

*WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION*

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# THE PERENNIAL

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

 **TENNESSEE**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

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**One generation plants the tree...another gets the shade.**  
**-Chinese proverb**



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# OUR ROOTS

## **Gardening, Growing and Nurturing**

Spring is finally here, I think. Mother nature is sure dragging it out with rain, cold and windy conditions this year. The last frost date April 15 we are expecting snow flurries. What's a gardener to do? We keep planning, working the garden and preparing to plant our crops as soon as we can.

Sometimes we must be patient and wait a little longer, but the reward is worth the wait. All good things generally take time, gardening is one of them. I enjoy working the soil and planting crops. It is therapeutic, relaxing, fulfilling and gives you a sense of accomplishment growing the food you consume. My focus is heirloom tomatoes and I grow several varieties, preferring quality fruit rather than quantity.

You can compare it to raising a kid. The seed is planted, and the growing begins. You make sure they get the proper nourishment to become big, strong and healthy while watching out for and diseases or injuries that may arise. Although a kid is many years of intense care, a tomato plant is only one season. In the end of the growing season the mature plant after all your care rewards you with fruits of your labor. A child after many years of care provides you with lots of joy, then they are ready to go on their own.

It may be a stretch to compare the two, but it is an accomplishment to plant a seed and watch all your nurturing efforts mature into something special.

Good Gardening this Season

WCMGA President

*Jack Melnick*





*photo credit to Dr. Natalie Bumgarner, UT Extension*

# What's soil got to do with it?!?

*By Amy Dismukes*

This is the time of year when everybody wants to fertilize. How much and what should I use? What do you mean soil testing? Just add some lime and nitrogen in the Spring, right?! WRONG! So let's dig a little deeper into understanding our soils before we begin amending.

Considering that soil health is one of the most important factors in the landscape or garden, one might want to get it right. An unhealthy soil makes for an unhealthy plant. So how do you know?

In general, ideal soils have good drainage, adequate organic matter with a medium texture, meaning a mix of sand, silt and clay ... aka a loamy soil. High levels of clay can result in a soil that holds too much water, which can cause problems with plant roots. On the flip side, soils with a higher sand content will drain too quickly, leaving plant roots thirsty and hungry.

We can determine soil porosity, or rate of drainage, by performing a percolation test. It's relatively simple: dig a hole, fill the hole with water and allow it to drain, refill the hole with water and measure the water level. Continue measuring the level of water each hour until the hole drains completely. Ideal soil drainage is about 2" per hour. Additional information can be provided by your local Extension office.

Another really important factor of soil is the pH, which can also vary greatly. Many environmental factors, including rainfall, vegetation and temperature, can all affect soil pH. The pH is important because plant nutrients become available or unavailable according to the level and specific plants have specific preferences. A professional soil test will give specific recommendations for your soils, based on the specific plant life involved in your landscape.



I like to refer to soil pH as the 'KEY' to the nutrient 'LOCK'. Every plant has its preferred range of soil acidity. When the pH level is out of that range, an unwelcome parade of problems are sure to follow. A basic understanding of pH will not only help keep your garden or landscape healthy, but can also be a tool within your best management practices toolbox.

The pH (acidity or alkalinity) is a scale from 0 to 14. A pH of 7 is considered neutral. As pH drops below 7, acidity gets higher. As numbers increase from 7 so does soil alkalinity. Most plants enjoy a slightly acidic pH of about 6.5, while others, such as blueberry and azalea, demand a very acidic pH of around 4.5.

Plant roots absorb mineral nutrients such as nitrogen and iron when they are dissolved in water. If the soil solution (the mixture of water and nutrients in the soil) is too acidic or alkaline, some nutrients won't dissolve easily, and therefore, they won't be available for uptake by roots. Most plants thrive in slightly acidic soils because a pH between 6.0 and 7.0 afford them good access to all nutrients.

The darker side of soil pH is plant poisoning. For example, too low of a pH level can render the plant nutrient manganese available at toxic levels. A pH level that is too low also liberates aluminum, a heavy metal, in amounts that can stunt root growth and

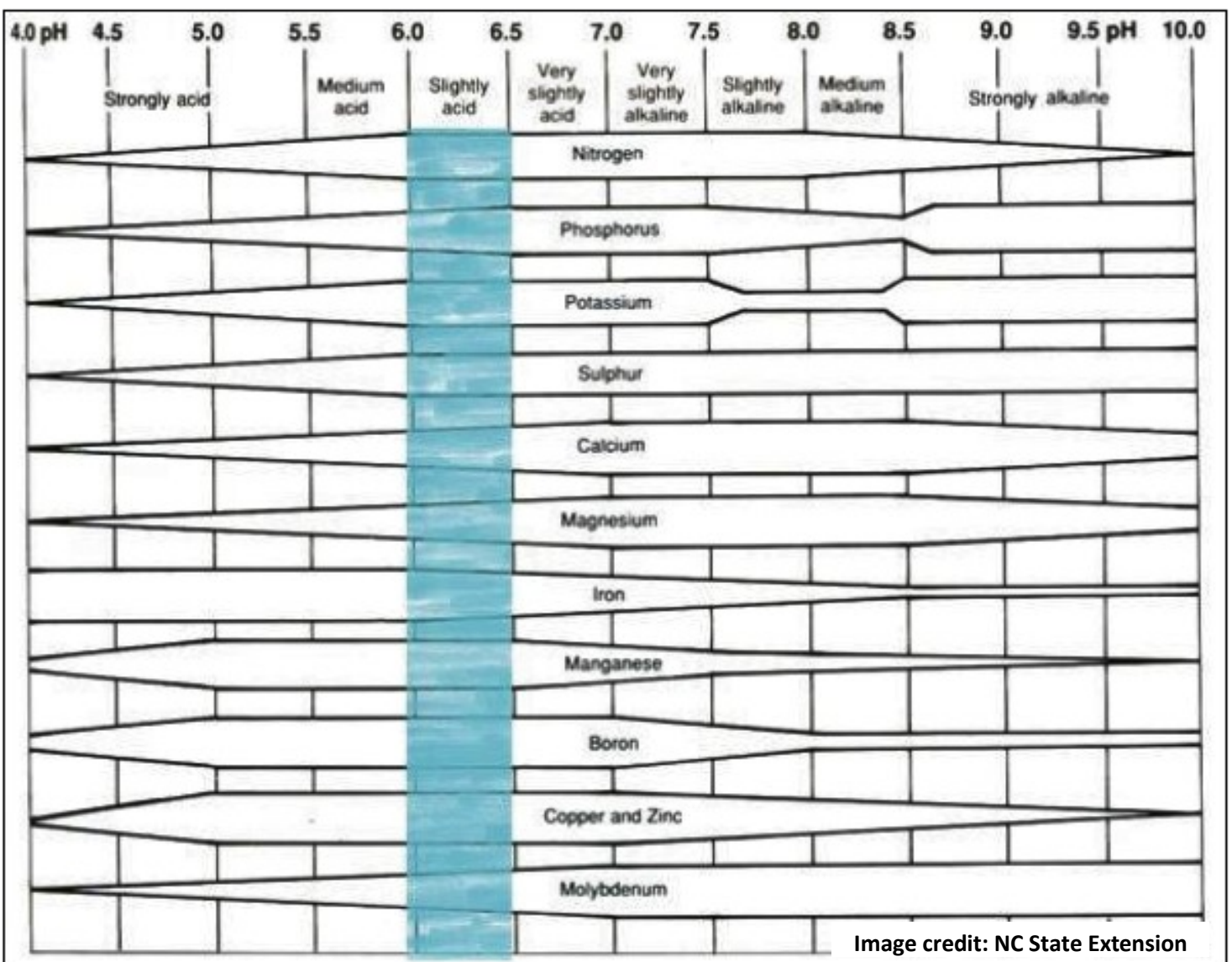


Image credit: NC State Extension



interfere with a plant's uptake of nutrients. At a high pH level, the plant nutrient molybdenum becomes available in toxic amounts.

So think before amending, without testing. Too little nutrient availability within the soil results in a deficient, weaker plant. Too much and nutrients can be toxic. Just as in a deficient state, toxicity also results in a weaker, if not dead, plant. Plants have an immune system, like people. Think about iron deficiency in a plant like anemia in a human. If you're anemic, you generally feel like poo and you're much more susceptible to a cold or even pneumonia. Plants experience the same symptomology; we just don't know about it until they begin to show us.

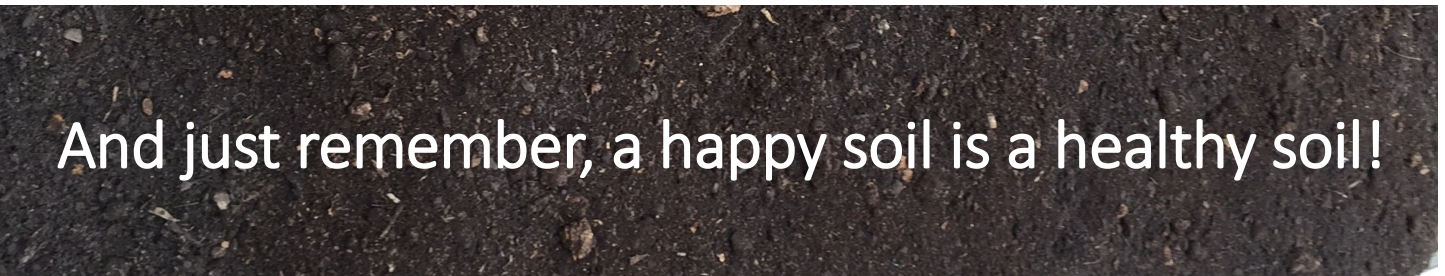
Soil pH also influences soil-dwelling organisms, whose well-being, in turn, affects soil conditions and plant health. The slightly acidic conditions enjoyed by most plants are also what earthworms like, as do microorganisms that convert nitrogen into forms that plants can use.

Now we've come to the soil analysis part. Before attempting to change your soil's pH, you must know its current level. There are several options for testing, at home or in lab. One benefit resulting from

soil analyzed by a University lab is the definitive pH value and recommendations. While soil health and texture is 100% important, the pH is vitally important. Certain plants prefer certain nutrients or minerals. That's just how it is.

The most important thing to remember when soil sampling is that soil test results are only as good as the soil sample. No wet soil. No plant roots. Take multiple samples from the area you're concerned about. You want a good mix of soil from said area, so pull multiple samples, 4-6" below the soil line and collect within a clean container of your choice. After collection, mix those samples together using your hand and pull one sample from the mixture. This process will provide a good, random sampling. A Ziploc bag will work fine until you make it to your destination.

If you're lucky and live close, the UT Soil, Plant and Pest Center is in Nashville, located on the Ellington Campus. If you happen to live outside of Davidson County, you may mail your sample OR often, the sponsoring Extension will accept submissions and deliver to the lab for you. For more information, check out the SPPC website at <https://ag.tennessee.edu/spp>.



And just remember, a happy soil is a healthy soil!



# GARDEN COMPANIONS

## Wildflower heaven

### WCMGA TRIP TO TAYLOR HOLLOW

An early start and low temperatures greeted the WCMGA Intern group to see the wildflowers at Taylor Hollow in Sumner County on April 19. The list of “must bring” included lunches, bug spray, walking sticks, and cold weather gear. But in bold letters, the email reminded: Make sure to pack A CAMERA! The morning started cold, as the caravan of cars made it way to the parking area near Westmoreland, TN. The 163-acre preserve did not disappoint. A list of flowers and trees was provided by Sumner MG Linda Robertson and the search was on. By the end of the day, Interns had spied over 70 different wildflowers on the trail. A stop for lunch was included near an ancient water fall. But the highlight of the trip was

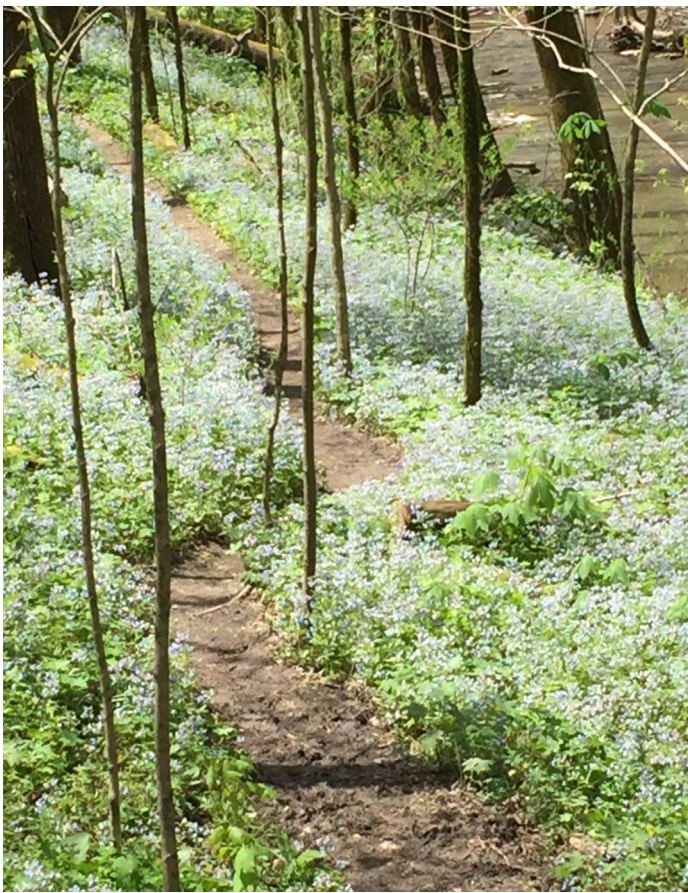


“Blue-Eyed Mary” (*Collinsia verna*)

the incredible views of the vast meadows of “Blue Eyed Mary” (*Collinsia verna*). An endangered plant in the state of TN, the Blue-Eyed Mary only grows in very few areas. The timing was perfect, as the cold weather was providing an extended season. Once the trees leaf out and the hot weather comes, the







delicate blue and white flowers will fade into the forest floor. The trail was well maintained with just a few muddy areas. Interns were thrilled with the beauty of the trail as well as the skill and enthusiasm of the knowledgeable guide. By the early afternoon, the cold had given way to the sun, and hikers were treated to a sparkling afternoon walk in the woods, punctuated by “Ohhhs” and “Ahhhs” all along the route. And, as predicted, the cameras really got a workout!

The day finished with a short trip to the Nature Center at Cedars of Lebanon State Park where the Sumner County MG maintain a superb wildflower and butterfly garden. Thank you to Amy and Linda for making this outing happen.

From the Nature Conservancy :

**CONTACT US BEFORE YOU GO!**

You can hike the marked trail along the ridge and down into the hollow. It's about 2.5 miles total in length and is moderate in difficulty.

**Please contact The Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy for directions & visitation guidelines. The trailhead is difficult to find without directions.**

We are trying to minimize the impact on this delicate natural area. Our phone number is (615) 383-9909. Our email address is [tn@tnc.org](mailto:tn@tnc.org).

The following activities are prohibited:  
Motorized vehicles (ATVs), horses, bicycles, collecting plants and animals, hunting, camping, rock climbing.  
Dogs are allowed on leash.



“Blue-Eyed Mary” (*Collinsia verna*)

Click [TAYLOR HOLLOW](#) for information on how you can visit

Click [HERE](#) to see the wildflower slideshow from the Nature Conservancy

# THE BARK

## MAY

**Sow and Transplant.** You can sow or transplant beans, black-eyed peas, cantaloupe, squash, melons, pumpkins, cucumbers, sweet corn, okra, basil, tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, and sweet potatoes.

**Crop Care.** Harvest your cool season crops regularly, keep them watered and weeded. When the snow peas show signs of heat fatigue, you can dig them right into the bed to enrich the soil, or contribute to the compost.

**Flower Power.** Now is the time for planting annual flowers like asters, cleome, coreopsis, cosmos, marigold, petunia, sunflower, and zinnias (all types). Continue setting out summer annuals like begonia, geranium and petunia this month.

**Ravishing Roses.** Like vegetables, roses are big feeders. Side-dress with an organic fertilizer this month, and keep topdressing with compost.

**Veggie Bugs.** In the vegetable garden, monitor for squash vine borer, flea beetle on eggplant, cucumber beetle. In the landscape, watch for bagworms, azalea lace bugs.



## JUNE

**Feed Your Vegetables.** Sidedress veggies with a soluble organic fertilizer, compost tea, organic granular, or generous topdressing of good worm castings or compost.

**Happy Harvest.** Keep harvesting your tomatoes, cukes, squash, peppers and other fruiting crops, or they will lose interest in producing and put their energy into seed.

**Watering Tips.** Water your plants during dry spells, and don't forget your pots, planters and containers. Watering in the cool of early morning or late afternoon is most efficient. The key point is to be sure that 1-3 cm (1/2-1 inch) of water a week gets to your vegetable garden and other demanding plants.

## JULY

**Water, Water, Everywhere.** This month's big job is watering. Water containers daily, vegetable gardens and first season landscape plants two times a week, and everything else about once a week.

**Harvest Time.** Harvest herbs and veggies on a regular basis. Don't let your zucchini get huge. Also, harvest your Irish potatoes when the tops begin to brown and die back.

**Start Fall Plantings.** Start fall vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, collards, kale, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. July is also a good time to start biennials and perennials from seed, such as foxglove and hollyhock, for planting out this fall.

**Tomato Tip.** If need be, cut up to a third off your tomatoes to keep them from overwhelming their posts or cages. Leave some leaf to protect against sunburn.

**Water Roses Regularly.** Roses need one inch of water per week. Prune your old fashioned and climbing roses after they've finished blooming. Secure climbing roses to the trellis as they grow. Remove diseased vegetation and deadheaded flowers.

Click [HERE](#) for more Zone 7 gardening tips from Rodale's Organic Life



# CONTINUED GROWTH

*Upcoming Outings – SAVE THE DATES!*

**Master Gardeners of Davidson County present**

## **2018 URBAN GARDENING FESTIVAL**

**SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2018 | 9AM - 4PM, RAIN OR SHINE**

**AT THE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN AT ELLINGTON AGRICULTURAL CENTER**

**5201 MARCHANT DRIVE**

**SUPPLIERS • ARTISANS • EXHIBITORS • PLANT DIAGNOSTICS • HOW-TO DEMONSTRATIONS • CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES • FOOD TRUCKS • LIVE MUSIC**

<http://www.mgofdc.org/ugf>

**MAY 15—WEBSITE TRAINING** *HOW TO ENTER VOLUNTEER HOURS*

**BRING YOUR TABLET OR LAPTOP TO THE WCMGA MONTHLY MEETING**

### **HEWITT GARDEN & DESIGN CENTER TO HOLD**

#### **“ROSE APPRECIATION DAY” ON**

**SATURDAY, MAY 5, 2018**

Hewitt Garden & Design Center in Franklin, TN, in partnership with the Nashville Rose Society, will be holding their first ever “Rose Appreciation Day” on Saturday May 5th, featuring free workshops on how to grow roses, free donuts, door prizes and special discounts on roses and rose supplies. Hewitt Garden & Design Center is located at 2525 Hillsboro Rd, Franklin, TN 37069.

Hewitt's will be offering FREE workshops at 10:00 AM and again at 1:00 PM on “The Basics of Growing & Caring for Roses”, led by Ron Daniels, President of the Nashville Rose Society and a long time Consulting Rosarian. Learn everything you need to know in these workshops about how to grow beautiful roses - from preparing your soil and selecting and planting your roses to watering, fertilizing, spraying and pruning. Ron will be joined by other members of the Nashville Rose Society who will be available to answer all your questions and assist you in picking out roses from Hewitt's huge inventory of nearly 1000 roses, which includes the largest selection of world famous David Austin roses in Middle Tennessee.

Hewitt's will also be offering FREE donuts during the day (while they last!) and door prizes will be awarded to participants at both the morning and afternoon workshops.



**Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the experts! For more information, go to**

[hewittgdc.com](http://hewittgdc.com) or [nashvillerosesociety.org](http://nashvillerosesociety.org).

# CONTINUED GROWTH

## WCMGA Meeting SPEAKERS

**5/14/2018**

### PARADE OF PROJECTS

WCMGA Project Leaders will give a short presentation about the many opportunities for volunteers. Learn more about:

**Carter House ~ Period Slave Garden**  
**Williamson County Fair ~ An Edible Uprising**  
**Giving Garden ~ Speakers Bureau**  
**Junior Master Gardener Camp**

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**6/11/2018**

### Trees of Tennessee – Josiah Lockard

Drawing from his nearly 20 years of professional practice, Josiah specializes in ecologically based landscape design and sustainable site development. He became a ISA Certified Arborist in 2003, and is a graduate of Lipscomb University's Institute for Sustainable Practice. Josiah is an award winning Landscape Designer, member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Past-President of the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council, and serves as both Consulting Arborist, and member of the Garden Development Committee at Cheekwood Botanical Gardens.



**7/9/2018**

### Presentation on Abe's Garden (Gardening for Specialty Populations) – Buzz Evans

Buzz Evans grew up in Nashville, graduated from Hillsboro High School and Vanderbilt University and spent a career in insurance and financial planning with Connecticut Mutual and Mass Mutual. He retired in 2011 and became a Master Gardner in 2012. His Master Gardner certification project was restoring a small greenhouse area at Park Manor, an independent living retirement facility which is part of Abe's Garden. This led to establishing a 4000 sq.ft. vegetable garden for the residents in 2012 and adding bees in 2013. His presentation, "An Adventure in Gardening", follows the growth of the garden and the bees at Park Manor/Abe's Garden from 2012 to the present time and how they are used to support both the residents and the mission of Abe's Garden .

Abe's Garden is an Alzheimer's and memory care center of excellence in Nashville that is setting a new standard of dementia care for other residential communities and community-based programs across the US. The Abe's Garden model includes evidence-based best practices in person-centered care and engagement, which are continuously evaluated for quality improvement and national dissemination. Abe's Garden is located on the beautiful wooded campus of Nashville's premier retirement community, Park Manor, which offers independent and assisted living arrangements, and a worry-free lifestyle.



# FOR SPROUTS

## Riddles

What's an elephant's favorite vegetable?      ANSWER: A Squash

How do trees get on the Internet?      ANSWER: *They Log-in*



# PRINT AND COLOR ME!





# WCMGA

Williamson County Master Gardeners Association

*in collaboration with Franklin Farmers Market and the Factory*

invite you to join us for our annual

## *Garden Festival*

SUNDAY, MAY 6<sup>th</sup> ... 10 am to 4 pm

- MOTHER'S DAY GIFTS • PLANTS •
- EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS • GARDEN
- TOOLS • ART • FOOD
- KID ACTIVITIES • FUN •

FOR MORE INFO: [wcmgaatlarge1@gmail.com](mailto:wcmgaatlarge1@gmail.com)



The **FACTORY**  
at FRANKLIN



**The Franklin Farmers Market**  
Real Farmers. Real Food. Real Good.

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Cooperative Extension



## Newsletter 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).



### Join Us on Facebook

If you haven't liked us on Facebook, you are missing the latest news! Find us [here](#).

## THE DIRT



Record your volunteer hours  
New link [here](#)

Before you can enter hours, you must register on the website with the same email address already in the UT system.



### 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

General Email: [wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com](mailto:wcmgatheperennial@gmail.com)

Address: [4215 Long Lane Suite 200, Franklin, TN 37064](#)