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The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

FEBRUARY 2026



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## February Meeting Info Monday, February 16, 2026

**Topic: Tincture Making**  
**Speaker: Susan Morey**



Susan will provide a presentation about tincture making with a hands-on experience.

To participate in making your own tincture, please bring a pint or quart of 80 proof vodka. Patsy Farmer will provide quart jars. Cost of materials will be \$20.

If you don't wish to participate in the tincture-making activity, please come to learn from Susan about herbs for upper respiratory. Susan will also bring some of her most popular herbal remedies for sale.

If there are specific items you would like to purchase from Susan during her visit, please review her website at [www.belfirebotanicals.com](http://www.belfirebotanicals.com) and text her at 423-312-1731 so she can be sure to have it for you.

## On The Cover

Nellie Stevens holly (Ilex x 'Nellie R. Stevens') is a popular evergreen shrub or small tree valued for its dense foliage and bright red berries.

It's known for fast growth, excellent cold tolerance, and a naturally pyramidal shape, making it ideal for hedges, screens, or specimen plantings.

The plant produces glossy dark-green leaves year-round and, with a nearby male pollinator, abundant berries that add winter color and attract birds.

### DUES ARE DUE!

It's time to pay your SCAMGA dues. The cost remains \$25 this year. Please either drop off your check or cash at the extension office or mail them to Debbie at the office, 752 Old Knoxville Highway, Sevierville, TN 37862. Checks should be made payable to UT Extension—Sevier County. Deadline for paying dues is April 30th, but please do it as soon as possible so you can check it off your to-do list. Remember that paying dues and logging your volunteer service and CEU hours is what keeps you in active membership. Thank you!

## President's Column

I hope you were with us at the January meeting to help us recognize our four founding Sevier County master gardeners. Glenna Julian, Leo Lubke, Colette Mancke, and Jerry Shonk were part of the very first master gardener class in 2005, and they are still actively involved today, over 20 years later. In fact, they are all still very active. In 2025, the quartet amassed a total of 407.25 volunteer hours., with the lowest of the 4 logging 79 hours and three of the four earning oakleaf clusters. Leo also received the award for most CEUs earned.

We are still learning from them, too. Jerry gave us a very informative presentation on bees in November, Leo (along with Linda), taught us about growing degree days and wetlands at two different presentations during last year, and how many of us have learned about butterflies from Glenna? Colette has been invaluable in helping Patsy with the Tomato Seed Project.

We owe so much to these pioneers and value their many contributions to keeping our organization serving the community since 2005. Retaining 25% of the original 16 members of the first class 20 years ago is phenomenal. Think back to your intern class and how many people from your class are still active. The answer for me is 2, and for many classes, that answer is only one.



It's up to all of us to keep the organization moving forward and to keep each other active and engaged. Life happens for all of us and we rarely know what challenges others may be facing that would be a higher priority than master gardener projects and events. So, it's important that each of us does what we can to keep our fellow master gardeners connected to our organization.

If you haven't seen someone for a while, please reach out to see how they are doing. It takes all of us to meet the goals of our organization and sometimes people just need to know they have been missed to encourage them to join us again at meetings and events.

I also hope we can start our 2026 interns out on the right foot with making them feel welcomed and valued. As I mentioned at the January meeting, I would like as many of us as possible to attend at least a portion of the upcoming intern class to give them an opportunity to get to know us and our organization so

they will decide to stay with us after they complete the class. Let them know what you're passionate about as a master gardener and how they can join you in helping us toward our TEMG goal of providing environmental stewardship to our community through our shared love of gardening.

Happy Gardening,  
Karen



Steve Greenwell accepting the 2025 Dub Julian Award

# Meeting Minutes

## January 12, 2026

### Program

Chili/Soup Potluck

### Call meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:28 PM.

### President's Report

Karen Less introduced herself and thanked outgoing board members: Diane McCullen, president; Andrew Hennigh, vice-president; Monica Scaccianoce, Secretary; John Oakberg, Treasurer; and Steve Greenwell, member-at-large. She also welcomed the new board members: Karen Less, president; Patsy Farmer, vice-president; Darlene Kemp, treasurer; Shauna Bayless, secretary; and Steve Greenwell, member-at-large.

### Secretary's Report

The minutes from the November 17, 2025, meeting were published in the newsletter. There were no corrections or additions, so the minutes will stand as printed.

### Vice President's Report

No Report.

### Treasurer's Report

The report does not include December. Darlene is still waiting for the cost of the Christmas Party. There were no corrections or additions, so the report was approved as stands and will be submitted to the auditor.

Karen Hall moved, Andy Bush seconded to approve the 2026

budget as stands. Ayes all. Motion Carried. The board recommended not to raise dues this year and they will stay at \$25, cash or check. Dues must be paid by April 30th, 2026.

### Extension Agent

Badge presentations were made to Pat Butler-10 yrs. and Colette Mancke, Glenna Julian and Jerry Shonk--20 yrs. Adam said an offer has been made to a candidate for the MG Coordinator position, but he has heard nothing back from Tennessee State University.

### Committee Reports

#### Junior Master Gardener

This will be run by Darlene Kemp, Elizabeth O'Connell,-Gifford and MandyHyde. Little Tillers will be taught by Darlene and Elizabeth. Both will be starting in March.

#### Demo Garden

DThere will be tray washing at the greenhouse on January 19.

#### County Fair

Angela Meyer will be heading this committee.

#### Plant Sale

Diane McCullen and Mandy Hyde are co-chairs.

#### Intern Class

Diane will be teaching the new intern class starting on March 3. This will be a morning class. Karen asked that members stop in and meet the new interns.

#### Senior Center

Diane McCullen stated that Glenna Julian is no longer the

Senior Center coordinator and a new coordinator is needed.

### Tomato Seed Project

Patsy said she is contacting schools.

### Wilderness Wildlife Week

Steve stated that they had 42 people sign up for the newsletter, 22 were interested in the intern class and eight homeschooled children signed up for "Tiny Tillers".

### Newsletter

Mandy has asked that any articles for the newsletter be sent to her by the 15th of the month, with delivery to members on the 1st.

### Old Business

#### Greenhouse Breaker

Shauna stated that the fairground breaker box has been repaired and locked. There should be no further power outages.

### MG Directory

Lynn handed out a draft of the directory so members could approve their entry.

### Christmas Party Awards

Karen passed out awards from the Christmas Party: Dub Julian Award-Steve Greenwell, Educator Award-Donna Stinnett, Youth Educator-Melanie Hill, Rookie Award-Angela Meyers, Butterfly Award-Jerry Shonk.

### New Business

#### 2026 Goals

Karen went over the goals for this year that the board

# Meeting Minutes Continued

approved. They are: Recruit New Master Gardeners, Keep Current Membership Active and Engaged, and Develop Future Leaders for SCAMGA.

### Christmas Party

Patsy asked if the Christmas Party could be scheduled for every 1st Monday in December. She was given the ok to do so.

### Food at Meetings

Karen asked if we should offer food at every meeting. It was decided that it would add too much time to the meeting when we had a speaker.

### Plant Sale Date Change

Diane said the MG Rummage Sale will be at the Senior Center Rummage Sale on April 24. The plan was to have the Plant Sale on May 2 along with the Senior Center's Plant sale.

After discussion, it was decided that our Plant Sale should be April 25 at the Extension Office. Andy moved, Steve seconded, to have the Plant Sale on April 25, 2026 at the Extension Office.

### New Dashboard

John discussed the changes to the Master Gardener Dashboard, where members keep track of hours. Karen will change the selection of Flower & Garden Show & Sale to Plant Sale.

### Strategic Plan for Membership

Angela and Mady Wun proposed a plan to get the word out about

MG, gather data on potential new members, actively recruit new members and then keep them. This will coordinate with the first two goals for 2026 and a new position of Social Media Coordinator. Angela, Mady, Darlene and Steve will make up the committee.

### Adjournment

The meeting was called to a close at 7:44 PM.



## Social Media Co-Coordinator

Working in a team of two master gardeners, maintain the organization's media presence through social media and other outlets.

Manage SCAMGA Facebook page to post information regarding upcoming public events and ensure that questions posted in comments are routed to the appropriate person for response.

Manage organization's Instagram account. Submit information to free community calendars such as The Mountain Press and local TV and radio outlets.

Contact Karen Less for additional information or to volunteer for this position.

## Tomato Seed Project

Hey fellow master gardeners, Patsy Farmer here. The Tomato Seed Project that SCAMGA sponsors is coming up soon. It starts on March 2, 2026. For those of you who are not familiar with this project, it is a SCAMGA sponsored program where master gardeners go into all the Sevier County Public Schools that have Kindergartners and help them plant their very own tomato seeds. First, the teacher divides the class into three groups. One group sits at their desk and colors a worksheet on tomatoes. One group sits on the carpet while one of the master gardeners reads them a book on tomatoes. (Linda Oakberg is a pro at this!) Finally, the last group goes to the table where the master gardeners are all set up to help them plant their tomato seeds.

We usually schedule one school per day in the mornings. THIS is a most rewarding project to participate in and you will not want to miss it!! PLUS this is a great way to earn service hours!! You get to count your travel time to and from the schools and the time you are inside the schools. I should have sign up sheets with dates and times at our February meeting. Anyone interested in helping may sign up then or contact me at any time. Looking forward to working with all my master gardener friends (and new interns hopefully) in achieving another successful year with the "Tomato Seed Project".

Patsy Farmer, Chairman

## Meetings and Events

Monthly Meeting, Monday, February 16th , 6:00 PM. 2026 Guest Speaker: Susan Morey, Belfire

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

Board Meeting, Monday, March 16th, 5:00 pm.

Monthly Meeting, Monday, March 16th, 6:00 pm.

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



## Volunteer Opportunities

Senior Center Work Days, Thursdays February 5, 12, 18 and 26, 2026 from 9:00 - 11:00 AM

Greenhouse Planting Days: February 17 – Peppers, March 3 – Tomatoes, March 18 – Tomatoes, April 7 – Squash, Herb Bowls. All days will start at noon.

A Demo Garden work day may be scheduled for February, but it will be weather dependent. An email will be sent ahead of time if one is possible.

2026 Intern Class begins March 3rd and ends April 21st. Volunteer hours are earned by helping with classes. See schedule of topics on page 8.

## Educational Opportunities

CEUs can be earned for attending the 2026 Intern class as a participant. Please see schedule of topics on page 8 for additional information.

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](#)

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.

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.

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

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

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

Discover Life in America 2026 Park Science Colloquim  
March 5, 2026 9AM - 4PM In person or Zoom [LINK HERE](#)

## The Truth About Butterfly Bush



Butterfly Bush is far from beneficial; in fact, it's actually an invasive species that can impair the health of our local ecosystems.

Tennessee Invasive Plant Council is designed to highlight new plant species that have emerged as potential threats to native plant communities in Tennessee by focusing on species most likely to significantly affect intact native plant communities or hinder their restoration.

The list emphasizes species that matter most to those seeking to manage natural areas or restore native plant and animal habitats. In streamlining the list, TN-IPC strives to place a sharp focus on those species that pose the greatest threats to the integrity and function of native plant communities.

Species on the list are known to invade and disrupt natural plant communities in several states. Theoretically, the early detection/rapid response model could be used to eliminate infestations or reduce the spread of these species in Tennessee:

**Fiveleaf Akebia -*Akebia quinata***  
**Porcelainberry -*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata***  
**Giant Reed -*Arundo donax***  
**Butterfly Bush -*Buddleja davidii***

### FACTS ABOUT THE BUTTERFLY BUSH

**Origins:** Although Butterfly Bush grows easily in our region, it is not native to North America. The *Buddleja* genus originated in central China.

**Appearance:** Butterfly Bush is a deciduous shrub that can grow up to 15 feet high.

**Reproduction:** Butterfly Bush is extremely

successful at reproduction, giving it a competitive advantage over native flowering shrubs. It excels at seed production and dispersal. A study at Longwood Gardens found that there were over 40,000 seeds on a single flower spike. The shrub reaches maturity quite quickly, often producing extremely lightweight, winged seeds within the first year of growth, which travel far distances by way of water or wind. The germination rate is about 80 percent or above. These seeds can remain viable for three to five years in soil, and any cut stems can sprout again.

**Negative Impacts:** Butterfly Bush benefits pollinators but only at one stage of their life cycle. It attracts butterflies because it provides copious nectar. However, butterflies need host plants on which to lay eggs and on which their caterpillars feed. Not a single native caterpillar eats Butterfly Bush leaves.

If Butterfly Bush were just a pretty garden shrub, it would be less of a concern. But its high reproductive success and dispersal means that Butterfly Bush replaces native shrubs outside the garden. It establishes in sunny, well-drained sites including fields, roadsides, woods edges, and riverbanks, where native shrubs would have grown. Those vanished native shrubs were essential food sources for caterpillars. Without caterpillars, there will be no adult butterflies. Without caterpillars, birds will not survive.

**Control:** Butterfly Bush can be difficult to manage once established. Seedlings can be manually removed. It is possible to uproot and dig out mature specimens. The roots must be removed or they will re-sprout. Areas around the removal site should be planted with a native ground cover to prevent future seedling germination. You must dispose of any plant material completely, by burning or putting out in the garbage. Branches left on the ground can root into new shrubs.

If you already have Butterfly Bush as a planting, and do not want to remove it, you should prevent the spread by removing old flowerheads in the fall prior to seed dispersal. Dispose of the flowerheads in a controlled manner. Do not dump  
(Facts about the Butterfly Bush were taken from an article by Lillia Schmidt, Land Stewardship Intern, and Susan Charkes, Easement Steward)

# Intern Class Schedule

Below is the class schedule for our 2026 Intern Classes. There are few spots left if you wish to present to the Intern class. If you know anyone who would like to take the class please share the schedule and contact information.

2026 MG Class Schedule  
(PP – Power Point)

Date	Chapter	Subject	Activity
March 3rd	1, 2	Welcome Vegetation of TN	Interns Into Project Soil Test - <b>Adam</b> PP – Who we are and what we do
March 10 <sup>th</sup>	3 (At Home)	Field Trip Botany and Propagation	UT Grafting on Campus
March 17 <sup>th</sup>	4, 7	Stewardship Garden Design	Design new garden Senior Center
March 24 <sup>th</sup>	5, 6	Soil Science Soil Mgt	Make potting soil – <b>Shauna</b> Composting – Soil Test Results - <b>Adam</b>
March 31 <sup>st</sup>	11, 12	Vegetable Gardens Home Fruit	Hugel Garden – <b>Darlene</b> Plant Seeds in Greenhouse – <b>Lavonne</b> Straw Bale Garden – <b>Karen H.</b>
April 7 <sup>th</sup>	13, 14	Entomology & IPM Pathology & Diagnostic (Diseases)	Good and Harmful Bugs - Pollinators - <b>Monica</b> PP – Bugs and Diseases
April 14 <sup>th</sup>	10, 15, 16	Turfgrass & Weeds	Wildlife - <b>Diane</b> Weeds – <b>Diane</b>
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	8, 9	Woody Ornamentals Herbaceous Plants	

Application can be downloaded from the Master Gardener Website:

<https://sevier.tennessee.edu/master-gardeners/>

Or call Sevier County Extension Office at 865 453 3695

## 2026 Intern Class Snacks

Please consider signing up to make snacks for our new class. I would love for everyone to bring a snack around 11:30 and stay to introduce yourself. Let Diane (dmccullen11@gmail.com) know if you can provide a snack for our interns.

Snacks for the Intern Class

Date (Tuesday)	Sweet	Savory
March 3rd	1. Patsy 2. Becky	1. Becky 2.
March 17 <sup>th</sup>	1. Elizabeth 2.	1. Elizabeth 2.
March 24 <sup>th</sup>	1. Shauna 2.	1. 2.
March 31 <sup>st</sup>	1. 2.	1. 2.
April 7 <sup>th</sup>	1. 2.	1. Donna Stinnett. 2.
April 14 <sup>th</sup>	1. 2.	1. 2.
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	1. Lynn 2. 3.	Pizza

# 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  
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Tomato Seed Project  
Patsy Farmer

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Tiny Tillers  
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# Junior Master Gardeners



## Program Overview

The “Tiny Tillers” Junior Master Gardener program will launch its first class this March. This engaging three-month gardening experience is designed for children in 2nd through 5th grade. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the world of gardening while learning valuable lessons and skills.

### Class Schedule and Location

Classes will take place on Tuesdays – March 2, April 6, and May 4, 2026 – from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Two sessions will be held at the University of Tennessee Agriculture Extension Office, located at 752 Old Knoxville Highway, Sevierville, TN 37862. The second class will be a field trip to a local nursery.

## Program Goals

- Introduce basic plant biology in a simple, engaging manner.
- Promote environmental awareness and healthy eating habits.
- Develop fine motor skills through planting and watering seeds and plants.
- Encourage teamwork, patience, and curiosity about nature.
- Foster good stewardship for the environment through hands-on activities, a field trip, and enjoyable projects.

## Program Benefits

Each student will complete and take home their own agricultural project. In addition, all participants will receive a Junior Master Gardener certificate upon completion of the program.

## Registration Information

To sign up for the Tiny Tillers program, please contact the instructors:

Elizabeth Gifford:  
eogetn@gmail.com

Darlene Kemp:  
kempmph@yahoo.com  
Phone: 615-594-4617