SEQUATCHIE VALLEY MASTER GARDENERS

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

Gardening News and Notes

July 2023

2023 Dates

- July 29, 2023, 9:00 AM, Quarterly Meeting and Tomato Tasting, Pikeville, TN Pikeville City Hall.
- August 12, 2023, 4-H Poultry Show 9:00 AM
- August 19-26, 2023, Sequatchie County Fair
- November 4, 2023, Quarterly Meeting, Location Dunlap, TN Exact Meeting Locations to the announced

Annual Tomato Tasting

July 29, 2023 At the Pikeville City Hall.

If you plan to have tomatoes for the tasting please let Sheldon know, call 949-2611 or email sdbarker@utk.edu.

We plan to invite those who attended the Tomato Class back in April (and ask them to share tomatoes as well).

If you bring tomatoes, do not refrigerate them, and label the varieties. Also, please make note of what you thought of the variety – problems, diseases or insects, growth habit, hybrid/heirloom/open-pollinated, and any other point you wish to share with the group.

UT Field Days 2023 Dates

- August 24, 2023, 8 a.m. CDT - Steak and Potatoes – Plateau AgResearch and Education Center at Crossville
- August 29, 2023, 8 a.m. CDT - Fall Gardener's Festival, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center at Crossville
- September 9, 2023, 10 a.m. EDT - UT Arboretum Butterfly Festival – Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center at UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge
- October 5, 2023, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. CDT - Fall in the Gardens: Plant Sale and Garden Talks –and October 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. CDT, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center at Jackson
- October 19, 2023, 7 a.m. EDT - Woods and Wildlife – Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center at UT Arboretum in Oak Ridge

Jumping Worms and Hammerhead Worms

Two new invasive species in Tennessee. I have attached to this newsletter publications and information about these two worms. If you would like links:

- Information on jumping worms may be found here.
- Information on hammerhead worms and other common land planarians may be found here and here

If you encounter these worms the UT Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology would like to know. To be able to confirm these two kinds of worms at the species level, they need quality images. A cellphone camera will take a photo of quality to submit for identification. Please note, if these worms are encountered, do not cut them in half. Place them in a plastic baggie and euthanize them in a freezer.

If you take photos for identification, email them to me sdbarker@utk.edu or bring the specimen to me at the office.

Hammerhead worms submission from middle Tennessee, May 2022. Credit: Suzanne Brokamp

Jumping worm Photo Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources

Taking a Quality Photo of an Insect for Identification

- Focus on the insect, not the background. Corollary to this rule: *Look at your picture before sending.* If the lawn at your feet is in sharp focus, but specimen looks like a fuzzy blob, you will need to retake. It will also look like a fuzzy blob to the entomologist.
- Take the picture in good light and fill your frame with the insect or damage, if you can. Brighter light (indirect sunlight or a well-lit room) will compensate for shaky hands and give the picture a deeper focus. Again, if you can't see any details in your picture because it's too far away, neither can the identifier.
- Take pictures from several angles. Sometimes key identification characters are hidden from a specific angle. Take a top and side view at least.
- Provide information about where and when you took the picture. Please include nearest city, county and date of photograph if you don't want to be black-listed by an identifier who just spent an hour looking for an exotic insect that's not in the field guides.
- Include information about the size of your specimen. Note: "big" "medium" "small" is not good enough. Whether something is 3 mm or 5 mm can make a difference in determining a species. Use your ruler, or other common item for size reference.

Source: "Insect ID via mobile device" *Insects in the City*. Retrieved Friday, June 23, 2023. https://citybugs.tamu.edu/2018/06/27/insect-id-via-mobile/

UT Gardens Plant of the Month

July Plant of the Month

Mountain Mint – A Pollinator's Perfect Perennial

Submitted by Janet Dowlen, Soil Conservationist, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service

Figure 1 Clustered Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) in the author's yard in Cumberland County, Tennessee. Photo courtesy of Janet Dowlen.

The words "Mountain Mint" evoke cooling thoughts of the Smoky Mountains, paired with a refreshing natural aroma. It should not conjure up the horrors that true mints (*Mentha* sp.) may give you! The native mountain mint species are not at all like their unruly mint family cousins because while they are spreaders they are not aggressively so and can be controlled by mowing or otherwise controlling the clump. They are very underappreciated and underplanted in our gardens.

There are several species of mountain mint in Tennessee (primarily Middle and East Tennessee), and all are valuable nectaring species for pollinator insects. The Latin genus *Pycnanthemum* means "densely flowered," an apt name for any of the native mint species you will find growing wild in Tennessee. They are more closely related to *Monarda* (bee balm) species than true mints.

Two of the most common species are Clustered Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) and Southern Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum pycnanthemoides*). They can be seen at the UT Gardens, Crossville, in the native plant garden, in Jackson growing in containers near the building's entrance, and at UT Gardens Knoxville in the Monarch Waystation and Kitchen Garden.

These can be difficult to identify down to the species at first glance, because both have similar height and foliage. The silvery-white bracts at the top of the plant make them look like they have been dusted with snow. They really are unmistakable when seen in midsummer. You can also hear the insects buzzing when they are in bloom. An incredible number of bees, butterflies, flies, beetles, and even wasps use mountain mint as a nectar source. Surprisingly, these mints are not generally a larval host for insect species, as they contain a substance called pulegone, which is a natural insecticide. Due to this, these mints are not recommended for culinary use.

Depending on where you live, you may also see Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*). The delicate, thin green leaves make it look like an entirely different plant until it flowers, and then the round, flat-topped flower heads give it away. It does not have white bracts of the other species and is considerably less fragrant.

Besides being a good plant for pollinator insects and providing an approximately three-month season of bloom, mountain mints can be a great plant for weed suppression and erosion control. They can be allowed to naturalize in spaces to crowd out weeds. They tolerate a wide range of soil and light conditions but prefer moist well-drained soils in full sun. Another bonus of the scented leaves is that they are not eaten by deer.

Overall, these wonderful native plants are not used enough in Tennessee gardens! But they are easy to start from seed, are readily divided, and available at native plant nurseries. Find a neighbor with some! It's a great pass-along plant.

Gardening Tips

"Gardening requires lots of water - most of it in the form of perspiration."
Lou Erickson

August

- Control crabgrass and other weeds that have invaded your lawn and garden. Weeds will be an even bigger problem next year if you let them go to seed. If you want to use chemical control, be sure to select the appropriate herbicide for the location and follow label instructions.
- August is a great time to plant perennials in pots to add late-season color to your garden.
- Remember to keep tall flowers staked.
- Be sure to keep garden mums well fertilized until buds show color.
- Check water needs daily. During the hot days of August, hanging baskets and containers tend to dry out daily.
- The fallen leaves below your roses and peonies need to be cleaned out to avoid diseases and insect invasion during the winter months.
- Pick summer vegetables every day or two to keep the plants producing.
- Take plenty of photos of your garden so next year you can refer back to them to see which plants you liked or disliked.
- Hummingbirds migrate in August so keep feeders full. Also, change the water in bird baths regularly. Standing water is less healthy for the birds, and it may become a breeding ground for mosquito larvae.
- Fertilize azaleas, pieris, mountain laurel, and other ericaceous (acid-loving) species before the end of August. Use an acid-based soluble fertilizer containing iron. Also, fertilize roses to encourage last new growth and hardening off before frost.
- Fertilize tall fescue and Bermuda lawns in late August using a high nitrogen fertilizer of a 5:1:1 ratio. If the lawn needs extensive renovation and aeration, however, wait until early September.
- Early September is the month to start fertilizing fescue and other cool-season lawns, if you have not taken a soil test recently now might just be the time to do so.
- Spray the underside of leaves with an appropriate insecticide, insecticidal soap, or a summer oil to control sap-feeding lacebugs.
- Dig potatoes after the tops have died down.
- Sow seeds for late crops of beets, bush beans, cabbage, carrots, collards, kale, lettuce, peas, spinach, turnips, kohlrabi, and onions until August 15th. Transplants can still be planted of broccoli, early cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, and onions as well.
- As Japanese beetles return to the soil late in the month, treat for grubs with milky spore disease or beneficial nematodes. This will reduce winter mole destruction on your lawn.
- Mow the lawn on a high setting if the weather is dry.
- Keep everything well-watered.

A Note on Fall Seedlings

It is especially important to closely monitor water and fertility in fall seedlings because they are being transplanted during Tennessee's driest weather (usually). Scouting is also critical as young plants are placed in gardens alongside older and potentially infested or diseased plants. Try row covers or netting to exclude pests. It is simple because most fall crops don't need to be pollinated.

Avoiding Heat-Related Problems

Adapted from Carol A. Rice, Ph.D., R.N., Professor and Extension Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System.

Types of Heat-Related Problems

1. Heat Cramps – symptoms include painful cramping and spasms of legs, arms and/or abdominal (stomach) muscles.
2. Heat Exhaustion – symptoms include feeling tired, weak, and dizzy; headache, nausea and possible vomiting. Heavy perspiration; skin feels moist.
3. Heat Stroke – symptoms include feeling tired, weak and dizzy. Skin feels hot and dry, even under armpits; appears red and flushed. May become delirious and unconscious. This is a life threatening situation! Call 911.

Reducing Your Risks

1. Drink lots of cool water
   a. Drink lots of cool water, even more than you think you need, when the weather is hot and humid. (High humidity makes heat injuries more likely because perspiration does not evaporate from the skin as quickly; this causes the body to cool down more slowly.) Water is best; fruit and vegetable juices are good, too.
   b. Drink at least a gallon of liquid a day (about 16 glasses) when the outside temperature is above 90 degrees and you are not in air-conditioned surroundings. This will mean drinking 1 1/2 times as much liquid as your thirst signals you to drink.
   c. Do not drink beer or other alcoholic beverages, coffee, tea, or other drinks containing caffeine because they cause you to lose fluid.
2. Wear light-colored clothes
   a. Wear light-colored clothes that are loosely woven and absorbent. Cotton is best; it absorbs 40 percent of its weight in moisture. Most synthetic (manmade) materials trap body heat and are not absorbent. Wear a hat to shade your head.
3. Avoid outside activities during the heat of the day
   a. If you are required to work outside, take frequent breaks and drinks of cool water. Do not run or do other types of energetic exercise during the heat of the day. Get wet, wear wet clothing, or bathe/shower as often as possible without drying yourself—this gives your body cooling system a boost.
4. If there is no air conditioning:
   a. Use a fan.
   b. Open windows wide to create as much cross ventilation as possible.
   c. Avoid cooking.
   d. Go to a cool place, if possible.
   e. Take frequent, cool baths or showers.

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

Sheldon Barker	**J. C. Rains**
Extension Agent	Extension Agent
Sequatchie Co.	Bledsoe Co.
170 Church St	PO Box 289
Dunlap, TN 37327	Pikeville, TN 37367
423-949-2611	423-447-2451
UT Extension Sequatchie County web page	UT-TSU Extension Bledsoe County Webpage
Sequatchie County Facebook	Bledsoe County Facebook

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.
UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

TREE NEWS
YOU CAN USE

JUNE 2023

ENVISIONING YOUR MOSAIC PALETTE FOR YOUR GARDEN

History of garden mosaics
A mosaic is defined as a picture or pattern produced by arranging small, colored pieces of hard material, such as stone, tile or glass (dictionary.com). Since ancient times, mosaics have been created and used decoratively. Examples include Romans creating indoor and outdoor walls, floors, ceilings and gardens; Greeks using sea pebbles to create pictorial mosaics that told stories or the Spanish artist Gaudi using recycled and found material for mosaic installations in Barcelona.

Creating your garden mosaic
How do we apply or adapt the mosaic concept to a mosaic palette for your flowering garden? Easy, we would say! By using your imagination, you can introduce more color with a decorative array of plants and hard materials. Start first with the plant selection. Use contrasting colors, textures, leaf sizes and plant forms to make impressive plant combinations for your flowering garden. A good flower garden design would use:

1) a mixture of height, colors and textures;
2) deep borders to hold more plants;
3) repetition of plants, shapes and colors throughout the garden to give continuity and;
4) height matters so pay attention to height depth.

The design for the hard material can be simply decorative or represent natural elements. Mosaic project ideas for hard materials in your garden include stepping-stones, seating, terracotta pots and planters and murals.

How to start
Remember the success of any garden design is tied to the health of the plants. Consider the amount of sun exposure your garden receives, how quickly the soil drains, the plant hardiness zone and other environmental conditions that may influence plant health! Familiarity with your garden's growing conditions will allow you to search for plants with a higher probability of success.

Once you have a list of plants, it's time to start thinking artistically! What are your goals for the space? Will this be a strictly aesthetic area, or should you plan for functionality such as seating? Do you intend to add any hardscape or paths to your design? Are you considering accent pieces or additions like wind chimes and bird feeders? During this phase, you might consider looking at other gardens for inspiration. Pay attention to what you like including plant selection, color choice, inorganic material, function and texture.

Now that you have a list of plants and materials, you can begin finalizing your design and planting your garden! Remember that while inorganic design pieces may be installed at any point, plants tend to be more successful if installed at certain times of the year. Growing and tending any garden is a process. Pace yourself and have fun!

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Dr. Sharon Jean-Philippe
Professor
Urban Forestry

Dr. Natalie Bumgarner
Associate Professor
Residential & Consumer Horticulture

Sam Adams
ISA Certified Arborist
UT Knoxville Facilities Services

Lee Rumble
Extension Agent & ISA Certified Arborist
UT Extension, Knox County

Neal Vercler
Senior Arborist Tech, BCMA #SO-7529B
UT Knoxville Facilities Services

Walker Fowler
Tree Care Technician
UT Knoxville Facilities Services

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PLANT SCIENCES UTIA INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE