



roots

The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

MAY 2026





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May Meeting Info Monday, May 18, 2026

Topic: All Things Bears Speaker: Ryan Williamson

Ryan Williamson, Wildlife Biologist for the past 12 years located in Sevier and Cocke Counties, will be our guest speaker at our next monthly meeting on Monday, May 18th at 6:00 pm. Ryan has a BS and MS in Wildlife Science from UT. He specializes in bear capture and immobilizations. Bring your bear questions. Ryan will not be accompanied by any bears.

On The Cover

Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) are cheerful, native wildflowers known for their golden-yellow petals and dark brown centers. Blooming from early summer through fall, they thrive in full sun and well-drained soil, making them a reliable choice for Tennessee gardens. These low-maintenance plants are drought-tolerant once established and attract pollinators like bees and butterflies. Ideal for borders, wildflower meadows, or naturalized areas, they also make excellent cut flowers and can reseed readily for continued seasonal color..



President's Column

WHEW! April was definitely a busy month, wasn't it? Our 2026 interns completed their training and are already integrating into our projects and routines. We're very glad to have them with us as they help our organization to grow and thrive.

Then there was the plant sale, our major fundraiser of the year. Despite the not-so-great weather, we had a phenomenal sale. When I arrived for my 11-2 shift, we had one tomato and two cucumber plants, plus some herbs and assorted houseplants. Getting the word out via social media seemed to really help, and buyers came out early because the weather was supposed to intensify. Thank you to the volunteers who came out to help us serve our community with gardening advice and sent them home beautiful plants. And those plants would not have been available had it not been for the diligence of "the Green Crew" who planted the seeds, and nurtured and watered those plants. Special thanks goes out to Shauna Bayless for heading up the greenhouse once again this year. I hope you picked up some beautiful plants for your garden that will nourish you through the season. A major thank you also goes out to Diane McCullen and Mandy Hyde for serving as co-chairs for the event, and to Andy Bush for stepping in for Diane at the last minute for day of sale.

I also want to thank Diane McCullen for her leadership



chairing the Demo Garden since 2022. Diane has chosen to step away from this role due to other commitments. Elizabeth Andrews will remain as co-chair, and Karen Hall will be coming back into a leadership role with the Demo Garden. This is one of our signature projects and we need to keep it going strong. We are always looking for volunteers on work days, and I hope you will join us there. Our scheduled work day there will be second Monday of each month starting in June. And don't forget to register for the TEMG State Conference at UT Knoxville. The dates are Wednesday, May 27th through Friday, May 29th (registration link is available on page 6 under May Meetings and Events). It will be a jam-packed event with master gardeners from across our state in attendance, along with our UT Hort faculty and staff. There will be workshops, tours (including of the UT Gardens and IJAMs Nature Center), and the announcement of the 2026 Search for Excellence Awards (we worked on award submissions last month, so come celebrate when we win!). It will be a great time with lots of learning—and a chance to knock out your CE hours while having a great time! Happy Gardening!

Karen

Note from Diane

Dear SCAMGA,

As I step down from my role as Chair of the Demo Garden Project, I want to share my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to serve. This experience has meant so much to me, and it has truly been a privilege to be part of something so special.

Working alongside each of you has been incredibly rewarding. I will always cherish the friendships, the shared hard work, and the sense of purpose we built together. Watching the garden grow and flourish—through all our efforts—has been both inspiring and deeply meaningful to me.

Thank you for your support, encouragement, and dedication. You have made this journey one I will always hold close. While I may be stepping away from this role, the Demo Garden and all of you will remain in my heart.

I know the gardens will continue to succeed, grow, and thrive as the project moves forward.

With sincere appreciation and warmest regards,
Diane

Meeting Minutes

March 16, 2026

Program

The program "Bat Rehabilitation" was presented by Susie Kaplar from Bat Education and Rehabilitation of Grainger County.

Call meeting to order

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Secretary's Report

The minutes from the March 16, 2026, meeting were published in the last newsletter. There were no corrections or additions, so the minutes will stand as printed.

Vice President's Report

Patsy reported that the May program will be presented by Ryan Williamson, who is a wildlife biologist for Sevier and Cocke Counties.

Treasurer's Report

Darlene reported that we have \$2,505 remaining in the annual budget. April 30 is the last day to pay the \$25 dues. A donation has been made to the 4-H scholarship in the amount of \$600. The treasurer's report was approved as presented.

Darlene went through the 2025 financials and reported that the audit was accepted. Thanks was given to those who worked on the audit.

Extension Agent

Cat reported that Farm Day will be May 12-13. She needs an MG presentation for children. Please contact her if you are interested

in helping. The "Ask a Master Gardener" booth will be at the Seymour Farmer's Market on June 27 and August 22.

Committee Reports

Junior Master Gardener

Darlene reported that Tiny Tillers met on April 7 and were taught about soil and planting. Participants made stepping stones, and planted tomato seeds or bush beans to take home. The last class is on May 5 and those present for all three classes will receive a certificate.

Demo Garden

Diane McCullen has stepped aside as co-chairperson. Elizabeth Andrews has taken over as chair. A co-chair is needed to help. Please contact Karen Less if interested.

Greenhouse

Shauna stated that the plants are ready to go for the sale on April 25. Had some problem with thrips, but that is now under control. A water spraying system will be installed soon. Report given on new water hookup in the demo garden.

Plant Sale

Diane has also stepped aside from the Plant Sale because of family issues. Andy Bush has agreed to co-chair the sale with Mandy. If weather turns bad at the sale, it will be closed and moved to the Senior Center's sale on May 2. Reminder given about bringing donated plants to the sale. Cat has arranged to store indoor plants in the conference room.

Sevier County Fair

No Report.

Senior Center

Lynn reported that the Senior Center plant sale is May 2. Interns will be attending a tree tour of the grounds and making labels for the trees.

Tomato Seed Project

Patsy reported that the project is finished for the year and went very well. She thanked all of her helpers.

Social Media

Darlene stated that the Facebook page has reported 10,595 views in the last 30 days. This is up 68%. Darlene met with intern Paige Huffaker who has ideas on making the page more appealing. Steve Greenwell also had great ideas on marketing our MG program to the community.

Newsletter

Deadline for all articles is the 15th of every month.

Old Business

Intern Class

The class will end on April 21. Intern Joan Paul, who was in attendance, was recognized.

Plant Sale Donations

Members were asked to label donated plants and bring to the sale before 9 am the day of the sale for inspection.

New Business

TEMG Conference

TEMG Conference-May 27-29 at UT Knoxville. Registration is

Meeting Minutes Continued

\$160 before May 1 and \$175 after. Go to <https://mastergardener.tennessee.edu/2026-tennessee-master-gardener-conference/> for more information.

Search for Excellence

We are entering five categories: Workshop/Presentation: Leo and Linda's presentation on Growing Degree Days; Youth: Patsy Farmer's Tomato Seed Project; Partnership: Senior Center; Written Communication: Newsletter; Individual MG: Glenna Julian. Karen asked if anyone had pictures or stories about Glenna, please get them to her by May 1

Adjournment

The meeting was called to a close at 7:45 pm.

Tomato Seed Project

Fellow Master Gardeners!

The annual 2026 Tomato Seed Project that we do as Sevier County Master Gardeners was again a huge success this year. We (17 certified master gardeners and 4 new interns) traveled to 13 different schools and planted with 1,205 kindergarteners. We had the sweetest children to work with. They were very well behaved and so excited to plant their very own tomato seeds.

The certified master gardeners that helped were Pat Butler, Nat Cassel, Lynn Chalache, Margaret Donnenhoffer, Linda Douglas, Joan Falsone, Becky Felty, Lavonne Gillespie, Glenna Julian, Darlene Kemp, John & Linda Oakberg (Linda punched holes in around 1500 cups), Terri O'Lear, Jerry Shonk and Lois Worthington. The new interns that helped were Alyssa Hale, Kayla Lowe, Jeannie Ogle, Karen Rausis (She's an awesome photographer), Donna Whaley and Mary Wilson.

I would like to say thank you to each and everyone who helped with the 2026 Tomato Seed Project in any way. The success of this project was most certainly a group effort!

TEAMWORK divides the task and multiplies the SUCCESS.

Patsy Farmer, Chairman
Tomato Seed Project



Tomato Seed Project Fun

Meetings and Events

Senior Center Plant Sale, Saturday, May 2nd, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

May Board Meeting, May 18th, 5:30 PM.

Monthly Meeting, Monday, May 18th, 6:00 PM.

TEMG State Conference, Knoxville, Wednesday through Friday, May 27-29, 2026. Registration and information. [LINK HERE](#)

Monthly Meeting, Monday, June 15th, 6:00 PM.

Volunteer Opportunities

Senior Center Plant sale Saturday, May 2nd, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Greenhouse Cleanup Day, Wednesday, May 6th, Noon.

Demo Garden Work Day Monday, May 4th and Friday, May 15th 9:00 AM

Educational Opportunities

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 for notifications. [LINK HERE](#)

UT Hort Friday Office Hours, Friday Office Hours June 12th, July 10th, August 14th, September 11th 10:00 AM. Sign up for notifications. [LINK HERE](#)

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

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](#)



Thank you to all of our plant sale volunteers—we're so grateful for each of you. Whether you planted seeds, watered plants, donated items, or braved the pouring rain to help at the sale, your efforts made it all possible. We truly appreciate you!

March Financials

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association March 2026 Financial Report								
Item	Month Account Summary			Year Summary as of Month End				
	Income	Expense	Balance	Budgeted		Actual		Funds Remaining*
				Income	Expense	Income	Expense	
Beginning amount	as of 02/28/26		9225.05					
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	577.41	(577.41)	0.00	800.00	0.00	617.40	182.60
Dues	250.00	0.00	250.00	900.00	0.00	825.00	0.00	825.00
Greenhouse	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	0.00	269.63	(69.63)
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	128.11	(128.11)	0.00	750.00	0.00	466.77	283.23
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	600.00	(600.00)	0.00	600.00	0.00	600.00	0.00
Ending: 03/31/26	250.00	1305.52	8169.53	5630.00	3125.00	825.00	1953.80	1996.20
Net Income			<u>(1,055.52)</u>		<u>2,505.00</u>			<u>(1,128.80)</u>

We had another great month – we balanced with the UT Ag. Ext. Office’s bookkeeping. From the financial report displayed, you are able to see the following: Dues are coming in. The 30th of April is the last day for people to pay their annual dues. We currently have collected \$825 of the \$900 that was budgeted. If anyone here has not paid their dues, they can do so tonight. The \$25 for dues can be paid directly to me, or you can drop off a check or mail the check to the UT Extension office, here in Sevierville.

The Demo Garden remaining budget is \$182.60. The Plant Sale expenses have run a bit higher than anticipated. We are currently \$69.63 over budget. We

are expecting the Plant Sale to bring in \$3,800. The Plant Sale is our largest event to raise money for the Master Gardener program.

The Tomato Seed Project budget was set for \$750. To date, the expenses are \$466.77 leaving \$283.23 for any additional and related expenses.

Each year, the Master Gardeners donate to the 4-H Scholarship which allows for some children to attend camp at little or no charge. We donate this money in an effort to educate children about gardening, ecology, and much more. This year, we were asked to give \$600 which has been

paid.

Net income totals are listed at the bottom of the report. For this month, we had expenses and income that left us with a negative total of \$1,055.52.

For our budget, we are looking very good. We still have \$2,505.00 remaining in the overall annual budget.

The last number shows what we have in income and expenses for the year. We are over budget by \$1,128.80. This being said, there is no need for alarm, at this point. With the Plant Sale to be held this Saturday, we expect our income to considerably increase.

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Edible Herbs



Edible herbs are among the most rewarding plants for home gardeners, offering beauty, fragrance, and fresh flavor for everyday cooking. In addition to enhancing meals, they attract beneficial pollinators like bees and butterflies and can even help repel garden pests.

One of their biggest advantages is how easy they are to grow. Herbs are low-maintenance, adaptable, and thrive in a variety of settings—from backyard beds to small containers on patios or balconies—making them ideal for gardeners of all experience levels.

A successful herb garden starts with thoughtful planning. Gardeners should consider the difference between annuals (like basil and cilantro) and perennials (such as thyme, sage, and lavender), using perennials as a long-term foundation and rotating annuals seasonally. Grouping plants with similar sunlight and watering needs also simplifies care and improves growth.

Ultimately, the best herb garden is one tailored to your kitchen. By growing herbs you regularly use, you gain convenient access to fresh ingredients while adding visual appeal and productivity to your garden space.