

Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

A Program of the University of Tennessee Extension Sequatchie and Bledsoe Counties

Gardening News and Notes

April 2024

2024 Calendar

- April 20, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting – election of officers, Pikeville
 - May 4-5, 2024, Valley Fest, Dunlap, set up on Friday, May 3, more details coming
 - July 20 or 27, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting – Tomato Tasting, Dunlap*
 - August 10, 2024, 4-H Poultry Show and Sale details to come
 - August 10-17, 2024 Sequatchie County Fair
 - August 27, 2024, Fall Gardener's Festival – 8 a.m. CDT, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center at Crossville
 - September 21, 2024, Annual SVMG Picnic, TBD*
 - November 2, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting, Pikeville
- *Tentative dates

Wilson County MG Plant Sale

Master Gardeners of Wilson County will hold its annual Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 18th at the Assembly Hall, Cedars of Lebanon State Park. Last year we offered more than 4,000 plants and 130 species. The bulk of our plants are winter sown in Tennessee soils under Tennessee weather conditions for Tennessee gardens. Because our goal is to encourage the use of native plants in Tennessee landscapes, we keep our prices as low as possible.

Details are attached to the newsletter.

The Extension Master Gardener Program is a program of the University of Tennessee Extension

Sheldon Barker

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The University of Tennessee is an equal opportunity provider.



UT Gardens Plant of the Month

April

Thailand Giant Elephant Ear Will Get All Your Neighbors Talking and Gawking

Submitted by Jason Reeves, horticulturist at the University of Tennessee Gardens, Jackson



Thailand Giant elephant ear is easy to grow in full sun to light shade and will steal all the attention in your garden with its enormous leaves that can grow to 5 feet long and 4 to 5 feet wide. In this photo, the author is shown in the middle with rese

With leaves nearly as big as kiddie swimming pools by late summer, Thailand Giant elephant ear will stop traffic. From a 6-inch plant in May to 8 to 10 feet tall by September, it grows just that fast, with leaves that can get to 5 feet long and 4 to 5 feet wide. To boot, it even blooms! In late summer, it produces white flowers reminiscent of peace-lilies toward the center of the plant.

As with all elephant ears, *Colocasia* (*Leucocasia*) *gigantea* 'Thailand Giant,' is easy to grow. For maximum growth, plant in good garden soil in full sun to light shade. It performs well in a large container but is not likely to reach its full potential. The large leaves can become tattered in strong wind, so protection from gusty

conditions is recommended.

As a specimen in the ground or large container, it cannot be ignored. Thailand Giant is fun growing near a pool or patio where you can use the large leaves for shade. With the bold look of these big tropical leaves, you can create your own summer oasis.

It is winter hardy in zone 8 but often can be overwintered in zone 7 in the garden with enough protection. It can be overwintered indoors or in a semi-dormant state in a basement/cellar, in the crawl space under your home, or in an enclosed garage, so long as it does not freeze. Be careful not to over water it in the winter.

Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina, introduced this huge strain of elephant ear from seed collected from plants growing wild in Thailand in the mid-2000's.

Both the UT Gardens locations in Knoxville and Jackson grow them each year from seed collected from their plants. They can be tricky to grow from seed even in a greenhouse, therefore, the reason they are uncommon in the trade. All three UT Garden locations will have them at their spring plant sale and growing in the gardens this summer.



Gardening Tips

“Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration.”

Lou Erickson

May

May is an important month to get your summer garden established. April is a great time to plant everything you want in your garden before the heat of summer. Following are some suggestions for your May garden.

- Keep an eye on watering everything newly planted. It does not take much for new little transplants to dry out and die before they have a chance to be established. Check every day for adequate moisture until plants take-off and start to grow.
- Be sure to mow your lawn at the correct height. For turf-type fescues and bluegrass, have your mowing height to 2 ½ “. The higher you cut your lawn the deeper the roots will grow helping it survive dry spells. Do not lime or fertilize your fescue or bluegrass lawns until late summer.
- Deadhead or prune back spent flowers on your perennials. This will manicure your garden and can stimulate reblooming of delphinium and columbine as well as other perennials.
- You can selectively prune spring-flowering shrubs such as azalea, forsythia, weigela, lilac, beauty bush, and mockorange to control their growth or improve their shape as well as increase their bloom next year.
- May is strawberry-picking month. Stock up on ice cream and whipped cream.
- Fertilize strawberry plants after their fruit has been harvested with 2 lbs. of 10-10-10 per 100 sq. ft.
- Spray fruit trees and grapes early in the month with preventative fungicides. Do not use insecticides until all blooms have disappeared so not to harm the natural bee population.
- May is the month for iris and peonies. Enjoy their cutflowers in vases in your home.
- Thin (pick off) excess fruits from apple, pear and peach trees to a ratio of one fruit per 6-8 inches of branch.
- Stake tall growing perennials such as foxglove and true lilies to prevent them from lodging.
- If your peonies fail to flower this month, it could be that they are planted too deep. They should be planted 2" deep and receive at least 6 hours of sunlight.
- Direct seed sunflowers in your garden and stagger their planting by every week or two through July so you have flowers until frost.
- As the days get hotter and your pansies show stress, remove them and replace with summer annuals.
- When planting summer annuals, consider pinching and removing the flowers to stimulate branching and the production of many more flowers.
- Be sure to train new vines onto trellis or posts with the aid of twine. Plastic twine should be used to support the weight of the vine throughout the growing season.
- Do not forget to apply pre-emergent herbicides such as Preen to newly planted flower and vegetable gardens to prevent weeds. Be sure to follow label directions.
- Stalks of bearded, Siberian, and Japanese iris should be removed as flower fade.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAMS FOR 2024

Pollinators

April 16, 2024 - 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap
RSVP email sdbarker@utk.edu, call 949-2611 or
online @
<https://forms.gle/5zo5EXKGSdQF8qHS6>

Garden Weeds

May 21, 2024 – 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap
RSVP email sdbarker@utk.edu, call 949-2611 or
online @
<https://forms.gle/STjpn9gpGExqx8PA9>
Free!

Poultry At Home: Biosecurity

June 18, 2024 - 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap
RSVP email sdbarker@utk.edu, call 949-2611 or
online @
<https://forms.gle/wYisAcMQxpR5wm3Z8>
Free!

Tree ID Walk

July 16, 2024 – time and location to be
announced

Garden Cover Crops

August 20, 2024 – 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap

Wildlife Food Plots

September 24, 2024 – 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap

Composting

November 19, 2024 – 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap

Winter Bird Feeding

December 17, 2024 — 6:00 PM Central,
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,
Dunlap

Master Gardeners of Wilson County TN presents

Native Plant Sale

**Over 100 species of Tennessee native
perennials, trees, and shrubs!**

Saturday, May 18th, 2024

10 am – 3 pm

**Cedars of Lebanon State Park
Assembly Hall**

Rain or Shine!

Cards, Cash, and Checks Accepted



Master Gardeners of Wilson County offer a diverse and affordable selection of native plants at this annual sale. Our mission is to promote the use of native plants in gardens and public spaces to support declining numbers of pollinators necessary for healthy landscapes.

All proceeds benefit Master Gardeners of Wilson County