

Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

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

Gardening News and Notes

September 2023

2023 Dates

- Saturday, Sept 16, 2023, Fall Picnic, Dunlap, Coke Ovens 3:30 PM Central
- November 4, 2023, Quarterly Meeting, Location Dunlap, TN Exact Meeting Locations to be announced

UT Field Days 2023 Dates

- 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

2024 Calendar

- February 3, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting, Dunlap
 - March 16, 2024, Tennessee Tree Day 2024, Dunlap
 - April 20 or 27, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting – election of officers, Pikeville*
 - May 4-5, 2024, Valley Fest, Dunlap*
 - July 27, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting – Tomato Tasting, Dunlap*
 - September 21, 2024, Annual SVMG Picnic, TBD*
 - November 2, 2024, Quarterly SVMG Meeting, Pikeville
- *Tentative dates

UT Publications

- [Backyard Vegetables: The Tennessee Vegetable Garden - Season Extension Methods W 346-F](#)
- [Backyard Vegetables: The Tennessee Vegetable Garden - Harvest, Handling, and Storage of Vegetable Produce W 346-I](#)
- [Fall Vegetable Gardens](#)
- [W 1180 Tennessee Smart Yards](#)



UT Gardens Plant of the Month

September Plant of the Month

Grow on the Wild Side with Goldenrod

Submitted by Celeste Scott, Horticulture Extension Agent, UT-TSU Extension Madison County



Giant goldenrod, *Solidago gigantea*, along a woods' edge. Photo courtesy of Celeste Scott.

As the heat of summer lingers and we move slowly into the fall season, gardens can often look dull, tired, and tattered. The blooms of many beloved summer favorites (lilies, daylilies, and coneflowers, just to name a few) have faded, leaving gardeners longing for a flash of late season color to rejuvenate spirits. The vibrant perennial, goldenrod (*Solidago*), can fill the gap between summer and frost with its golden blossoms and might be just the answer for weary fall gardens. There are nearly 100 species of *Solidago*, and many of them are native to North America.

While goldenrod has long been considered a weedy plant best relegated to roadsides and wild spaces, there are native species and improved hybrids that can fit well into the home garden. A plant evaluation study conducted by the Chicago

Botanic Garden compared the landscape performance of 25 species and garden hybrids. Evaluated traits included disease resistance (powdery mildew and rust), bloom coverage, flowering period, hardiness, and habit. Among the best performers were *Solidago* 'Baby Sun', *Solidago* 'Goldkind', *Solidago flexicaulis* 'Variegata', *Solidago sphacelate* 'Golden Fleece', and *Solidago rigida*. The overall standout was *Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks'. Its consistent disease resistance coupled with its clumping nature, small stature and reliable blooms that resemble sprays of fireworks has earned this cultivar a well-deserved place in ornamental landscapes. There have since been numerous cultivars introduced ('Cloth of Gold', 'Golden Baby' and 'Crown of Rays') that continue to build on characteristics that are desirable for home landscapes such as clumping growth habit, compact height, clean foliage, and bountiful floral display.

While *Solidago* species can be found growing naturally in diverse habitats, each species has specific environmental preferences. Those most used in landscape settings prefer full sun, and average soil, and have a clumping or slowly spreading rhizomatous root system. Goldenrod is a herbaceous perennial adaptable to poor soil, tolerant of drought once established, and has the potential to reseed. Goldenrods bloom between late summer and fall providing a much-needed source of late season nectar for many beneficial insects. Just as nature provides a compilation of flowering plants throughout the growing season, home gardens can mimic nature's sequential bloom patterns to ensure nectar and pollen provisions during this time of year when blooms can be sparse. Perennial companions to plant alongside goldenrod for late summer and fall interest include aromatic aster, New England aster, ironweed, Joe-Pye weed, beautyberry, rudbeckia and salvia.

Goldenrod is often mistakenly blamed as the trigger of seasonal allergies, but the true offender is ragweed, a plant with less showy flowers that is inconspicuously blooming at the same time as Goldenrod. The pollen produced by goldenrod flowers is too heavy to be carried in the wind and is not the cause of dreaded hay fever. Don't let false accusations and weedy reputations deter you. I encourage you to "Grow on the Wild Side" and include goldenrod in your garden this fall. *Solidago* goldenrod can be viewed in the landscape at all three University of Tennessee Gardens locations. Jackson is growing an unknown species of *Solidago* in the parking lot area, and *S. rugosa* 'Fireworks' in the rain garden. *S. rugosa*, roughleaf goldenrod, can be viewed at Crossville in the rain garden. Knoxville has two cultivars on display. *S. rugosa* 'Fireworks' is located at the entrance to the Children's Garden, and *Solidago* x 'Little Lemon' can be found in the Post-Wild Pollinator Garden.



Gardening Tips

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

October

Shrubs and trees

- You’ll find a good supply of trees and shrubs at local suppliers and October is just the beginning of the ideal season to install such plants in your garden. If you do plant in October, **water plants well until rainfall picks up** in November and December.

Perennials, annuals, and bulbs

- One last effort at weeding will help to improve the appearance of your garden throughout the winter. Any weed that you can eliminate from the garden this fall will possibly prevent thousands of weed seeds from sprouting in the garden next spring!
- Garden centers and nurseries are well stocked with spring flowering bulbs and late October and early November is the ideal time to get them planted.
- Collect and save seeds of wildflowers to sow either right now allowing the seeds to over-winter in your garden or wait and sow early next spring.
- Now is an ideal time to plant winter annuals in your garden for a great show of color from now until spring. Great plants to include in your winter garden are pansies, violas, snapdragons, and Dianthus. They can be planted in mass for a major splash of color in your landscape or use them in containers to add color in different strategic spots. Such winter hardy herbs as parsley, thyme, and rosemary make great container companions with winter annuals. Also, consider interplanting your winter annuals with bulbs of daffodils, tulips, and hyacinths. Planting bulbs between such hardy annuals will bring a surprise burst of color in the spring. And when the fading bulb’s foliage begins to wither, the winter annuals are so colorful that one barely notices the bulbs’ yellowing foliage.
- It’s a good time to spruce up your garden by cutting back withering perennial blooms and adding a fresh layer of mulch. If you do add new mulch, be sure to follow up with a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent an invasion of winter weeds.
- Mums are here. A variety of sizes and colors await your garden. Some people grow mums as year-round perennials, often enjoying two seasons of blooms—a light display in late spring, and another show in the fall. Others opt for treating them as fall annuals, sinking pots in the ground, or among their other garden plants. Either way, mums are a great way to add extra color to the fall garden.
- Keep your garden and lawn raked clean of a heavy layer of leaves and debris. Fallen leaves, old plant parts and grass clippings should be added to the compost pile.

Fruits and veggies

- Pumpkins, summer squashes, and gourds to be stored should be harvested before the first frost. Pumpkins that have begun showing color will continue to ripen after harvest. Use great care not to nick the rind during harvest since this will lead to more rapid deterioration.
- Dig and divide congested clumps of rhubarb.
- Apple varieties are showing up at fresh markets and roadside stands. Seek out some new varieties to eat fresh or create delicious desserts with. Apple trees can be planted now, too. Select disease-resistant ones such as Redfree, Prima, Priscilla, Jonafree, Nova Easygro, and Liberty.
- Keep harvesting second plantings of the cool season vegetables including radishes, lettuce, Chinese cabbage, chard, spinach, broccoli, and the other cole crops. Some such as parsnips, Brussels sprouts, and kale have enhanced flavor after a frost.
- Plant individual cloves of garlic now for a crop of garlic bulbs next summer. Select very large cloves to produce the largest bulbs. Plant them 6" deep and at least 6" apart. Mulch them after the ground freezes for winter protection.
- Some root crops, such as carrots, onions, and parsnips can be left in the ground and dug up as needed. Apply enough mulch to keep the ground from freezing, and the crop will be kept fresh until it is needed.

- If diseases or insects wiped out your peach or other fruit crop this year, cleanup is called for. Destroy any fallen fruit from under your trees, and remove any that have mummified on the tree. These fruits will be loaded with problems, and cause an early attack next year. Consider getting a home fruit spray schedule from your local extension office now, so you are prepared next year.
- After you have finished harvesting your summer vegetables, plant a cover crop of clovers, cow peas, soybeans, or vetches for the purpose of plowing under next spring. These nitrogen-producing plants will provide good organic matter and food for your garden crops next year, as well as help control weeds over the winter.

Lawn care

- Fall is an ideal time to renew tall fescue lawns that have suffered during hot, dry summer months. Fertilizing with nitrogen-containing fertilizers will speed lawngrass growth, thicken the lawn, and improve its color.
- Seeding and mulching bare areas will provide erosion control and reduce the potential for weed problems.
- Core aerifying will help water and nutrients move into hard soils. If your lawn is weak and thin and you intend to seed, a power rake can be used to lift thatch and expose soil before planting. Now may be the time to introduce a new, improved variety or tall fescue blend. It is best to be done with seeding your lawn by mid-October but fertilizer can be applied as late as mid-December.
- It is not too late to prepare your bermudagrass or Zoysia lawn for winter this fall. By increasing the cutting height now, you can help buffer these lawngrasses from extremely low temperatures in winter. The application of a potassium-containing fertilizer may also improve your lawn’s low-temperature hardiness and drought tolerance. Several fertilizers are specially formulated to help “winterize” bermudagrass and Zoysia. Some may also contain a pre-emergence herbicide to prevent seeds of annual bluegrass and other winter annual weeds from germinating and competing with lawn grasses for light, nutrients, and water.

Odds and ends

- The first hint of cool air and autumn color to late November and Thanksgiving. The key is making displays that use the traditional icons of fall - hay bales, scarecrows, corn-stalks - as supporting cast for the lead players - pumpkins, gourds, Indian corn, garden, or pot mums, fall pansies, asters, ornamental kale, and other blooming plants. Hay bales are especially useful “benches” for building versatile displays, while corn stalks add height and definition. Such displays can add a festive touch to a front porch or the landscape in strategic places like a light post or the entrance to a driveway or walk.
- Place amaryllis in storage for a 2-month rest before re-flowering. Select a cool (40-50 degree) spot and stop all watering. Plan to begin watering again 9-12 weeks before you want it to flower.
- Thanksgiving and Christmas cactus should be placed in an east or north window, watered, and fertilized one last time. Start letting them dry out more between waterings. This plus cooler night temperatures will stimulate blossom production.
- Compost has been compared to black gold, and will make quite a difference in your soil. Fall is the ideal time to start a compost pile, since there is such a ready supply of materials—from falling leaves to the gleanings from our vegetable and flower gardens. Your local extension office has loads of material on composting, from building the compost structure, to how to compost.
- The birds will soon begin their winter migrations so give them a helping hand by providing them with some food for their long journey. You might persuade a few of them to stick around for the winter if they know they have a reliable food source!

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

<p>Sheldon Barker Extension Agent, Sequatchie Co. 170 Church St Dunlap, TN 37327 423-949-2611 UT Extension Sequatchie County web page Sequatchie County Facebook</p>	<p>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</p>
---	--

The University of Tennessee is an equal opportunity provider.