

# roots

The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

APRIL 2023



SEVIER COUNTY  
**UT**EXTENSION  
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

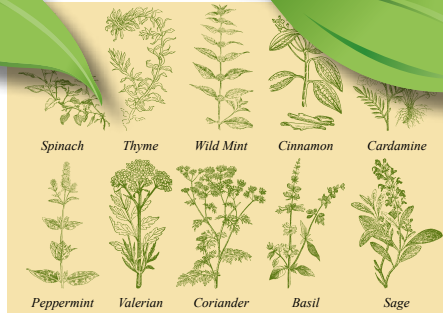


# in this issue

April Meeting info ..... 2  
 Meetings, Events, Educational & Volunteer Opportunities ..... 3  
 Letter from the President ..... 4  
 Tomato Seed Thank You ..... 5  
 SCAMGA Speakers Bureau..... 5  
 March Meeting Minutes..... 6  
 Hot News from the Greenhouse ..... 7  
 Demo Garden News..... 7  
 February Financial Report .....8  
 JMG Financial Report.....9  
 Earth Stars .....10  
 Contacts ..... 11



*On the cover: Phlox in full bloom.  
 Photo credit: John Oakberg*



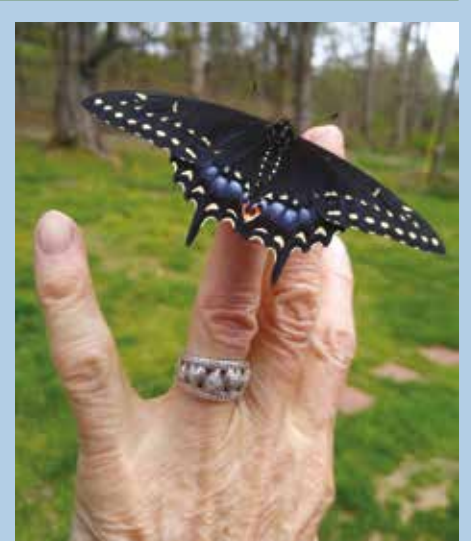
## april meeting speaker: karen less

**April 17, 2023, 6:30pm**

In April, we will be introducing our new medicinal herb garden in The Teaching Patch demonstration garden. This plot will feature herbs grown and used in this region by the Cherokee Indians prior to their departure during the Trail of Tears.

Karen Less will be presenting information about agricultural and medicinal plant practices of the Cherokees prior to the mid-19th Century. Karen has been an avid vegetable and herb gardener since the early 80s when she was growing summer veggies on her 3rd floor apartment balcony. In the late 80s, she began growing culinary herbs and later became fascinated with medicinal herbs. Karen has been a certified fundamentals herbalist for ten years, having initially trained at the Appalachian School of Holistic Herbalism in Asheville, NC. She next earned a certificate

in Herbal Medicine Making with the Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine, Weaverville, NC. Karen has been fortunate to participate in online workshops, seminars, and classes with renowned herbalists including Rosemary Gladstar, David Crow, Dr. Tieraona Low Dog, K.P. Khalsa, David Winston, Christopher Hobbs, and others. After retiring as a higher education teacher and administrator, she became a master gardener and now grows a variety of veggies, fruits, flowers, and herbs on the banks of Douglas Lake.



*A beautiful Eastern Black Swallowtail emerged from its chrysalis on April 5th. Host plants: fennel, parsley, dill, carrots.  
 Photo credit: Lois Worthington*

# opportunities



## educational

### volunteer

**My People Senior Activity Center Garden Workdays** Wednesday, April 12 & Saturday, May 6, 9:00 am (each first Saturday and third Wednesday).

**Master Gardener Intern Training,** Tuesdays 10 am to 2 pm. Help train our 2023 intern class with hands-on activities. Contact Matt Anderson for details.

**Demo Garden Workdays,** Tuesdays, April 11, 10 am (note date and time change).

**Annual Master Gardener Plant Sale,** Saturday, April 22, 2023, 9 am to 2 pm, Sevier County Fairgrounds. Multiple volunteers needed. Volunteers needed for set up on Friday, April 21.

**My People Senior Activity Center Plant Sale** Saturday, April 29, 9 am to Noon. Volunteers needed to assist with sale.



master  
gardener  
apparel  
ETA

If you ordered master gardener apparel, orders will be distributed at the April 17th meeting.

SEVIER COUNTY  
**UT EXTENSION**  
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE  
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### meetings & events

**Monthly Meeting,** Monday, April 17, 6:30 pm (no scheduled board meeting).

**Annual Master Gardener Plant Sale,** Saturday, April 22, 2023, 9 am to 3 pm, Sevier County Fairgrounds. Volunteers needed to assist with sale.

**My People Senior Activity Center Plant Sale** Saturday, April 29, 9 am to Noon. Volunteers needed to assist with sale.

**33rd Annual Asheville Herb Fest,** WNC Agricultural Center, Fletcher, NC (close to Asheville Regional Airport), Friday, May 5-Sunday, May 7. [Details Here.](#)

**Monthly Meeting,** Monday, May 15, 6:30 pm (board meeting time TBA).

### plant sale

Bring any garden items that you want to donate to the MG Store to the Extension Office. Diane will begin to price items on April 19th in the exhibit hall. She'll send out an email with a starting time soon. Please consider coming out and helping Diane set up the store.

**Friday Office Hours in Horticulture,** April 14, May 5, June 2, July 7, August 4, September 8. [Register here to receive reminders.](#) See the entire 2022 playlist [HERE!](#)

**International Master Gardeners Conference,** June 18-22, 2023, Overland Park, Kansas. Early Bird registration discount has passed. [MORE INFO HERE.](#)

**Melody's Monday Musings** (Greene County), [More info HERE.](#)

More TEMG events in [THIS CALENDAR!](#)

### SAVE THE DATE!

**Eastern Regional Tennessee Master Gardener Conference,** September 8-9, 2023, Hamilton County. Registration will begin in July.

Matthew created a private portal for Master Gardeners to be able to access the Bylaws, contact list, volunteer manual. The link is at the bottom of the Master Gardener web page, and he has included the direct link as well. Let me know if you have any questions. It does require a password - check your email or call Matt to obtain.

**DUES ARE DUE!**  
[See page 9 for more info](#)

# letter from the president

*April...*

*it's all hands on deck!*

Here it is already, our busiest month! The weather has our climatological senses all mixed up, but as master gardeners we know to keep our eye more on the calendar as we plan our chores.

You know what's coming **April 22 – Plant Sale! Tammie Browning** is the head of that committee and will gladly lead you to all the different work areas for set up and the sale day. Put your name on that dotted line for a work slot: Ask a Master Gardener table, MG Plant Sales booth, **MG Store**, tours in the Demo Garden, runner for the vendors... lots of places to help!

Other things you can do right now – donate your new or gently used garden items or horticulture books and such for our MG Store. Be creative, decorate old pots! Donate that gnome sitting behind the shed! Talk to Diane McCullen about where to leave them for her.

ALSO for our sales booth – PLEASE shop for cases of your canned goods and save the box trays (and also short boxes) for us – they are great to pack up customer's orders so they can carry them out. The easier we can load it for them, the more they will purchase!

The transplanting of seedlings has begun in the **Teaching Patch Greenhouse**. We can always use more hands, watch your email for work days/times.



It's vitally important to come spend time on work days in the **Teaching Patch Demo Garden**. Right after the Plant Sale, it's the next big Publicity Project about our MG program. Agent Matt is planning community classes out there; we'll be using it for a JMG outdoor classroom; and open for tours. It needs show off our organization's gardening skills! Diane cannot begin to get it in shape without our hands. Watch your email, come donate some time – bring your water, gloves, and kneeling pad and enjoy the comradery there making it a great Teaching Patch!

Our **Tomato Seed Project** with all the county Kindergarteners is now done for this spring. Thank you, Patsy and all her helpers! It's such an important program introducing the plant/food connection. We might also see some of these tomatoes entered into the fair!

The gardeners at **My People Senior Activity Center Greenhouse**, another of our projects, will have their plant sale April 29th. If you don't find it at our earlier sale, be sure to run by theirs and fill in your beds.

And Don't Skip our Meeting Programs! If you just come to the monthly meetings you can fulfill your annual CEU

requirements. Diane is lining up excellent speakers, and is always open to hearing about others we need to have present. This month we'll learn about medicinal herbs and our next new teaching bed in the demo garden. Meetings this spring and summer at 6:30 p.m. but discussion will be ongoing about a different schedule for darker months. We'll also take a few minutes to share learning opportunities, or ask help from our fellow MGs on our own plant or garden issues. Time to pick our fellow gardening experts' brains!

If you just cannot participate in any of the above, how about writing an article for our newsletter? Be a photographer at our events? Send your garden pics to Teresa for the banner art? Our newsletter IS our club history and scrapbook right now – help us fill it with our members, activities, events.

And again to say THANK YOU FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER SPIRIT! Find a way to help us during this busy, busy spring season. Sharing the load always makes work lighter!

*Dixie Seaton*  
SCAMGA President





## THANK YOU! from the tomato seed project

The 2023 Tomato Seed Project was a huge success and has now been completed. We went to 13 schools and planted with 1300 kindergartners. Patsy Farmer, TSP Chairman, would like to THANK all the master gardeners who participated. Could not have done it without your help. TEAMWORK divides the task and multiplies the SUCCESS.

*Patsy Farmer*  
Chairman, Tomato Seed Project



## scamga speakers bureau

We all have our areas of gardening expertise that we hop you would be willing to share with our group or other groups in our community.

Andrew Hennigh is our Member at Large and the primary contact for this project. Please remember that he is your member contact with the board. Contact Andrew Hennigh, Diane McCullen, or Dixie Seaton if you have questions.

If you have ideas, projects, etc., to be considered please call Andrew. He is also in charge of the Speakers Bureau, so if you haven't signed up, please do so. As things continue to open up, we could have community groups seeking speakers in the late summer and fall. So please register if you are interested in sharing your expertise with local groups (while earning service hours).







SEVIER COUNTY AREA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

# meeting minutes

MARCH 20, 2023

**ATTENDANCE:**

26 plus the guest speaker.

**PROGRAM:**

Diane Warwick from the TN Division of Forestry presented “The Importance of Native Plants in Tennessee.”

**BUSINESS MEETING:**

Call to Order: 7:27 PM

**MINUTES:**

The February Minutes were accepted without change.

**TREASURER’S REPORT:**

The February report was accepted without change. Treasurer John Oakberg reminded the members that the UT transaction data is always one month late. He also stated that the Board had agreed to pay an increase in fee for the Associations storage unit, an increase from \$45 to \$57.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Karen Less reminded the members that today (March 20) is the deadline for MG apparel orders.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Dixie Seaton polled the members present to determine whether they favored changing the monthly meeting time from 6:30 PM to 6:00 PM. The majority favored 6:00 PM.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**TOMATO SEED PROJECT:** Patsy Farmer reported that 5 schools have been completed and that Northview Elementary is scheduled for this week.

**PLANT SALE:** Tammie Browning reported that 14 vendors have signed up so far to participate in the sale along with 1 food vendor. She then circulated signup sheets for members to volunteer for the various Plant Sale duties. She also made available flyers for members to use to advertise the sale.

**GREENHOUSE:** Dixie Seaton stated that volunteers will be needed in about 2 weeks to help with transplanting the seedlings that are growing now in the greenhouse.

**DEMO GARDEN:** Diane McCullen announced a workday for the garden on Tuesday, March 21, starting at 1:00 PM.

**JMGs:** Melanie Hill stated that the JMGs will be focused on native plants for the Plant Sale this year. They will also be building bug hotels for sale. During the summer they will have Mornings in the (Demo) Garden sessions and will be building an outdoor classroom for this purpose. On May 18 they will have a one day camp at the Smoky Mountains Heritage Center.

**SENIOR CENTER:** Lois Worthington reported for Glenna Julian that the plants for the Senior Center Plant Sale on April 29 are now growing in the Center’s greenhouse.

**WILDERNESS WILDLIFE WEEK:** No activity to report.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Before the meeting started Matt Anderson thanked those who participated in sorting and distributing trees for Arbor Day. He also stated that he is working on a field trip in May to the East Tennessee Nursery in Delano, TN.

Teresa Rae requested that all submissions for the next newsletter be sent by April 1.

Tammie Browning stated that now is a good time to contact the County Commissioners regarding improvements and repairs that need to be made to the Fair Grounds.

Dixie Seaton reminded the members that the last of the Keep Sevier County Beautiful presentations will occur at 11:00 AM on Thursday, March 23, at the King Family Library. The topic will be fermented vegetables.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 7:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*Carl Parsons*  
Secretary





# hot news from the greenhouse



Can you believe it's less than 3 weeks 'til our Plant Sale.!!?! Everything is sprouting in the greenhouse, most have been transplanted by the time this goes to print. NOW - its watering enough, but not too much. Watching for any unwanted visitors (insects!) A little fertilizing, turning trays, moving trays from top to bottom shelves and back... and then getting ready the 3000 or so labels that we'll need for all those pots!

And yet, with all that activity and responsibility, working in the greenhouse is my ZEN Place. It's quiet, calm, warm (!!), and all that Life around is just fills the soul.

**PLANT DONATIONS** – If you have perennials or shrubs that you split or propagate from your yard those are welcome. Also any flower or vegetable seedlings you have started! We just need clean pots and no bugs or disease. Be sure they are labeled with the plant name. They'll need to be here in time for the plant inspection – watch email for that date/time deadline. And Thank You for those donations!

We may need extra hands here as we check the greenhouse morning and evening these last few weeks. If you would could help in that capacity please let me know. The week before the sale is the most critical, and we will start moving plants over to the sales booth in the Exhibit Hall that Friday, April 21. Again, lots of hands can be used, and you'll learn along with us what is working and not working – it's just our continuing education as master gardeners!

*Dixie Seaton*

Greenhouse Coordinator



## demo garden news

The gardens are beginning to come alive. The work day in April has been moved to the **11th at 10:00 am**. We have lots to do to get ready for the Spring tours. I hope to see everyone in the garden this month!

Don't forget to add May 16th and June 20th to your calendar for our monthly scheduled work day. We will move the time to the morning as the days begin to heat up.

See you in the garden,  
*Diane McCullen*



# treasury report

Sevier Co. Area Master Gardener Assoc. | March 2023

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association March Financial Report							
Item	Month Account Summary			Budget Summary to Date			
	Income	Expense	Balance	Budget	Income	Expense	Balance
<b>MG account balance</b>	as of 02/28/23 5728.25						
Added approved items	314.00	0.00	314.00	0.00	314.00	0.00	314.00
County Fair decoration	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
County Fair MG	0.00	0.00	0.00	150.00	0.00	0.00	150.00
December dinner	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Demo garden	0.00	0.00	0.00	1000.00	0.00	94.69	905.31
Dues	90.00	0.00	90.00	0.00	855.00	0.00	855.00
Greenhouse	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Plant sale	215.00	260.91	(45.91)	1200.00	215.00	386.66	1028.34
Scrapbook	0.00	0.00	0.00	75.00	0.00	0.00	75.00
Senior Center	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Storage unit	0.00	57.00	(57.00)	540.00	0.00	147.00	393.00
Tomato seed project	0.00	23.89	(23.89)	750.00	0.00	23.89	726.11
Virtual meetings	0.00	0.00	0.00	165.00	0.00	0.00	165.00
Wilderness Wildlife Week	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Totals as of 02/28/23</b>	<b>305.00</b>	<b>341.80</b>	<b>6005.45</b>	<b>4080.00</b>	<b>1384.00</b>	<b>652.24</b>	<b>4811.76</b>
<b>MG account balance</b>	as of 01/31/23 4795.25			(February not yet available)			

MG Financial Report submitted by John Oakberg.

**A note from Matthew** (March 24 email to membership)

To help circulation and fend off bugs we need to add a fan to the SW corner of the greenhouse. The Board has approved the expenditure since it is under \$300 and the Greenhouse line had a small budget this year (moving plants to Plant Sale line).

**Thanks to the following  
MGs for paying your  
2023 dues!**

*\$25 per MG;  
\$15 for add'l MG spouse*

**According to the bylaws, the  
deadline for paying dues is April 30**

Jennifer Bacon  
Henry Barse  
Linda Barse  
Tammie Browning  
Andy Bush  
Pat Butler  
Natileene Cassel  
Lois Cooper  
Joan Falsone  
Patsy Farmer  
Rebecca Felty  
Bonnie Gathergood  
Sarah Gibson  
Steve Greenwell  
Kathy Hammer  
Andrew Hennigh  
Melanie Hill  
Glenna Julian  
Guane Julian  
Kathleen Lear  
Paul Lear  
Karen Less  
Leo Lubke  
Colette Mancke  
Diane McCullen  
John Oakberg  
Linda Oakberg  
Pam (Jeannie) Ogle  
Sandra Palmer  
Carl Parsons  
Teresa Rae  
Monica Scaccianoce  
Dixie Seaton  
Jerry Shonk  
Donna Stinnett  
Renee Thrap  
Steve Wilson  
Lois Worthington  
Bonnie Young

**JMG Budget/Expenditures**

	<b>12/31/2023</b>	<b>2/28/2023</b>	<b>3/31/2023</b>
Knoxville Funds	<b>2001.84</b>	<b>1963.84</b>	<b>1525.88</b>
Sevierville Funds	<b>963</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>466.49</b>
Total as of 12/31/2023	<b>2964.84</b>	<b>2509.84</b>	<b>1992.37</b>
Category	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Spent</b>	<b>Spent</b>
<b>EDUCATION:</b>			
Education -beyond the classroom	250		
Field Trips	250		
Summer Programs	250	31.44	24.66
<b>SUPPLIES-EDUCATION:</b>			
Leaf and Vine Supplies	150	57.53	27.85
Buds Club Supplies	150	50.78	27.00
<b>SUPPLIES-OTHER:</b>			
Fall Kick Off	50		
Plant Sale	250	180.79	
Garden	200	31.46	
<b>OTHER:</b>			
Fair Sponsorship	60		
Fair Ad	120		
Storage	114	38	38
JMG Leader Training	65	65	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>1909</b>	<b>455</b>	
Funds Not Budgeted	1055.84		399.96 Tables/Outdoor Classroom

*JMG Financial Report submitted by Melanie Hill.*



# earth stars

by Carl Parsons

There is a uniquely shaped fungus that you may encounter as you hike in the woodlands of East Tennessee, a fungus commonly called earth stars and scientifically geostres [geo (earth) + astrum (star)]. While various types of true earth stars are found all over the world, except for arctic and alpine regions, you are most likely to encounter a close cousin of the true earth star in Tennessee called *Astraeus hygrometricus*, variously known as “false earth star” or “barometer earth star.”

Its name owes to the earth star’s mature appearance when its “petals,” actually segments of its body, separate and spread out in a star-shaped pattern. Earth stars grow largely unnoticed in the spring, forming a leathery, inconspicuous, mahogany-colored, and stemless mushroom that seems pressed into the ground. During this time a spore pod is forming inside the mushroom. As humidity increases during the summer, the mushroom’s body absorbs the water unevenly, a characteristic called hygroscopy. This uneven absorption then causes the fungus to swell until its body breaks into segments that eventually peel back to expose and even elevate the now mature spore pod. Conversely, if the weather becomes too dry, the petals refold to protect the spore pod until more propitious weather arrives.

The mushroom’s reproduction strategy calls for an animal passing by to step on the exposed fragile spore pod or for rain to strike it. When such a



*Earth star in winter without pod, photo by Carl Parsons*

disturbance occurs, the pod explodes its spores in a dense dark brown cloud that quickly settles on the ground nearby. The spores then germinate in the moisture to begin the lifecycle again. Consequently, it is common to find clusters (or constellations) of earth stars, especially along the drip lines of trees where the chances of water striking the spore pod are improved.

Another important quality of earth stars is that they are mycorrhizal—that is, they can form a mutually beneficial relationship with other plants, in this case tree roots, especially those of oak and pine trees. The earth stars absorb the nitrogen they require from the tree roots while helping the trees to absorb from the soil the phosphorus they need to produce acorns and pine cones, respectively. However, if the

soil contains sufficient nitrogen, these mushrooms can grow without the benefit of tree roots.

So look for earth stars in meadows and along the drip lines of trees, especially during the late summer months; they peak in maturity during September and October. But because of their leathery bodies, their remnants can be found during the winter also, as seen in the photo above. While these mushrooms are especially interesting for their reproduction strategy, they are **NOT CONSIDERED EDIBLE**.

#### Sources:

[http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms\\_fungi/dec2003alt.html](http://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/dec2003alt.html)  
<https://blog.mycology.cornell.edu/2014/06/03/twinkly-earthstars/>  
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# CONTACT

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Newsletter content is due on the 1st of each month, and should be emailed to [peatree@peatreedesigns.com](mailto:peatree@peatreedesigns.com)  
*Articles submitted by members are welcome and should be 300-500 words. Photographs should be at least 3Mb in size. Please make sure emails that contain attachments are less than 10Mb (combined). If attachments exceed 10Mb, send in separate emails or use Dropbox.*

## committee chairs

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### Sev Co Fair

VACANT

### Tomato Seed Project

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# APRIL

*is National Gardening Month!*