

Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

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

October 2024

Gardening News and Notes

Your input needed

We are starting plans for the 2025 Program Year and would like your help. You will find a survey asking about your interest and what you would like to see as a program for 2025 at <https://forms.gle/sKRF4HTd8L4Xtzc7>

2024 Calendar

- November 2, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting, Pikeville

Reminder

Don't forget to record your hours, especially County Fair Hours!

Agriculture and Natural Resources Programs for 2024

Composting

November 19, 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/7UZonuFuXudKiykH8>
Free!

Winter Bird Feeding

December 17, 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/AnZHBBztgVtdrrpy5>
Free!

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

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UT Gardens Plant of the Month

October

Choose Cherokee Sedge for a Spot in Your Sustainable Garden and Lawn

Submitted by Holly Jones, horticulturist, UT Gardens, Knoxville



Cherokee Sedge thrives in shade, sun, wet and dry conditions. Photo courtesy UTIA.

Garden styles that support biodiversity are gaining popularity. According to a 2021 survey conducted by the National Wildlife Federation and the National Gardening Association, there was a 26 percent increase in plants purchased to help wildlife from the previous year.

Instead of simply buying plants because they are pretty, gardeners are choosing plants that also fulfill ecosystem functions like providing food for foraging insects, nesting materials for birds and strong deep root systems that stabilize the soil and contribute to plant survival in harsh weather conditions. One group of plants that is gaining recognition due to this trend are the North American native sedges.

Not to be confused with the unsightly garden weed, nutsedge (*Cyperus rotundus*), sedges (*Carex* sp.) are attractive grass-like plants that primarily grow in slowly spreading clumps. While there are hundreds of native species found in the wild, only a handful of those are available on the retail market. *Carex cherokeensis* (Cherokee sedge) is one of those chosen few, and it is easy to see why. This handsome, tough selection thrives in an impressive range of conditions including deep shade, intense sun, occasional flooding and periods of drought once established.

Depending on the growing environment, this plant ranges in size from 1-2 feet tall and wide. The coarsely textured semi-evergreen foliage contrasts well with big, round flowers and large-leaved plants like hostas. Consider using it as an alternative lawn under trees, as a filler for large mixed borders, in a rain garden, or naturalistic meadow planting.

For a tidy appearance and a flush of fresh green growth, cut back old foliage to about 6 inches tall in late winter or early spring. Mature communities of Cherokee sedge can be found at the Native American Interpretive Garden on the UTIA campus in Knoxville as well as the perennial border surrounding the Great Lawn at UT Gardens, Knoxville.



Gardening Tips

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

Lou Erickson

November

Shrubs and trees

- It's an ideal time to plant or transplant trees, shrubs, and fruit crops. Be sure to water well and then mulch newly planted plants with a good 3- to 4-inch layer of mulch. Newly planted evergreen plants should be checked regularly during the winter to insure they are getting enough water.
- Fall planting crapemyrtles, edgeworthias, loropetalums, hardy gardenias, butterfly bushes and warm season grasses (like muhly grass, Miscanthus, and Pennisetum) can be a gamble if we have a severe winter. If you are a cautious type, you may want to wait until spring to purchase and plant. If you already have them in a pot, then you're better off to go ahead and plant now.
- Mulch existing trees and shrubs to help reduce weeds, provide insulation from freezing temperatures and to conserve moisture.

Perennials, annuals, and bulbs

- Reduce peony botrytis blight and hollyhock rust by removing and disposing of all leaves and stems this fall. Roses should have all their leaves raked from beneath to prevent black spot. Dispose of plant materials in the trash, not the compost pile. This will reduce the carryover of disease during the winter and you will have less trouble next year.
- Cut the stems of chrysanthemum and other perennials close to the ground once they have begun to die back. Leave ornamental grasses to provide winter interest until spring.
- Transplant perennials throughout the fall and winter, as long as they remain dormant.
- Winter annuals such as pansies, violas, Dianthus chinensis, red mustard, snapdragons, ornamental cabbage and kale can still be planted. The earlier in the month, the better, so they can get rooted in before colder temperatures hit.
- November is the ideal time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Consider planting some of the minor bulbs such as winter aconite, glory of the snow, narcissus and grape hyacinths.
- Mulch flower beds with 3 inches to 4 inches of good compost or fine mulch to keep the soil temperature stable and to prevent winter plant injury from frost heaving. As the compost or fine mulch decomposes, it will enrich your garden soil as well.

Lawn care

- It's not too late to fertilize your cool-season fescue lawn. Use a turf fertilizer and follow label directions. This encourages good root development and helps improve the color of the lawn.
- Keep heavy layers of leaves raked from the lawn. They should be composted. Alternatively, you can just mow over a light layer of leaves, turning them to a mulch which adds important nutrients back to the lawn.
- November is the time for the first herbicide application for wild garlic and wild onion.

Fruits and veggies

- As soon as leaves fall from fruit trees and berry bushes, spray for the first time with dormant horticultural oil. This helps control overwintering insects and diseases. Apply according to label instructions.
- Incorporate compost in the annual and vegetable gardens for next growing season.
- Complete removal of fallen leaves and debris to help eliminate overwintering insects and disease organisms.
- Cut the tops off asparagus plants and mulch with a good layer of compost.
- Cover strawberries 2 inches deep with hay or straw to reduce weeds and increase winter protection.
- Secure raspberry and blackberry canes to stakes to protect them from wind whipping.

Indoor plants

- Give houseplants as much light as possible as lower light days begin.
- Stop fertilizing indoor plants until spring.
- If possible, provide houseplants with increased humidity as levels decrease due to indoor heating.
- Begin to increase the time between watering, but do not cut back on the amount of water.
- Force bulbs indoors like narcissus, hyacinths and amaryllis for color early in the new year; start paperwhites in late November for Christmas flowering. Keep paperwhites from flopping over by adding alcohol. Cornell University has some great advice online:
www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/bulb/Pickling_your_Paperwhites.pdf