



roots

The monthly newsletter of the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association

JULY 2026



In This Issue

July Meeting Info	2
Letter from the President	3
Demo Garden News.....	3
Minutes	4
Meetings and Events	5
Educational Opportunities.....	5
Volunteer Opportunities	5
Financials	6
Social Media Report.....	6
TEMG Conference.....	7
Contacts.....	9

On The Cover

Hydrangea quercifolia, commonly known as oakleaf hydrangea, is a beautiful fit for East Tennessee gardens, offering white summer blooms that fade to pink, bold oak-shaped foliage, and rich fall color. This Southeastern native thrives in moist, well-drained soil with sun to partial shade, making it well suited to woodland edges, shaded borders, and naturalized landscapes across the region.



Guess what, fellow Master Gardeners – it's almost picnic time!

Don and I are happy to host another picnic this year at my family's pavilion on the river, located at 3530 Sam Ellis Way, Sevierville, TN 37876 on **Monday, July 20th at 6:00 PM.**

This picnic is a thank-you to everyone who helped with the Tomato Seed Project, but all Master Gardeners and their spouses are invited!

My husband and I will provide the meat – hamburgers and hot dogs – along with buns and chips. Everyone else is invited to bring a side dish or dessert to share.

Please let me know by July 1 if you plan to attend so we can get an accurate head count.

You may also want to bring a lawn chair. We will have picnic tables available, but a chair might be more comfortable.

We will be playing Bingo and need prizes. If you have extra garden produce you could donate for prizes, we would appreciate it.

We look forward to seeing everyone there!

Directions:

Coming from Sevierville take Dolly Parton Parkway going toward Newport, until you see Weigels on your left.

Take a right onto S416, at the red light across from Weigels. Stay on 416 for approximately 7 miles.

Next, take a left onto Pittman Center Rd. (There will be a SCAMGA sign there.) Continue until you see Richardson Cove Baptist church on the left, from there continue straight until you see Sam Ellis Way on the left (this will be at a concrete bridge.)

There will be another SCAMGA sign at this point. Cross the bridge, and take the first RIGHT turn onto the gravel - another sign will be posted here. This road will take you down to the pavilion. You may contact Patsy at 865-850-9644 if you have any questions concerning the picnic or directions. Looking forward to hosting and fellowshiping with ALL of you.

President's Column

Hello, Master Gardeners!

Here we are in the middle of summer and I hope your gardens are doing well. My plants are looking great, but I did have a small problem a couple of weeks ago with one of my jalapeno plants. I went out to water one morning and almost all the leaves on one of my three plant were GONE! We're not talking just little nibbles, but no leaves down to the stem.



My first thought was tomato/tobacco hornworms, so I immediately checked the tomatoes in the adjacent beds and they were untouched. I also consulted the excellent Growing Degree Days resources Leo and Linda gave us last year and the conditions didn't seem right for hornworms yet. I spread Diatomaceous Earth powder, but suspected that wasn't the culprit.

We do have a few rabbits, but the beds are almost 4 feet off the ground, and they had plenty to munch on at ground level. We also have squirrels, and the beds are near a treeline. So that's an option. I also encountered a



chipmunk a couple of weeks ago, so there's another possibility. And, deer are always among "the usual suspects".

At this point, the exact cause is still a mystery, but I am using Luster Leaf® Fend Off clips, spreading ground cayenne pepper, and continuing with the D-earth. So far so good, and the pepper plant did retain enough leaves to rebound. Hopefully it will bloom and set fruit soon.

How are things going in your gardens? Are you experiencing anything unusual? Remember that the next UT Horticulture Office Hours will air on Friday, July 10th and the experts would love to answer your gardening questions. Sign up for notifications at the link in the Educational Opportunities column on Page 5



Demo Garden News

As you may have heard at last month's meeting, the grasshoppers have returned to the Demo Garden. We are looking at both short-term and long-term solutions for removing them. One of the long-term solutions may be to add some birdhouses, possibly an owl nesting box and a couple of boxes for bluebirds, larks, etc. We would need to ensure that our local cats cannot get to them. If anyone is willing to donate a birdhouse (or more than one), please contact Karen Hall or Elizabeth Andrews.

We are also considering adding a bird bath to make the area more attractive for birds. We're looking at a small solar-powered fountain type that would have continuous water movement to deter mosquitos. Finding ways to attract frogs are also being researched. In the meantime, there will be a large jar with soapy water in a shady part of the gazebo. If you can catch any of the grasshoppers while you're in the garden, please place them in the jar, which will be emptied regularly. We're also seeking other ideas we can consider. If you have suggestions, contact Karen H. or Elizabeth A. at the information listed on the Contacts page.

We are also going to put together a contact list with names and numbers of those involved in the garden, which will be placed in the white box inside the door so people will know who to contact with any issues. We are also going to put a list of tasks that can be done by anyone who is looking for something to work on in the garden at any time. So, if you can't make it for the scheduled work days, you can work (and earn volunteer hours) when it's convenient for you.

Meeting Minutes

June 15, 2026

Program

The program "Beekeeping" was presented by Larry Ogle.

Call meeting to order

Meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the May 18, 2026 meeting were published in the last newsletter. There were no corrections or additions. .

Vice President's Report

Patsy is again hosting the annual MG picnic at her house. This will be in place of the regular monthly meeting. A food sign-up sheet was passed. Bingo will be played, and the prizes will be vegetables and flowers from members' gardens.

Treasurer's Report

Darlene reported that the remaining budget balance is \$2,174.61. The budget was adjusted to show the transfer of \$283.23 from the Tomato Seed Project to the Demo Garden (\$183.23) and the Greenhouse (\$100). A new line item was added, Added Approved, to show income from the Garage Sale.r.

Extension Agent

Cat reported that the nandina was replaced with native plants in front of the Extension Office. A talk on "Gardening in Tennessee Clay" will take place at the Seymour Family Library on June 26, 11-12:30. The MG booth will

be at the Seymour Farmer's Market on June 27. The MG email has been corrected to Seviermastergardener@gmail.com. Updates are being made to the Sevier Co. MG website with a calendar to list activities. An Instagram account is also available. A new logo is also being developed and suggestions were discussed.

Committee Reports

Demo Garden

Elizabeth Andrews said that MG's can pull weeds in the Demo Garden at any time or day that is convenient for them. Grasshoppers have invaded the garden again and she is looking for non-chemical ways to get rid of them. Karen Less reported that there is water coming up from the ground in front of the garden shed. That will be investigated.

Greenhouse

Shauna reported that there was a temporary solution, suggested by Adam, to the electricity being turned off at the fairgrounds. An alarm system will be installed to alert Shauna's phone if the power goes out. Shauna will also put orange duct tape over the greenhouse circuit breaker at the fairgrounds to help prevent it from being turned off.

Sevier County Fair

Angela has confirmed that the MG table will be in the same place as last year. The dates for the Fair are Sept. 1-7. This is a great opportunity for volunteer hours. Contact Angela at:

547-246-9354 or
angmyears@gmail if interested

Senior Center

Lynn reported that the pollinator garden, herb garden and feeders have been cleaned and a new herb garden is planned. An herb butter class is scheduled for June 19th at 11 a.m. That class has sold out, but others are being planned.

Wilderness Wildlife and Heirloom Garden

Steve gave an update on the Heirloom Garden plantings. Wilderness Wildlife Week will be January 4-7, 2027.

Social Media

Darlene reported that the Facebook page had 4995 views in May. A social media committee has been formed.

Newsletter

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

Old Business

TEMG Conference

Karen reported that Glenna Julian was one of three statewide Individual Master Gardener Award winners, Leo and Linda Lubke's Growing Degree Days won Best Workshop or Program, and our monthly newsletter, edited by Mandy Hyde, was the winner for Best Written or Recorded Education. Award mugs and shovels were presented and door prizes were drawn.

Meeting Minutes Continued

New Business

Christmas Party

Prize donations were requested for the bingo game. If anyone is willing to donate, contact Angela at 574-246-9354 or angmyears@gmail.com. The party will be on December 7.

Adjournment

The meeting was called to a close at 8:05 pm.



Congratulations to our own Donna Stinnett (far right) who was recently featured in an article in the May/June 2026 issue of Cityview Magazine for her work at the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center in Townsend.

[READ THE ARTICLE](#)

Meetings and Events

Monthly Meeting, Monday, July 20th , 6:00 PM, Annual Picnic hosted by Patsy and Don Farmer, 3530 Sam Ellis Way, Sevierville 37876. (No July board meeting)

Monthly Meeting, Monday, August 17th. It will be our annual Ice Cream Social.

Fall Gardeners' Festival, Tuesday, August 25th, 10 AM to 4 PM EDT, UT Plateau AgResearch and Education Center, 320 Experiment Station Road, Crossville.

Sevier County Fair, Tuesday, September 1st through Monday, September 7th.

Smoky Mountain Naturewalk Group, July 14, 8 AM-Noon, Seven Islands State Birding Park. Contact Cat Lawson for additional information.

Volunteer Opportunities

Senior Center Work Days for the summer will be arranged through WhatsApp. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lynn Chalache (865.441.1972 or lynnchalache@gmail.com).

Demo Garden Work Day, Monday, July 13th, 9 AM. Please come to help us get the garden looking great!

Boys and Girls Club of the Smoky Mountains Junior Master Gardeners program. Contact Dixie Seaton at 615.498.0340 or tdseaton69@gmail.com for dates and times.

Educational Opportunities

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

Herb Gardening for Use and Delight, July 24, 11 am- Noon, Gilreath Family Kodak Branch Library, \$10. Contact Cat Lawson for additional information and registration.

May Financials

Sevier County Area Master Gardener Association								
May 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 04/30/25		0.00					
Added app	453.00	0.00	453.00	0.00	100.00	453.00	0.00	100.00
County Fair	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Decemberr	0.00	0.00	0.00	930.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Demo garde	0.00	9.99	(9.99)	0.00	983.23	26.77	689.67	293.56
Dues	0.00	0.00	0.00	900.00	0.00	950.00	0.00	950.00
Greenhous	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	0.00	269.63	30.37
Plant sale	0.00	0.00	0.00	3800.00	300.00	2816.25	45.34	254.66
Senior Cent	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Tomato see	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	466.77	0.00	466.77	0.00
Virtual mee	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	175.00	0.00	0.00	175.00
Wilderness	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4H Scholar	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	600.00	0.00	600.00	0.00
Ending: 05	453.00	9.99	443.01	5630.00	3125.00	4246.02	2071.41	2003.59
Net Income			443.01		2,505.00			2,174.61
Month: 5								

Balance as of : 05/31/2026 \$ 2,174.61

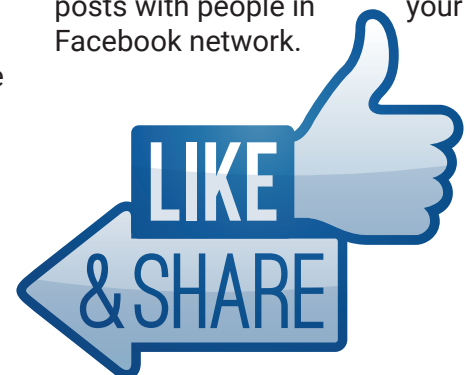
Overall UT Balance: 05/31/2026 \$ 11,472.94

Social Media Report

Our Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Facebook account had 4,995 views, from May 1 – May 31, 2026. This is a substantial number, but we are down in monthly views by 76%! This is entirely expected. Over the last few months, we made numerous posts about plant sales, Master Gardener classes, Tiny Tillers Junior Master Gardeners, and the My People Senior Center sales. Now, we are in a time when we do not have the number of posts, as we did in the past. Never fear, we have a plan to increase views and participation on the Facebook account.

A Social Media Committee was constructed of interested Master Gardeners and Interns. The group met, in May, to discuss what exactly we wanted to do for our Facebook account, and lay out a plan of action, along with a schedule of postings to be made, throughout the remainder of the year. The Committee members are: Cat Lawson, Karen Less, Darlene Kemp, Paige Huffaker, and Kayla Lowe. Posting can now be made by the committee, with approval from the other members. In the near future, you will see new and interesting Facebook

posts. Please stay tuned. Our Facebook page can be found by searching for Sevier County Area Master Gardeners. Once on the page, please click the “follow” button and “like” some posts. You can also forward or share posts with people in your Facebook network.



TEMG Conference



The 2026 TEMG State Conference provided an opportunity for education, networking, and a bit of recognition for the Sevier County Area Master Gardeners Association. The theme of the conference was Building on Strong Foundations, and was attended by seven master gardeners from our organization and Master Gardener Coordinator Cat Lawson.

Pre-conference sessions were held on Wednesday afternoon that highlighted leadership initiatives. The Wednesday evening kickoff event honored four pioneers of the master gardener program in Tennessee. One of those honored was Sevier County's own Alan Bruhin, former Sevier County Extension Director, who started the master gardener program here in 2005 and retired in 2020.

Thursday morning's activities included a variety of local tours.



These included the UT Gardens, the UT Organic Crops Unit Farm, the UT Plant Sciences Research Farm, the UT wetlands area at the UT Gardens, IJAMS Nature Center Pollinators and Wildlife Education, and the Knoxville Smokies Stadium turfgrass.

The afternoon began with recognition of the Search for Excellence award winners,

including three from SCAMGA. In the Workshop/Program category, Growing Degree Days from Leo and Linda Lubke received the award. The newsletter you are reading, *Roots*, was chosen as the best Written or Recorded Education. And, our very own Glenna Julian received the Individual Master Gardener of the Year award in the small group category. Our winners were recognized at the June monthly meeting.

Educational sessions on Thursday afternoon highlighted a variety of horticulture, leadership, social media, nutrition, and pest management topics. Hands-on workshops on Friday morning saw that Dr. Natalie's objective of sending everyone home with plants was achieved. The conference concluded with a planning session for regional meetings in the near future. Stay tuned for more information about those because rumor has it we may be playing an important role in the eastern region.





Leo and Linda Lubke recognized for their award-winning Growing Degree Days Presentation.



Founders Award recipients including (left to right) Bob Ary, Robertson County Extension; Carol Burdett, Cumberland County Master Gardener; Patsy Boles, Hamilton County Master Gardener; and our very own retired Sevier County Extension Director, Alan Bruhin.



General conference session. Around 160 master gardeners attended at least one day of the conference."



Dr. Natalie Bumgarner welcomes master gardeners at the kickoff event.



Glenna Julian accepts the Individual Master Gardener Award.



Sevier County's own Alan Bruhin accepting a Founders Award from Sullivan County Interim Extension Director Melody Rose..

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
sggreenwell@gmail.com
865.556.3636

Project Coordinators

Greenhouse
Shauna Bayless

Intern Class
Diane McCullen
dmccullen11@gmail.com
832.605.5769

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

Demo Gardent
Karen Hall
865.851.2922
Elizabeth Andrews
443.975.5551

Tomato Seed Project
Patsy Farmer

Junior Master Gardener
Tiny Tillers
Darlene Kemp

Senior Center Gardens Liaison
Lynn Chalache
865.441.1972
lynnchalache@gmail.co

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

Cat Lawson
Extension Agent
csams1@utk.edu
865.453.3695 Office

seviermastergardner@gmail.com

UT Sevier Co Extension Office
865.453.3695.

Recipe

Crispy Roasted Okra

Serves 4

Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

1 lb fresh okra
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp smoked paprika
½ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
¼ tsp cayenne pepper, optional
1 tbsp cornmeal, optional for extra crispiness
Lemon wedges, for serving

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F
2. Wash and dry the okra very well. Trim the stem ends, then slice the okra lengthwise or into ½-inch rounds.
3. In a bowl, toss okra with olive oil, garlic powder, paprika, salt, pepper, cayenne, and cornmeal.
4. Spread in a single layer on a baking sheet. Avoid crowding so the okra roasts instead of steams.
5. Roast for 18–22 minutes, flipping halfway through, until browned and crisp on the edges.
6. Squeeze fresh lemon juice over the top before serving.

This goes well with rice, grilled chicken, fish, cornbread, or as a snack with ranch or spicy mayo.

