



# roots

The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

JANUARY 2026





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## On The Cover

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is Tennessee's state evergreen and a resilient native tree well adapted to the region's climate.

Highly drought-tolerant once established, it thrives in a wide range of soils and conditions. Its distinctive blue, berry-like cones provide an important food source for birds and other wildlife.

With dense, year-round foliage, Eastern Red Cedar is an excellent choice for windbreaks, natural screening, and privacy plantings.

## January Meeting Info Monday, January 12, 2026

### Topic: Business and Potluck



Help SCAMGA kick off 2026 with a potluck and business meeting. Please note the date change due to extension office being closed on the third Monday of January.

Chilis and soups will be provided, so bring your favorite go-withs and let's ring in the new year in Master Gardener style.

## President's Column

First and foremost, I want to thank Diane, Andrew, Monica, John, and Steve for their successful leadership in 2025. We achieved all of our objectives, despite losing Matt halfway through the year, and seem to be starting this year on a positive note with plans in place and a healthy financial footing.

Those of you who have become master gardeners since 2022 may not be aware that I served two terms as SCAMGA president in 2020 and 2021. Things started a bit rocky in my first term when our extension director/master gardener coordinator retired in February, and we weren't even in the search process for a replacement when Covid hit. Rather abruptly, all our goals for 2020 quickly went out the window and we were suddenly in survival mode, with a greenhouse full of beautiful plants and a canceled in-person plant sale. We immediately came together as a group and found a way to sell plants online and developed a system of "touchless" pick up for our customers that followed every one of the laundry list of restrictions UT threw at us that year. We began holding monthly meetings via Zoom, which wasn't ideal, but did keep us in contact with one another. We even held our annual ice cream social and Christmas party over Zoom that year. A determined group of master gardeners can always find a way to accomplish their



objectives. Things did smooth out a bit by my second term, and we had a new extension director/master gardener coordinator in place by then. I truly hope we won't have any snags for my third term as president.

Hopefully we will have a new master gardener coordinator in place soon. In the meantime, we are moving ahead with plans for the annual plant sale, welcoming a new class of interns, and scheduling schools for the Tomato Seed Project. But what do we want our organization to be in 2026 and what can we accomplish together? The board and I will be discussing goals at our meeting before the meeting on January 12th, so if you have ideas for us to consider, please let Steve Greenwell, our Member-at-Large, or me know in advanced. And please remember that our board meetings are open, so if you're curious about what goes on during board meetings, feel free to join us. We would love to have you in attendance.

Happy Gardening - Karen

## Demo Garden News

Come Play in the Dirt With Us!

Do you like fresh air, getting your hands a little dirty, and laughing while you learn? Then the Demonstration Gardens might be your happy place!

Working in the demo gardens is a great way to pick up new gardening tips, share what you know, and spend time with friendly folks who love plants as much as you do. No green thumb required—we welcome beginners, seasoned gardeners, and everyone in between.

You'll help grow beautiful gardens that inspire the community, support pollinators, and show what really works in East Tennessee landscapes. Plus, it's good exercise, good company, and way more fun than weeding alone at home.

So grab a hat, bring your sense of humor, and come dig in with us—we promise smiles, learning, and maybe a little dirt under your nails!

We will have a workday on January 19th at 10:00 am in the Greenhouse. We will finish cleaning the trays and get the greenhouse ready to plant! We will have several workdays in February in the gardens. This will give us a chance to clean out the gardens and get ready to welcome the new growth and new plants that come with warmer weather. Please consider giving some of your volunteer hours to the Demo Garden.

Diane and Elizabeth



# Meeting Minutes

## November 17, 2025

### **Program**

Beekeeping by Jerry Shonk

### **Call meeting to order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by President Diane McCullen.

### **President's Report**

Diane asked the members to vote on the slate of Officers for 2016.

President Karen Less

VP Patsy Farmer

Secretary Shauna Byless

Treasurer Darlene Kemp

Member at Large Steve Greenwell

The officers were approved by acclimation.

### **Secretary's Report**

The minutes of the October meeting were recorded by Shauna Byless and published in the last newsletter. There were no corrections or additions so the minutes will stand as printed..

### **Vice President's Report**

There will be a potluck meal at the January 12th meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

John asked that all outstanding items for the budget need to be submitted as soon as possible.

### **JMG's Report**

Elizabeth O'Connell, Darlene Kemp and Mandy Hyde have agreed to be responsible for this group. They are currently working on scheduling and

content for this group. Tiny Tiller classes are tentatively scheduled for March, April and May of next year.

### **Extension Agent**

Absent

Update by Diane. All volunteer and education hours need to be entered by November 18 for certificates.

Hours for certification need to be submitted by December 31st.

Tree days will be March 19th and 20th 2026.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Demo Garden**

Diane reported that she needs volunteers to clean pots on November 18th at noon in the greenhouse. She also needs help cleaning the vegetable garden on November 20th at 10:00 AM.

#### **Senior Center**

Glenna said that there will be an organizational meeting on November 18th at 10 AM. Everyone was invited to attend.

#### **Newsletter**

Please submit all articles and information to Mandy by January 1st.

#### **Greenhouse**

Shauna Bayless asked for help cleaning pots. She is also picking out plants for upcoming sales.

#### **Wilderness Wildlife Week**

Steve reported that all volunteers are welcome to help with the booth.

### **MG Directory**

Lynn asked that all members who want to be included contact her.

### **Old Business**

#### **Christmas Party**

Diane asked that if you have a prize for Bingo, please bring it to the Christmas Party. The party will be on December 1st at 6 PM.

### **New Business**

#### **MG Class 2026**

Diane stated that she will be teaching these classes and that they will begin on March 3rd and will conclude on April 21st, 2026. They will be held on Tuesdays from 10 AM until 2 PM.

She asked that members who are interested in helping contact her.

#### **Plant Sale**

The upcoming plant sale will be held at the Senior Center on April 24th and on May 2nd, 2026. The hours will be from 10 AM until 2 PM. The price of the plants will be \$4.00.

#### **Website for MG portal**

Diane reported that the new password is 2013. The directory will be on this portal.

#### **Tomato Seed Project**

Patsy Farmer said that she is contacting the schools to set up dates in March.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was called to a close at 7:41 PM.

## Meetings and Events

Board Meeting, Monday, January 12th, 4:45 PM.

Monthly Meeting, Monday, January 12th , 6:00 PM. 2026 Kickoff with Potluck.

Wilderness Wildlife Week, Monday through Thursday, January 5th through 8th, 2026, LeConte Center.

2026 Intern Training, Tuesdays, March 3rd through April 21st.

Save the Date, TEMG State Conference, Knoxville, Wednesday through Friday, May 27-29, 2026.

## Volunteer Opportunities

Wilderness Wildlife Week, Monday through Thursday, January 5th through 8th, 2026.

Senior Center Work Days, Tuesdays, January 13th, January 27th, February 10th and Saturday, February 3rd. All at 10:00 AM

Demo Garden, January 19th 10AM. Tray cleaning.

## Educational Opportunities

Wilderness Wildlife Week, Monday through Thursday, January 5th through 8th, 2026.

May Lunch and Learn live zoom food crop webinar series- May 5, 12, 19, 26 (12:30-1:30 ET/11:30-12:30 CT)- Live delivery and launch of NEW Smart Gardens curriculum that will be available throughout the year. Sign up will be available for everyone around March.

Save the Date, TEMG State Conference, Knoxville, Wednesday through Friday, May 27-29, 2026.

UT Hort Friday Office Hours, Friday Office Hours June 12th, July 10th, August 14th, September 11th 10:00 am. Email reminder notification sign up available this spring.

Melody's Monday Musings (Greene County). [LINK HERE](#)

Buncombe County (NC) Master Gardener Video Series [LINK HERE](#)

Discover Life in America from our own GSMNP offers a variety of online educational resources, including a podcast and archives from the popular Science @ the Sugarlands. [LINK HERE](#)

## Annual Plant Sale

Assistance is needed with cleaning trays, planting and watering for the annual plant sale.

January 19 - Tray Washing

January 29 – Herbs

February 17 – Peppers

March 3 – Tomatoes

March 18 – Tomatoes

April 7 – Squash, Herb Bowls

All days will start at noon. These dates are subject to change. If the date is changed, an email will be sent to all members with the new date.

If anyone is interested in being a part of the greenhouse watering team, please contact Shauna Bayless, by text at 517-719-7290, and let her know the days and times you will be available this spring.



## Contacts

### Board

Karen Less, President  
greyheroncrafts@gmail.com or sevier-  
mastergardner@gmail.com  
828.308.5864

Patsy Farmer, Vice President  
patsyefarmer1950@gmail.com  
865.850.9644

Shauna Bayless, Secretary  
Shauna.bayless@gmail.com  
517.719.7290

Darlene Kemp, Treasurer  
kempmph@yahoo.com  
615.594.4617

Steve Greenwell, Member-at-large  
9catsfarm@gmail.com  
865.556.3636

### Project Coordinators

Greenhouse  
Shauna Bayless

Demonstration Gardener /Intern Class /  
Plant Sale  
Diane McCullen  
dmccullen11@gmail.com  
832.605.5769

Newsletter / Plant Sale  
Mandy Hyde  
mandy.hyde@earthlink.net  
951.662.8557

Tomato Seed Project  
Patsy Farmer

Junior Master Gardener  
Tiny Tillers  
Darlene Kemp  
Elizabeth O'Connell-Gifford  
eoget@aol.com  
518.461.0743  
Nature Scholars  
Mandy Hyde

Senior Center  
Open

Adam Hopkins,  
Sevier Co. Extension Director  
ahopkins@utk.edu  
865.453.3695

seviermastergardner@gmail.com

UT Sevier Co Extension Office  
865.453.3695.



2026 Organic Growers School  
Spring Conference, Saturday and  
Sunday, March 6th through 8th  
(Pre-Conference Sessions  
Friday, March 5th), Mars Hill  
University, Mars Hill, NC.

Tracks include Alternative  
Gardening Techniques,  
Gardening, Mushrooms, Native  
Plants & Wildscaping,  
Permaculture, Soils, and  
Sustainable Living, with multiple  
classes in each track, featuring  
regional and national presenters.

Pre-conference sessions feature  
full-day and half-day workshops  
and are held at  
Asheville-Buncombe Technical  
College in Asheville.  
[LINK HERE](#)

## Senior Center

Hello friends,

Got ideas? Curious what's  
coming up? Or just enjoy good  
conversation? Then come join  
us for our Senior Center  
organizational meeting on  
Tuesday, January 13th at 10:00  
a.m. at the Senior Center!

This will be a relaxed, friendly  
get-together to talk about ideas,  
plans, and what's coming up.  
Whether you want to share  
thoughts or just listen in,  
everyone is welcome - no  
pressure, just friendly faces and  
fun conversation. Bring your  
ideas and your questions,

We'd love to see you there and  
start the new year off together!

See you soon,  
Diane

## Winter Vegetable Lentil Soup

Serves  
4-6 people

### Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 medium onion, diced  
2 leeks, white and light green  
parts only, sliced and rinsed  
well  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
3 carrots, peeled and sliced  
2 celery stalks, sliced  
1½ cups dried green or brown  
lentils, rinsed  
6 cups vegetable broth  
1 bay leaf  
1 teaspoon dried thyme (or 1  
tablespoon fresh thyme)  
½ teaspoon ground cumin  
(optional, for warmth)  
Salt and black pepper, to taste  
2 cups chopped kale or Swiss  
chard (stems removed)  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
(optional, for brightness)

### Instructions

Heat olive oil in a large pot over  
medium heat. Add the onion  
and leeks and sauté for 4-5  
minutes, until softened.

Stir in garlic, carrots, and celery.  
Cook for another 2-3 minutes  
until fragrant.

Add lentils, vegetable broth, bay  
leaf, thyme, and cumin (if  
using). Bring to a gentle boil.  
Reduce heat to low, cover, and  
simmer for 30-35 minutes, or  
until lentils are tender.

Stir in kale or Swiss chard and  
cook for 5 more minutes, until  
greens are wilted.

Remove bay leaf. Season with  
salt and pepper, then finish with  
lemon juice if desired.

Serve warm with crusty bread  
or a simple green salad. This  
soup stores well and tastes  
even better the next day.

# November Financials

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association November 2025 Financial Report								
Item	Month Account Summary			Year Summary as of Month End				
	Income	Expense	Balance	Budgeted Income	Budgeted Expense	Actual Income	Actual Expense	Budgeted Funds Remaining*
Beginning amount	as of 10/31/25 9479.52							
Added approved items	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	163.28	342.92	(342.92)
County Fair	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
December meeting	650.00	0.00	650.00	930.00	930.00	1000.00	0.00	930.00
Demo garden	0.00	20.04	(20.04)	0.00	800.00	0.00	639.83	160.17
Dues	0.00	0.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	825.00	0.00	825.00
Greenhouse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	112.50	87.50
Plant sale	0.00	78.75	(78.75)	3800.00	1200.00	4266.90	428.02	771.98
Senior Center	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tomato seed project	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00	0.00	470.97	279.03
Virtual meetings	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	175.00	0.00	0.00	175.00
Wilderness Wildlife	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4H Scholarship	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	0.00	600.00	0.00
Ending: 11/30/25	650.00	98.79	10030.73	5630.00	4655.00	6255.18	2594.24	2885.76

\* Budgeted expense minus actual expense; for Dues, actual income

# 2026 Budget

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association 2026 Budget (Approved January 12, 2026)						
Item	2025 Actual Amounts (as of Nov 2025)				2026 Budget	
	Budget	Income	Expense	Balance	Income	Expense
Added approved items	0.00	163.28	342.92	(179.64)	0.00	100.00
County Fair	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
December meeting	930.00	1000.00	0.00	1000.00	930.00	100.00
Demo garden	800.00	0.00	639.83	(639.83)	0.00	800.00
Dues	0.00	825.00	0.00	825.00	900.00	0.00
Greenhouse	200.00	0.00	112.50	(112.50)	0.00	200.00
Plant sale	1200.00	4266.90	428.02	3838.88	3800.00	300.00
Senior Center	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tomato seed project	750.00	0.00	470.97	(470.97)	0.00	750.00
Virtual meetings	175.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	175.00
Wilderness Wildlife	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4H Scholarship	600.00	0.00	600.00	(600.00)	0.00	600.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4655.00</b>	<b>6255.18</b>	<b>2594.24</b>	<b>3660.94</b>	<b>5630.00</b>	<b>3125.00</b>
<b>Income minus expenses</b>	<b>3660.94</b>					<b>2505.00</b>

Balance as of 12/31/2024: 6558.72

Balance as of 11/30/2025: 10030.73

\* UT Balance: 10301.82

\$134.00 due as refund to MG

\$137.09 difference



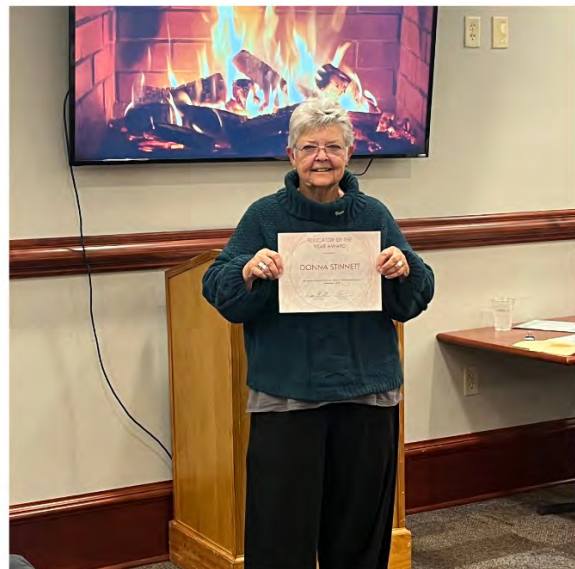
# Holiday Party



100+ Volunteer Hours



**Jerry Shonk**  
Butterfly Stewardship Award



**Donna Stinnett**  
Educator of the Year Award



Demo Garden Volunteers





2025 Master Gardener Class



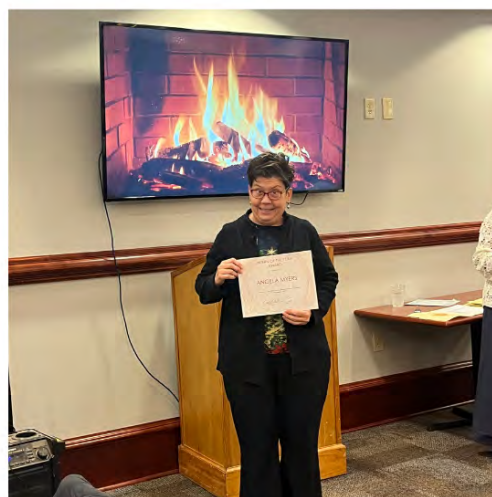
Most CEUs



Three Years of Service



Melanie Hill  
Junior Educator of the Year



Angela Myers  
Intern of the Year