

*WILLIAMSON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION*

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# THE PERENNIAL

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WILLIAMSON COUNTY  
**U-EXTENSION**  
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE



TENNESSEE  
STATE UNIVERSITY

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## OUR ROOTS

This is the time of year when cabin fever starts to set in. As gardeners, we have been pouring through seed catalogs planning for our home gardens and WCMGA projects.

Orders have been placed and preparations are underway for indoor planting of tomatoes and peppers while plans are being finalized on what and where to plant.

**This is that time of year when you realize how much you miss a good tomato right off the vine.**

The current stretch of cold weather has kept us inside more than usual in a Tennessee winter. Imagine how good it is going to feel when the weather breaks and you can get out to begin work in the garden. Just feeling the sun on your face gives you a new perspective on things.

I know I am looking forward to it.

Your Board of Directors has accomplished a lot this past year and I promise you there are new things on the horizon. Last year was transformational for WCMGA, this year we continue to organize and be professional in all we do.

We are well on our way to that end.

Working in the garden is not only fun, but you get to meet new people, make friends, exchange ideas, learn new things and be part of a great organization.

I hope to see you all in the garden this summer.

Your Friend and fellow gardener

WCMGA President

*Jack Melnick*





# A Gardener's Resolution

*By Amy Dismukes*

It's a new year ... and it's cold outside. What to do, what to do? It's the time of year when we all begin to ponder what we should or could have done differently the year before. How about making a little list of all those thoughts and ideas, to develop your gardening 'plan' for 2018. Here are a few potential resolutions for your gardening enjoyment!

**Start composting.** It's easy and incredibly beneficial for your landscape. Not only do you cut down on the amount of waste that you're contributing to a landfill, but compost can improve soil structure and increase its nutrient content. Less water is required because fertile, healthy soil has greater water retention properties. Soil permeability (drainage rate) can also improve due to the addition of organic matter into your soil profile.

**Don't volcano mulch.** Volcano mulching is a real problem in middle Tennessee. Most roots grow in the top 2 feet of

soil so when mulch is applied too heavily, the little feeder roots that are responsible for uptake of water and nutrients from the soil begin to choke. These little roots need oxygen just like we do. Excessive mulch can also cause the formation of a hydrophobic mat; i.e. water cannot permeate the mulch therefore, cannot be absorbed by the root system. Thirsty tree = unhappy, stressed tree.

**Prune correctly ... DON'T top trees.** Crape Myrtle Murder is a big issue. Continual topping of any tree will eventually lead to problems. It's recommended to 'prune for health'. Remove any crossing or dead/diseased branches. Make sure to prune at the collar if the entire branch requires removal. If stubs are left, they will eventually rot, leaving dead wood in the tree canopy. A dead branch in a large tree is often called a 'widow maker' and that pretty much says it all.

**Test your soil.** I often hear from homeowners requesting lawn information, that they fertilize their lawn yearly, without knowing if it's actually required. Over-application of nitrogen can lead to Brown Patch, a fungal pathogen, in fescue grass. It's always a good idea to test before you treat because you may not need any additional nutrients. Your local extension office can advise you further on the process, how to take a soil sample for best results and how to evaluate your results.

**Harvest water.** Rain barrels are excellent tools for your landscape, garden and even dog bowl. Rain barrels save money by reducing water usage, hence, the bill. Rain barrels also help reduce runoff pollution, decrease erosion, assist in conservation efforts (drought) and last, but not least, rainwater is highly oxygenated and free of the compounds contained in tap water that accumulate in the soils over time, and therefore, better for your plants. Use your water wisely.

**Don't overHEAD water.** Water your plants at the soil line. Why? First and foremost, plant leaves do not 'take in' water. Roots do. So why water the leaves? Overhead watering, especially if done later in the day before the leaves have time to dry, can also promote disease development. Most fungal pathogens require moisture or humidity to infect. Bacterial plant pathogens generally

require water to disseminate to their host. When we water the leaves of a plant, we are also wasting water ... hint, hint.

**Don't OVERwater.** Do you want to stand in a bucket of water for extended periods of time?

**Plant an edible landscape.** Many herbs work great as landscape plants. Take rosemary for example. It's great as an anchor plant and can grow quite large. It's also quite hardy and will generally last middle Tennessee winters if healthy. Clumping parsley makes a great alternative border plant. Utilize as you'd use liriope (monkeygrass). Blueberry bushes also seem to be showing up in many ornamental beds.

**Don't think about gardening as 'yard work'.** If you stop to think about it, we see the therapeutic effects of gardening every day. Why else would so many people love to stick their hands in the dirt? It's even been said that soil contains certain anti-depressant properties. Imagine that!!

**Scout your landscape for pests, insect and disease.**

Take time to take a peek at your plants. They can't talk to let us know they're not feeling well so they show us by exhibiting symptoms. Many times, you can catch a problem before it actually takes off. If you're not sure, take notes on changes you are seeing. Not only will this





assist in determining whether or not you've got a potential problem, it will also keep start you on a good timeline for the future year(s), knowing in advance what to be on the lookout for. I love a documented landscape!

**BE PROACTIVE VERSUS REACTIVE.** As mentioned above, we can often slow or completely deter an issue by catching it early (as with insects and disease). One of the best proactive acts is the use of horticultural oils. Often, we miss the opportunity to use horticultural oils because their application is based on the weather ... too hot and the foliage can burn ... too cold and efficacy is limited.

Horticultural (summer and dormant) oil spray is basically mineral oil and water. If purchasing conventional products, an emulsifier and spreader sticker are added, which extends the residual abilities of the oil. When used properly, the oil wets and smothers over-wintering adults and eggs of many insects ... some mites, adelgids, scale insects, aphids, leaf rollers, whitefly larvae, mealybugs, etc. ... on fruit trees, shade trees, vegetables and ornamentals. It can also slow or stop the progression of certain plant diseases.

Depending on product, oils can be utilized at different concentrations at different times of the year. BONIDE ALL-SEASONS dormant oil provides mixing instructions for specific times of the year: (1) DORMANT STAGE (before



buds show green tissue), (2) GREEN TIP STAGE (when leaves of blossom buds are bursting and show about  $\frac{1}{8}$  -  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of green color), (3) DELAYED DORMANT STAGE (leaves of the blossom buds are  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$ " ), and (4) during the GROWING SEASON. The best time to apply is above 40° F and below 80° F (many products say 90° F but I tend to play it safe).

And best of all, horticultural oils are considered organic. They're also not a threat to our pollinators and other beneficial insects.

*And last but not least, take time to enjoy  
ALL the beauty of the outdoors ...  
be it another's landscape, or your own*

# GARDEN COMPANIONS

## Got seeds?

*By S. Tucker Runyon*

### WILLIAMSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SEED EXCHANGE

Recently I had the opportunity to learn more about the seed exchange program at our local **Williamson County Public Library** (1314 Columbia Ave, Franklin TN). This exciting program is under the direction of Sharon Reily, whom I was fortunate enough to meet. Late in the year 2014, the seed bank got its start, with several people at the library, namely Sharon Reily and Randi Peters, the administration assistant, lending time and ideas. Having started a seed exchange system previously, the Nashville Public Library proved to be an invaluable resource and kindly offered assistance and advice to this "germinating" program. Then, in the spring of 2015, it began to sprout! The seed bank was a success and is now on its fourth year, with changes and improvements made every go around.

So, this is how it works. Seeds of all shapes, sizes, and varieties are generously donated to the library. They are then stored and recorded to keep track of what is on hand at any given time. Sharon has made a thorough "Seed Exchange" binder, complete with pictures, as well as the common name, botanical

name, and basic information on every variety. This is updated every year depending on availability and what seeds have been donated. Patrons are allowed to peruse the selection on hand. Then, having been given a "Seed Checkout Request Slip", and filling out their name as well as the plants they desire, can "check out" seeds to try out at home! The only rules are that you must have a library card (which is a snap for Williamson County residents), be at least 18 years old, and receive only one packet each of up to ten types of plants. The seed packets, which have been





designed by Sharon, include the same information as in the "Seed Exchange" binder plus things like harvest date (age of the seeds) and, inside the pack itself, basic planting and starting instructions.

The seeds are stored through the winter under refrigeration, then brought out in spring at the very beginning of March. From then, until later in the summer (approximately mid to late July), the seed collection is kept at the Reference Desk on the second floor. Though it is an **entirely free program**, patrons are strongly encouraged to donate some seeds back into the system after their bountiful harvest. This helps insure that the program can continue, and also that some of the more popular seeds are available for everyone for years to come. Though this entire seed exchange program and system seems smooth and well planned out,

Sharon said it changes and improves each year as she strives to make it the best she can.

Last but not least, I asked Sharon if there was anything in particular she wanted me to include in this article. Her response was that she wanted to see more Master Gardeners donate seeds. Right now, some of the biggest donors have been our own Amy Dismukes as well as Harpeth True Value Homecenter, both having donated large amounts of seeds and seed collecting supplies. But her request was to see more **WCMG's** "step up". So, as we huddle inside through the next few weeks, avoiding the cold and planning our 2018 gardens, let us not forget to include plants from which we can save seeds to give back to the community. Whether we start plants from the **Williamson County Public Library's** collection, our own backyard, an existing seed collection, or some other source, let's make this part of our gardening goals in 2018. When saving seeds to contribute to the seed bank, remember to record and provide as much information as you can (i.e. date of harvest, name, special features).

In conclusion, I am excited that I learned more about this program, and encourage everyone to become a part of the Williamson County Public Library's Seed Exchange.

Click [HERE](#) for more information on the  
WCPL seed exchange



# THE BARK



## 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.

## 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

Click [HERE](#) to record your amazing volunteer hours!

# CONTINUED GROWTH

## *Upcoming Outings – SAVE THE DATES!*

### **Huntsville Botanical Gardens – April 4<sup>th</sup> 2018**

Azaleas in full bloom

1 hour tour at 11:00 a.m., lunch, self-guided tours for the remainder of the day

Cost is \$21.80/person with box lunch.

Entry is free with membership in the National Horticultural Society

(cost reduced to \$11.40; bring identification)

Click [HERE](#) to view the Art in the Garden display

### **Fiddlers Grove – April 27<sup>th</sup> 2018**

<https://www.fiddlersgrove.org>

Fiddlers Grove Historical Village is located on the grounds of the

James E. Ward Agricultural Center in Lebanon, Tennessee.

Marianne Pelletier will conduct a tour at 11:00, followed by box lunch

Cost is \$25.00 person with lunch

### **Iris City – May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018**

Talk at 10:00 followed by self-guided tours and shopping;

No cost and no lunch provided      Located in Primm Springs, Tennessee

## **2018 TEMG State Conference**

**April 5th, 6th, and 7th—Montgomery Bell State Park**

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR SCHEDULE

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR REGISTRATION INFO



# CONTINUED GROWTH

## WCMGA Meeting **SPEAKERS**

**2/12/2018**

### **Rose Gardening in Middle Tennessee**

**Marty Reich**

Marty Reich has grown roses in Nashville for 40 years and been a member of the Nashville Rose Society since 1983. She became an American Rose Society Consulting Rosarian in 1991 and qualified as a Master Rosarian ten years ago. Her garden consists of about 90 roses of various kinds.



**3/12/2018**

### **Could Solutions Be Your Solution? (Hydroponic Gardening)**

**Natalie Bumgarner**



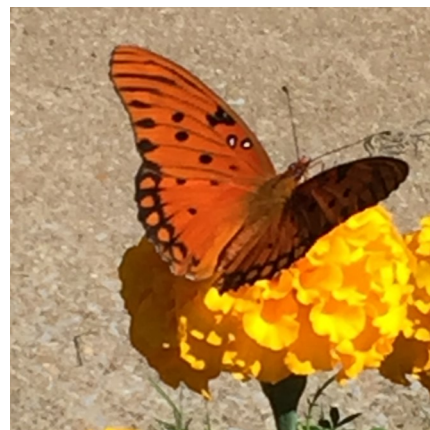
Natalie Bumgarner is the University of Tennessee Residential and Consumer Horticulture Extension Specialist with responsibilities for educational content and program development across Tennessee. Her responsibilities also include coordinating the TN Extension Master Gardener program and optimizing the education and teaching impact of these trained volunteers throughout the state. Natalie is a West Virginia native with a background in agriculture and has been active in various facets of horticulture for over 15 years.

**4/9/2018**

### **Gardening for Pollinators**

**Mary Pemberton (WCMGA member)**

Mary has a BS in Park and Recreation Management. She worked for several years planning, organizing and managing recreation programs and facilities for Park Districts in Illinois and for the City of Anaheim, CA. She became a certified master gardener in 2016, but has always enjoyed gardening. She's lived and gardened in Illinois, New Jersey, California and now Tennessee. Her areas of interest include perennials, gardening for birds and butterflies, and practical home landscape design. Finally, Mary is the co-director of the WCMGA Speakers Bureau and has organized gardening talks at the Brentwood Library and assisted with the Franklin Library gardening series.



# FOR SPROUTS

## Riddles

**Why do potatoes make good detectives?**

ANSWER: *Because they keep their eyes peeled.*

**What vegetable can tie your stomach in knots?**

ANSWER: *String beans.*



## PRINT AND COLOR ME!







# THE DIRT

## 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](#).

### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2017, WCMG contributed

**13,137 volunteer hours**

to the community, valued at **\$317,127!**

ALSO-**50** young people attended the Junior Master Gardener Camp!



### 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](#)