



roots

The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

MARCH 2026





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March Meeting Info Monday, March 16, 2026

Topic: Certifying Your Landscape Speaker: Leo and Linda Lubke

This topic is especially relevant as we, as Master Gardeners, promote environmental stewardship through our home landscapes. A variety of different themes and emphases will be included in this PowerPoint presentation. Bring a guest!



On The Cover

Spring is just around the corner and the daffodils are leading the way.

Daffodils are perennial bulbs known for their bright trumpet-shaped blooms that signal early spring. They naturalize well, meaning they multiply over time when planted in suitable conditions.

Meet Catherine “Cat” Lawson

I was born and raised in Hamblen County. I attended Morristown West High School and Walters State Community College. From there, I went on to study Plant Sciences with a concentration in Public Horticulture at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I graduated in December 2024 with my bachelor’s degree.

I’ve gained experience interning at the UT Gardens, working in greenhouses, volunteering, doing private gardening, and most recently serving as the Groundskeeper at Ancient Lore Village. In my free time, I love to read, bake bread, and—of course—garden. I am so excited to be your new Extension Agent, and I look forward to getting to know and work with each of you.

President's Column

What is your favorite part of being a master gardener? Is it working in the Demo Garden, helping in the Greenhouse, being part of the Tomato Seed Project, or one of our other community projects? Have you ever considered that these projects are only made possible because we have people in our organization willing to step into leadership roles to make them happen?

Our organization needs leaders in order to be successful. We need people to step into leadership roles for our various projects, but beyond that, we need people to lead those individuals and the rest of our organization by stepping into positions on the executive board. When I was an intern, our executive board consisted of seven people.

During my first term as president, the bylaws committee restructured our board and now we have only five positions. But it has not seemed any easier to fill five positions than it was to fill seven. Master gardeners is something we are passionate about, but we all have lives outside of the organization. We may not be aware of what board members do and how much time it would take to fulfill the responsibilities. Some people don't feel they have the organizational, financial, or public speaking skills to be of service. Some of these skills can be learned and applied not only to a master gardener board position, but to other parts of



life. Learning new skills is something we all should be doing to keep ourselves sharp and engaged as we age.

We are only into the third month of 2026, but I would like everyone, especially newer master gardeners, to consider serving on the board for 2027. Look at the bylaws to see what the responsibilities of the officers entail. Talk to existing board members to see what they do. Attend a board meeting (we have one coming up before our March monthly meeting).

If there are some leadership topics you are interested in learning about, let me know and I can put together some short training sessions (PSA: I used to do that for a living). I have already announced that I will not be seeking a second term as president, and Steve is in his second term as Member-at-Large, so he is not eligible for reelection to that position. Some of the remaining board members will hopefully stay in their positions or decide to move into an open board position. There also may be some people currently leading projects that won't return to that

position for 2027.

So we will need people to step into leadership roles with SCAMGA. If our organization is going to survive and thrive into the future, we need to start cultivating leaders now. Please take time to consider how you might be of service next year and in the years to come in a leadership role with SCAMGA.

Happy Gardening,
Karen



There will be another planting day at the greenhouse on Tuesday, March 3, at noon. We will be planting slow-growing tomatoes: Celebrity, Sun Gold, Early Girl, Cherokee Purple, and Mountain Merit. It should only take 1 hr. to 1.5 hrs. to plant. Hope to see you there!

Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2026

Program

The program was presented by Susan Morey from Belfire Botanicals, who demonstrated how to make tinctures.

Call meeting to order

Meeting was called to order at 7:28 pm. Karen introduced Cat Lawson, our new Master Gardener Coordinator.

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

Minutes from the January 12, 2026, 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

Darlene reported that we have \$1,885.36 in available funds starting in 2026. UT reported a \$29.07 difference, so a review of all 2025 transactions was conducted. We were in perfect

balance as of January 2026.

Also planned is an internal audit of the records, as required by our organization's bylaws. That committee will meet in March and report in April. Three volunteers are needed for the committee. If you are interested, please contact Karen Less or Darlene Kemp.

Extension Agent

Cat said that volunteers will be needed to sort and give out trees for Tree Day, with March 19th being the set up day and March 20th being pick up day. Contact her for further details or to volunteer.

Committee Reports

Junior Master Gardener

Tiny Tillers will start on March 3 at 6 PM at the Extension office and continue on the first Tuesday of April and May. They have six signed up so far.

Demo Garden

Workdays scheduled for March 11, March 20, and April 1 at 10 AM.

Greenhouse

The next planting day is March 17 at noon. The greenhouse will be getting water from the fairgrounds as soon as they turn the water on. Shauna is working on a misting system to water the plants, hopefully for 2027.

Plant Sale

No Report.

Intern Class

No Report.

Senior Center

There will be work sessions at their greenhouse on February 19 and 26 from 9-11 AM.

Tomato Seed Project

Patsy said that she has all of the schools scheduled. If you would like to help, contact Patsy at 865-850-9644.

Social Media

Darlene said that we have two Facebook sites. One is for JMG's and has had 1,588 views so far. The other is for MG's, and that one has had 2,198 views. She is also looking for someone to help her manage the pages and other media.

Newsletter

Karen stated that the deadline for articles being on the 15th has worked out well, except for minutes from meetings held after the 15th.

Old Business

MG Directory

Lynn made hard copies of the directory to pass out. It is also on the UT Sevier County Master Gardener Website. The directory on the UT Dashboard includes inactive members, many who have moved out of the area, so the information on many is not accurate. We plan to see if it is possible to delete non-active members from this directory.

New Business

SCAMGA Service, CEU and Project Guide

The guide has been updated and will be on the UT Sevier County Master Gardener

Meeting Minutes Continued

Website.

Announcements

Dues are \$25.00 and need to be given to Darlene or Debbie by April 30th.

Adjournment

The meeting was called to a close at 8:02 pm.



Audit Committee

In accordance with the SCAMGA bylaws, we need to form a three-person audit committee to review our 2025 financial records. No higher math skills are required and this should be a quick and easy process, hopefully requiring only one or two meetings. The committee will probably need to meet during week day daytime hours due to the need to involve Debbie Hurst. The committee will meet in March and will report its findings to the membership at the April monthly meeting. If you could serve in this important role, please contact Darlene Kemp (kempmph@yahoo.com) or Karen Less (greyheroncrafts@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

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 - Adam PP – Who we are and what we do
March 10 th	3 (At Home)	Field Trip Botany and Propagation	UT Grafting on Campus
March 17 th	4, 7	Stewardship Garden Design	Design new garden Senior Center
March 24 th	5, 6	Soil Science Soil Mgt	Make potting soil – Shauna Composting – Soil Test Results - Adam
March 31 st	11, 12	Vegetable Gardens Home Fruit	Hugel Garden – Darlene Plant Seeds in Greenhouse – Lavonne Straw Bale Garden – Karen H.
April 7 th	13, 14	Entomology & IPM Pathology & Diagnostic (Diseases)	Good and Harmful Bugs - Pollinators - Monica PP – Bugs and Diseases
April 14 th	10, 15, 16	Turfgrass & Weeds	Wildlife - Diane Weeds – Diane
April 21 st	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



13th Annual
TENNESSEE TREE DAY
MARCH 21, 2026

Meetings and Events

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

Monthly Meeting, Monday, April 20, 6:00 PM

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



Volunteer Opportunities

Tomato Seed Project starts March 2nd. Contact Patsy Farmer for remaining volunteer opportunities.

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

2026 Intern Class begins March 3rd and ends April 21st. Volunteer hours are earned by helping with classes.

Senior Center Work Days, Thursday, March 12th, Thursday, March 26th, Thursday, March 19th, and Friday, March 20th (last two are helping Jerry plant tomato seeds). All days start at 9 AM.

Demo Garden work days Wednesday, March 11th, Friday, March 20th, Wednesday, April 1. All days start at 10 AM.

Tennessee Tree Days March 19th and 20th. See Cat Lawson for information.

Educational Opportunities

CEUs can be earned for attending the 2026 Intern class as a participant. Please see schedule of topics on page 5 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.

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 Colloquium March 5, 2026 9AM - 4PM In person or Zoom [LINK HERE](#)

December and January Financials

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association December 2025 Financial Report								
Item	Month Account Summary			Year Summary as of Month End				
	Income	Expense	Balance	Budgeted		Actual		Funds
				Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Remaining*
Beginning amount	as of 11/30/25		10219.66					
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	50.00	1000.40	(950.40)	930.00	930.00	1050.00	1000.40	(70.40)
Demo garden	0.00	0.00	0.00	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	0.00	0.00	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: 12/31/25	50.00	1000.40	9269.26	5630.00	4655.00	6305.18	3594.64	1885.36

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

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association January 2026 Financial Report								
Item	Month Account Summary			Year Summary as of Month End				
	Income	Expense	Balance	Budgeted		Actual		Funds
				Income	Expense	Income	Expense	Remaining*
Beginning amount	as of 12/31/25		9298.33					
Added approved items	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
County Fair	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
December meeting	0.00	0.00	0.00	930.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Demo garden	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	800.00	0.00	0.00	800.00
Dues	275.00	0.00	275.00	900.00	0.00	275.00	0.00	275.00
Greenhouse	0.00	182.36	(182.36)	0.00	200.00	0.00	182.36	17.64
Plant sale	0.00	0.00	0.00	3800.00	300.00	0.00	0.00	300.00
Senior Center	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tomato seed project	0.00	146.66	(146.66)	0.00	750.00	0.00	146.66	603.34
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	0.00	600.00
Ending: 01/31/26	275.00	329.02	9244.31	5630.00	3125.00	275.00	329.02	3070.98

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

Junior Master Gardeners

SEVIER COUNTY AREA MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

NATURE SCHOLARS YOUTH GARDENING CLASS

MARCH 18 - APRIL 15 - MAY 20, 2026
6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

In this three-class hands-on gardening experience, young learners become Nature Scholars as they dig into the science and wonder of the natural world. Each session explores a new theme through interactive lessons.

Along the way, students will explore gardening themes in literature to learn how nature inspires writers and storytellers.

Register with the instructor by emailing
mandy.hyde@earthlink.net

CLASSES HELD AT
UT EXTENSION OFFICE
752 OLD KNOXVILLE HIGHWAY, SEVIERVILLE, TN 37862

Tiny Tillers

Engage, Explore, and Grow at the UT Ag. Ext. Office in Sevierville

Exciting news for young nature enthusiasts! The upcoming class "Tiny Tillers" is specially designed for students in 2nd through 5th grade, offering a fun and interactive opportunity to learn all about how plants grow. Through hands-on activities, kids will explore the wonders of nature and gain valuable lessons in responsibility as they cultivate their very own plant.

Tiny Tillers classes will be held at the UT Ag. Extension Office in Sevierville, with three engaging sessions scheduled for March 3rd, April 7th, and May 5th. Each class runs from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., providing plenty of time for discovery, creativity, and teamwork. Whether your child is a budding gardener or simply curious about the natural world, this class is an excellent way to spark their interest and help them grow—both as gardeners and as individuals.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to nurture your child's love for plants and the environment. Register today and let your tiny tiller dig in, explore, and flourish!

Please contact the Tiny Tiller instructor at kempmph@yahoo.com or call Darlene Kemp at 615-594-4617. You can also find the class flyer and registration for on the FaceBook page.

Contacts

Board

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

Patsy Farmer, Vice President
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865.850.9644

Shauna Bayless, Secretary
Shauna.bayless@gmail.com
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Darlene Kemp, Treasurer
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Steve Greenwell, Member-at-large
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Project Coordinators

Greenhouse
Shauna Bayless

Demonstration Gardener /Intern Class /
Plant Sale
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Newsletter / Plant Sale/ Nature Schol-
ars
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Tomato Seed Project
Patsy Farmer

Junior Master Gardener
Tiny Tillers
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UT Sevier Co Extension Office
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Native Pollinator Info

Tennessee's diverse landscapes—from Appalachian highlands to river valleys—provide habitat for a rich array of pollinators, including native bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, and hummingbirds. These species are essential for ecosystem health and agricultural productivity, helping plants reproduce and supporting food crops like tomatoes, squash, berries, and orchard fruits.

However, habitat loss, pesticides, and climate stressors have contributed to declines in many pollinator populations.

Homeowners in Tennessee can make a meaningful difference by planting native flowers that provide nectar and pollen throughout the growing season.

Why Native Plants Matter

Native pollinator plants are adapted to local soils, climate, and wildlife interactions. They tend to:

- Support a greater diversity of native pollinators than non-native ornamentals;
- Require less water and maintenance once established;
- Flower at the right times to feed pollinators through spring, summer, and fall.

Pollinator-Friendly Plants for Tennessee Gardens

Here are gardeners' favorites that thrive in Tennessee and attract a wide range of pollinators:

Spring Bloomers

- Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) – Early nectar source for bees.
- Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) – Bell-shaped blossoms beloved by bumblebees.
- Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) – A mint family member with fragrant pink flowers.

Summer Favorites

- Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) – Long-lasting blooms that attract butterflies and native bees.
- Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) – A nectar and pollen powerhouse; also drought-tolerant.
- Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) – Red blooms draw hummingbirds, honeybees, and butterflies.

Fall Sustainers

- Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) – Often unfairly blamed for allergies but vital for late-season bees.
- Asters (*Symphyotrichum* spp.) – Provide critical nectar as other blooms fade.
- Blue Mistflower (*Conoclinium coelestinum*) – Spreads easily and feeds late-season pollinators.