Love Story in Bloom

By Lisa Forsythe, WCMGA Member

Three years ago, when I first moved to Tennessee, I stumbled upon something magical. It was during a summer afternoon at Belmont University, as I walked my son to piano camp. That's when I first saw them—enormous white spheres of flowers, gracefully swaying in the breeze, almost as if they were dancing. Their beauty was mesmerizing. Having lived in Southern California, I had seen hydrangeas in shades of blue, pink, and white, but never had I encountered such magnificent, oversized blooms.

Curious, I asked around, hoping to uncover their identity. After a few puzzled responses, a friendly passerby finally revealed their name: Incrediball® hydrangeas. And just like that, I was hooked. From that moment on, I made it my mission to learn everything I could about these breathtaking flowers—their care, pruning techniques for the largest blooms, fertilization schedules, and even propagation methods. With each discovery, my admiration deepened, and I knew they would become a staple in my dream garden.

Fast forward to this summer, nearly three years to the day I first spotted them—now, I'm growing my own Incrediball® hydrangeas right in front of my home, bursting with fresh, gigantic blooms! Their sheer size is astonishing, with blossoms larger than both my husband's and my own hands. The recent rain has encouraged lush growth, and to keep them standing tall and proud, I've ordered plant support stakes. Positioned as a dramatic "thriller" behind my "not- so-neatly manicured boxwoods (master gardener in training...) I think they add depth and elegance to my landscape. What do you think?



Photos by Lisa Forsythe, taken June 6, 2023 in front of Belmont University, Nashville TN

Now, as I watch them thrive, I know I'll be enjoying their spectacular presence all summer long—a living testament to the moment I first fell in love with these extraordinary flowers, gardening and growing in middle Tennessee!



Photos by Lisa Forsythe, taken in front and side yard of my home  
June 8, 2025

## Did you know...?

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 is part of the UT/TSU Williamson County Extension Office. You may find more information about our association on our website at [Williamson County Master Gardeners Association \(WCMGA\)](https://www.wcmga.org)



# THE BARK: Monthly To-do List

## NOVEMBER

- Plant tulip and daffodil bulbs for a stunning display next spring
- Prepare a bed for planting autumn garlic
- Cut back the yellowing foliage of herbaceous perennials, and lift and divide overcrowded clumps to maintain their vigor
- Keep harvesting your various cool-season crops
- Plant out bedding displays of pansies, violas, and primulas
- Remove remains of dead annual plants and add to compost if there is no sign of disease
- If you have access to fresh manure, now is the time to spread it across the surface of your vegetable beds to rot down over winter
- Tidy up your strawberry plants - cut off any dead leaves and remove runners
- Continue to check for pests in houseplants brought inside for protection from cold weather
- Create compost bins for collecting fallen leaves and dead plant material
- If the soil is dry, give your garden one last good watering before the ground freezes
- Once plants are dormant, it is a good time to relocate any plant that you want to move
- Winterize spigots and take in hoses



Photos by Holly Gardner



- Prune and destroy all dead or diseased fruit tree limbs when dormant
- Carrots can be stored in ground for a little while, but be sure to pull them before the ground freezes
- Remove fallen leaves from around the base of any rose bushes which suffered from blackspot or rust this summer to reduce the chance of reinfection next year

## DECEMBER

- Cover unused beds with mulch or a thick layer of leaves
- Feed fall crops (do this every six weeks during the growing season)
- Cut evergreen boughs or holly with berries for wreaths
- Organize seeds and determine what you will need for spring
- Pot up amaryllis, paperwhites, or pre-chilled hyacinths so you'll have winter blooms inside for the holidays and beyond
- Order seed catalogs
- It is not too late to get your spring bulbs planted, so get them in the ground
- Plant trees or shrubs
- Mulch strawberries when temperatures expected to drop below 20F, but only if they are dormant
- Map out crop rotations for next year in light of any diseases or pests encountered
- Start to think about the garden plan for next year



Photos by Holly Gardner



- Don't overlook other great plant choices for holiday color. Poinsettias aren't your only option. Consider kalanchoe, cyclamen, bromeliads, 'Diamond Frost' euphorbia, Christmas cactus, orchids, or even blooming mini-cactus
- Add fallen leaves to your compost pile or use for mulch
- Continue to add kitchen scraps, dead plant material that is not diseased, or any grass clippings to compost pile and turn regularly with a fork
- Remove any diseased leaves from under rose bushes and dispose of them
- Clean any pots or seed trays
- Water fall crops during dry spells
- Clean gardening tools



## JANUARY

- Inventory leftover seeds
- Test germination of leftover seed from last year
- Purchase media from a reputable source and buy new pots or sanitize old ones to reduce disease risk
- Prepare seed order for remaining cool-season and warm-season seeds for transplants
- Keep an eye out for spider mites, mealybugs, and scale insects on houseplants
- Start planning gardens and other yard projects
- Keep your bird feeders full
- Test and amend the soil by continuing to add compost to the garden
- Clean and oil garden tools, if you have not done so
- Compost or chip your Christmas tree

- Test your garden soil for its pH levels. Contact your local Extension office for a soil kit. Then, apply lime, sulfur, and fertilizer according to the soil-test results
- Prune any damaged or dead branches from your trees and shrubs and then fertilize
- Start slower-growing, cool season vegetables such as cabbage, brussels sprouts, beets, and onions indoors so you will have seedlings to plant into the garden later



Photos by Holly Gardner

Another good resource is the [2025 Tennessee Home Vegetable and Fruit Garden Calendar](#)

Look for the 2026 Calendar coming soon!



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## Member Gardens

These coneflowers and Rudbeckia in Cheryl Carlson's garden are native pollinator plants



Some of the many delicious strawberries from the garden of Carol Murphy.

October photo submission from Cheryl Carlson:  
"Just wanted to share the first fall cool season cauliflower harvest starting to come in!  
I've got another one about ready...then others ready next week!  
She's a beauty! "



## Member Gardens (continued)



From Francie Owens' Garden:

The yellow rudbeckia hirta is Gloriosa Daisy. The red and yellow dahlia were started from seed last year.

I just love the various colors of nasturtium. A few weeks back, a couple of tree frogs left me their babies in a 5 gallon bucket full of rain water. How exciting! The eggs hatched in three days and I could see them change from a tiny dot to a squiggle before they hatched. They are finally developing legs and have been so much fun to watch!



## Member Gardens (continued)



From Sally Ebrahim's Garden:

I'm sending a few photos from my garden. the day lilies are from the MG garden sale. They are absolutely beautiful. This is the second summer in my garden. It's come a long way. When I moved in it was basically a blank slate, so it's been so much fun watching the progress. The swallow tails returned for the second year. They love the Joe Pye Weed and so do the bees. Learning what grows here has been a real challenge. The cold winters are new to me.

# 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](#)

#### **Seed Starting - February 26, 2026**

**Description** - The focus of this class will be starting your own vegetables and annuals from seed. We will guide you on the best practices for seed starting so that you can have a successful start to your home garden. You will leave with a few supplies and seeds to start your own garden journey!

#### [Seed Starting | 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](#)



## THE DIRT

### *November*

**November 10 - WCMGA potluck and intern graduation - 6:00 p.m.** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park

### *December*

**December - No WCMGA meeting - Happy Holidays!**

### *January*

**January 12 - WCMGA meeting - 6:00 p.m.** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park - Speaker: John Kell, founder of local non-profit, The Habitat Connection.

### *February*

**February 5, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. - Library Garden Talk Series - Brentwood Library - "Sow Cool! Gardening All Winter Long with Winter Sowing"** - Presented by Sande Sullivan - Register Here: [Sow Cool! Gardening All Winter with Winter Sowing - Calendar - The John P. Holt Brentwood Library](#)

**February 9, 1-3 p.m. - Library Garden Talk Series - "Cultivating Your Green Thumb: Foundations for Successful Gardening" (Virtual only)** - Register Here: [Cultivating Your Green Thumb: Foundations for Success](#)

**February 9 - WCMGA meeting - 6:00 p.m.** - Williamson County Ag Expo Park - Speaker: Sarah Ruzic of Tennessee Kitchen Gardens



## Newsletter and Website Articles Wanted

Special thanks to Anita Tilley, Elvira (Ella) Eivazova, Holly Gardner, Susan Ramsey, Tammy Lenox, Lisa Forsythe, Cheryl Carlson, Carol Murphy, Sally Ebrahim, and Francie Owens 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  
**2025 = 10,202**

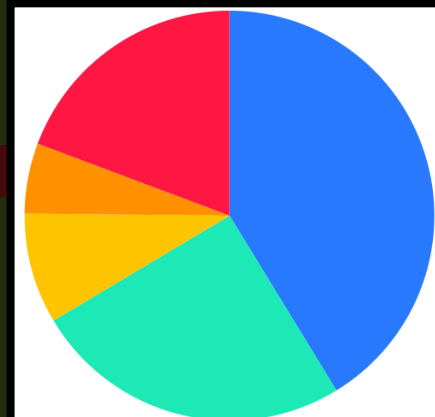
Based on values determined by  
Independent Sector Website:  
Hours Value: **\$341,676.03**

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

### 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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