Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

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

May 2025

Gardening News and Notes

2025 Intern Class Graduates

The 2025 Master Gardener Intern class wrapped up at the end of April, with five new interns completing the training.

From left to right are: Erin White, Susan Lockinger, Brandon Waldo, Catherine Revis, and Angela King.

2025 Dates

- May 3-4, 2025, Valley Fest, Dunlap
- July 26, 2025, Tomato Tasting – Pikeville
- November 1, 2025, MG Meeting – Dunlap

2025 Field Day and Events

- Fruits of the Backyard – June 10, 8 a.m. CDT, Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center at Spring Hill
- Summer Celebration – July 10, 8 a.m. CDT, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center, Jackson, TN
- Steak and Potatoes – August 21, 8 a.m. CDT, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center at Crossville
- Fall Gardeners' Festival – August 26, 8 a.m. CDT, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center at Crossville

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

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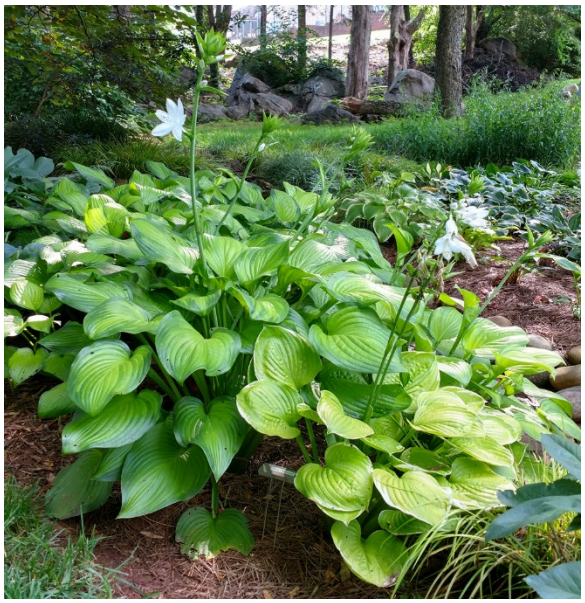
UT Gardens Plant of the Month

UT Gardens' May Plant of the Month

There's No Such Thing as Too Many Hostas

Submitted by Mary Lewnes Albrecht, professor emerita, Department of Plant Sciences, UT Gardens, Knoxville



Hosta 'Guacamole,' named the 2002 Hosta of the Year by the American Hosta Growers Association, is a reliable hosta that does well in most gardens provided it's given some good afternoon and evening shade. Photo by Mary Lewnes Albrecht, courtesy UTIA

With more than 10,000 or so cultivars to choose from, why not try hostas?

Hosta species and cultivars, sometimes called plantain lily, are very easy to grow in the garden. They are the queen of the shade garden. Many with white to yellow foliage can take some morning sun, but all need protection from the hot afternoon and evening sun.

Plant in compost-amended soil and keep the plants well-watered, especially during establishment or dry spells. There's a saying when it comes to hosta – first year they sleep, second year they creep, and the third year they leap! So be patient!

Hostas come in all sizes: minis (up to 7 inches tall), small (8 to 11 inches), medium (12 to 18 inches), large (19 to 24 inches), and giant (over 25 inches), so they can fit in just about anywhere in any shade garden. And they also do well in pots.

The foliage can be shades of blue, green, yellow, and variegated with white to yellow in the middle or on the margins; some with very waxy leaves. Others have leaves that are thin and easily eaten by scales and slugs. Unfortunately, deer love them, too, regardless of the leaf thickness.

Breeders are introducing shades of red in the petioles and hoping to get the pigment in the leaves. Some form neat clumps, others can spread slowly. Flowering will vary with the cultivar, mostly white to lavender to purple, and summer to autumn. Hummingbirds, bees, and other pollinators are attracted to the flowers.

So, where do you start? With the very reliable, large, mounding hosta named 'Guacamole.' This one has shiny chartreuse/apple green leaves, margined by a wide green edge. Large, fragrant, pale lavender flowers appear in August. Plus, it's a fast grower and can handle some sun.

To see more hosta, visit the Cornelia B. Holland Tranquility Hosta Garden, an American Hosta Society Display Garden, at the UT Gardens, Knoxville. To learn more, also check out the East Tennessee Hosta Society website: easttnhostasociety.net.

The UT Gardens includes plant collections located in Knoxville, Crossville, and Jackson, Tennessee. Designated as the official botanical garden for the State of Tennessee, the UT Gardens are part of the UT Institute of Agriculture. The Gardens' mission is to foster appreciation, education and stewardship of plants through garden displays, educational programs and research trials. The Gardens are open during all seasons and free to the public. For more information, see the Gardens website: utgardens.tennessee.edu.

Gardening Tips

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

June

- Trim back catmint (Nepeta) after its first flush of flowers to promote new growth and a second flush of blooms.
- Harvest herbs early in the morning when essential oil content is at its peak. The best time to harvest most herbs is just before flowering. This time is when the leaves contain the maximum essential oils.
- Daylilies are in peak bloom in June. It is a good time to buy new daylily selections for your garden to ensure you get the color you desire. Visit a daylily farm for the best selections, and plant them in full sun for the best flower production.
- Once daffodil foliage has turned yellow, you can mow or cut it down. If you remove it while it is still green, you decrease the amount of energy available for the bulb to store, decreasing flower size next year.
- To keep squash, cucumber and bean plants abundantly producing, harvest them frequently.
- Store leftover vegetable and flower seeds in a cool, dry location to save them for planting next year.
- Water your plants in the morning, if possible, to conserve water and reduce evaporation. Infrequent, deep watering is better than frequent, shallow watering, since deep watering promotes deep root growth. For best results, deep-water trees and shrubs once or twice a week and flowers two to three times a week. Most plants need 1 inch of rainfall per week. Pay attention to how much falls from the sky and water accordingly. If you have an automatic irrigation system, consider installing a rain sensor that adjusts for rainfall.
- Traditional strawberries go semi-dormant after harvest. This is an ideal time to fertilize them with a complete fertilizer.
- Continue to spray a multi-purpose fruit tree spray consisting of an insecticide and fungicide to prevent any insect and disease problems. Spray until 10 days before harvest.
- Remove all root suckers at the base of fruit trees, particularly apple and pear, and all thick water sprouts shooting up straight on the branches. Also remove any diseased, dying or insect-riddled wood.
- Consider planting basil, rosemary, thyme, and even tomatoes in containers. Place the containers near the kitchen or patio door so you have quick and easy access to fresh veggies and herbs when cooking or grilling.
- Keep tomatoes pruned and staked or in cages.
- Prevent blossom-end rot of tomato by providing deep and regular watering with drip irrigation or soaker hoses. Mulching can also help conserve water. Fertilizing with calcium nitrate rather than agricultural grade 10-10-10 fertilizer also helps. Varieties resistant to blossom-end rot include 'Celebrity', 'Goliath' and 'Mountain Pride'.
- Harvest cucumbers, green beans and summer squash when they are ready. If you stop picking, production will halt.

Get Ready for the Return of 17-Year Cicadas

Cicada from the 2024 Brood XIX emergence in Nashville. This year's 17-year Brood XIV cicadas will begin emerging in the next few weeks. Photo by H. Harbin, courtesy UTIA.

Most East Tennessee Counties Will See and Hear Brood XIV Adult Cicadas

In the next few weeks, the brood of periodical cicadas that last emerged in 2008 will be singing and looking for mates before laying their eggs for the next emergence in 17 years.

The 17-year periodical cicadas of Brood XIV will begin to emerge when the soil temperature at 8 inches deep reaches 64 degrees, which is estimated to be in late April to early May.

Brood XIX of the 13-year periodic cicadas had a spectacular emergence in 2024 in middle and southeastern Tennessee. However, Brood XIV is expected to have a statewide coverage. Based on the University of Tennessee Extension publication SP 341 "Periodical Cicadas," Brood XIV will be concentrated in most East Tennessee counties and in various counties spread throughout Middle and West Tennessee. "If you are a cicada enthusiast, and missed the Brood XIX emergence in 2024, this year might be another chance to witness a spectacular periodical cicada emergence. If you are not a fan of the insects, don't worry. They will be gone about a month and a half after their emergence," says Midhula Gireesh, a UT Extension entomologist.

Periodical cicadas *Magicicada* have the longest developmental period among insects. Depending on the race or type, they spend 13 or 17 years underground in larval form, feeding on plant roots. The 13-year periodical cicadas are more common in the Southeastern United States, whereas the 17-year cicadas are usually found in northern states. Fifteen broods, designated by Roman numerals, have been identified by scientists. There are 12 broods of 17-year cicadas (I-X, XIII and XIV).

Adults are about 1 inch to 1.5 inches long and mostly black with reddish-orange eyes, legs and wing veins. They are harmless to humans and pets, as they don't sting or bite. They also do not feed on foliage after they emerge, but their egg-laying process may damage young trees, shrubs and ornamentals. Gireesh recommends protecting young and valuable plants with cheesecloth or tobacco canvas while cicadas are present. Insecticide sprays are not effective.

The periodical cicadas emerging this year were laid as eggs in 2008. When adults emerge, the males quickly try to find mates by singing. That's the intense loud sound you hear for a few weeks in May and are not to be confused with common annual cicadas that are active during the hot summer months of July through September. Annual cicadas are about 1.5 to 2.5 inches long and have a green and brown pattern or green and black pattern with a primarily white or greyish underside.

After mating, the females start to lay eggs by making slits in twigs of woody plants using her knife-like ovipositor. In each slit, the female lays around 24 to 28 eggs. A single female can lay between 400 to 600 eggs. Eggs hatch in six to seven weeks, and the nymphs, which are white and ant-like in appearance, drop to the ground and bury in the soil to find suitable roots. Nymphs grow slowly and feed by sucking sap from roots, but they appear to have no noticeable effect on the trees. After 13 or 17 years, the nymphs emerge and find places to molt, and the new adults emerge several hours later and take flight.

Adult periodical cicadas live only for three to four weeks above ground. The young of Brood XIV will emerge in 2042.

For more information about cicadas, read UT Extension publication SP 341 "Periodical Cicadas."