

# Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

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

## Gardening News and Notes

March 2024

### Rescheduled

Small Fruits (blackberries, blueberries, strawberries)

**March 12, 2024 - 6:00 PM Central,**

Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St, Dunlap

RSVP email [sdbarker@utk.edu](mailto:sdbarker@utk.edu), call 949-2611 or

online @ [tiny.utk.edu/Jan24class](https://tiny.utk.edu/Jan24class)

Free!

### 2024 Calendar

- March 16, 2024, Tennessee Tree Day 2024, Dunlap, Fair Building 103 Heard Street
  - April 20, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting – election of officers, Pikeville
  - May 4-5, 2024, Valley Fest, Dunlap
  - 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

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

#### Sheldon Barker

Extension Agent, Sequatchie Co.  
170 Church St  
Dunlap, TN 37327  
423-949-2611

[UT Extension Sequatchie County web page](#)

[Sequatchie County Facebook](#)

#### J. C. Rains

Extension Agent, Bledsoe Co.  
PO Box 289  
Pikeville, TN 37367  
423-447-2451

[UT-TSU Extension Bledsoe County Webpage](#)

[Bledsoe County Facebook](#)

The University of Tennessee is an equal opportunity provider.



# UT Gardens Plant of the Month

March

## Leucojum: A Lesser-Known Spring Showstopper

*Submitted by Andy Pulte, Faculty member, Department of Plant Sciences*



Leucojum produces white bell-like flowers in the spring and adds to a garden of daffodils or looks beautiful by itself. Perfectly suited for Tennessee gardens, it has alkaloids that make it unappetizing to deer, rabbits and rodents. Photo by Andy Pulte.

Expanding your spring flower bulb palate beyond the basics is a good way to extend your garden's flower-power and enjoyment in the spring. One bulb I consider underused in Tennessee is *Leucojum aestivum* (Zone 4-8). Leucojum is a European and Western Asiatic species perfectly suited for our state.

Leucojum is often listed under the common name summer snowflake. This is misleading in our region because it is often in full bloom in mid to late March. This is right in concert with mid to late season daffodils.

White bell-like flowers edged in green sit atop 12-to-14-inch flower stocks that nod downward. Flowering can last a few weeks in the garden, particularly if the weather is mild. Bees flock to the little bells and get to work the minute the first flower opens. Each stem can have as many as six individual blooms.

If you want to add Leucojum to your garden, seek out bulbs from a reputable source and fall plant. If you have a gardening friend who is willing to share some of this wonderful plant, divide clumps and replant in early summer as foliage starts to turn yellow. Plants will continue to go dormant, and you should be rewarded the following spring.

When choosing a location for this plant, think of semi-shady zones or sunny areas with good soil and adequate moisture in the spring. I have grown this in nearly full shade. However, the edges of woodlands where spring light abounds seems the best. All that being said, I would not be overly fussy with placement.

After flowering, allow foliage to remain until it is completely yellow and withered. This will keep plants coming back year after year. Leucojum is deer, rabbit and rodent resistant in the garden because of alkaloids present in the plant. Clumps take a few years to bulk-up, so be patient—the reward will come soon enough.

This plant is featured in the "Tranquility" Hosta Garden at UT Gardens, Knoxville.

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.



# Gardening Tips

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

Lou Erickson

## April

April is the month for gardeners. All the world seems to be in bloom and gardening enthusiasts are just waiting for assurances that the last frost for the spring has passed. For much of the state April 15 is the “safe date” but estimates are available from the National Weather Service for specific locations.

- Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, okra, basil, sweet potatoes pumpkin and gourds resent cool temperatures, so despite your enthusiasm, wait until night temps are consistently above 50 degrees F to plants. Wait also for the ornamentals vinca, lantana, ornamental sweet potatoes and caladiums.
- Prune spring-flowering shrubs (azaleas, flowering quince, Forsythia and Loropetalum) soon after they finish flowering, but only if they need it. Selectively cut old or unruly branches by reaching deeply into the shrub leaving no visible stub, making the cut just above a joint. This pruning method will keep them from looking like meatballs.
- A good option for *Loropetalums* that have outgrown their space is to tree-form them. They can easily be limbed up by removing lower branches. *Loropetalum* ‘Crimson Fire’ is a new dwarf that has proven to be hardy in all but the coldest part of Tennessee. As with all *Loropetalums*, they are best planted in spring or summer to insure proper establishment before the winter months. It will mature to 3-ft tall, and can be seen growing at the UT Gardens in both Knoxville and Jackson.
- *Kerria japonica*, also known as Japanese kerria or yellow rose of Texas, often has dead branches. Follow them to the base to cut them. Remove older branches the same way to keep the plant looking good. Older, overgrown or neglected plants can be cut to the ground for rejuvenation.
- Azaleas often show symptoms of lace bug and spider mite infestations during the hot summer months. This damage can be prevented by a one-time, early application of the systemic insecticide imidacloprid. This insecticide should be poured in liquid form around the root system as the flowers fade, spreading the active ingredients throughout the plant tissue where it remains effective through the growing season. Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub Insect Control is a common brand that contains this safe and effective insecticide. Always follow label directions when applying any pesticide.
- You can direct seed easy-to-grow flowering annuals and vegetables. Some easy flowers to grow from seed include marigold, zinnia, sunflowers and cosmos. Beans, peas, corn and okra are some easy direct sow vegetables, while dill, basil and cilantro are some easy direct sow herbs.
- Try the annual moon vine, *Ipomoea alba*, this year to attract sphinx moths to your garden. Nick the hard seed coat carefully with nail clippers and soak in water overnight to hasten germination.
- Spring is a good time to freshen up the mulch in your landscape. Remember not to pile it around the trunks of your trees and shrubs. If using a pre-emergent herbicide, be sure to apply it before spreading your mulch to prevent the sunlight from breaking it down. It also forms a more effective barrier when allowed to bond with soil particles. Remember it is not necessary to fertilize well-established trees or shrubs. If you are trying to encourage faster growth on new plantings, a balanced granular fertilizer scattered on the soil surface is effective. Be careful not to overdo it. Tree spikes or drilling fertilizer into the root zone is unnecessary and expensive.
- Cut back any woody perennials that may need it, like rosemary, rue, lavender, Santolina and Artemisia. If done before the danger of frost has passed, new growth may appear, and a freeze can kill that new growth and sometimes the entire plant.

# AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROGRAMS FOR 2024

## Poultry At Home: An Introduction

March 19, 2024 - 6:00 PM Central,  
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,  
Dunlap  
RSVP email [sdbarker@utk.edu](mailto:sdbarker@utk.edu), call 949-2611 or  
online @  
<https://forms.gle/e5DP1k6AgwdYtLKw9>  
Free!

## Pollinators

April 16, 2024 - 6:00 PM Central,  
Sequatchie County Fair Building, 103 Heard St,  
Dunlap  
RSVP email [sdbarker@utk.edu](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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