

UT Extension Sequatchie Co.

Horticulture and Gardening Monthly News & Notes

December 2022

Vegetable Gardening Series

Gardening basics and more for the beginner and the experienced gardener

All classes are free!

Are you new to gardening, or an old hand looking for new ideas? This series of classes will cover four basic topics related to vegetable gardening:

- The January 19, 2023 - Vegetable Gardening Basics class will discuss site selection, soil testing, how to find information and resources, and much more.
- The February 16, 2023 - Straw Bale Gardening Basics class will cover how to prepare straw bales and some tips for Straw Bale Gardening.
- March 16, 2023 - The Gardening with Containers and Raised Beds class will examine growing vegetables in raised beds and containers. A great way to grow vegetables in small areas or on a small scale.
- April 20, 2023 - Growing Tomatoes, we will cover one, if not the most, frequently grown vegetable in the garden, with tips on how to have a prize-winning tomato.

All classes are at 6:00 PM CST and will be at the Sequatchie Co. Fair Building, 103 Heard St. Dunlap, TN. Contact the UT Extension office at 949-2611 or email sdbarker@utk.edu for more information. Sponsored by the Sequatchie County Fair and UT Extension Sequatchie County these classes are free to the public.

Upcoming Events and Programs in 2023

- March 18, 2023, - Tennessee Tree Day and Soil Test Saturday Sequatchie County Extension office. Bring your soil samples to Soil Test Saturday and the Master Gardeners will help with the paperwork, more details coming soon. As for Tree Day see below for details.
- March 25, 2023, Bledsoe, Soil Test Saturday would be at the Farmers Market
- May 5-7, 2023, - Valley Fest, Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners are planning their annual plant sale during Valley Fest in Dunlap so come by and see what they have to offer.

Tennessee Tree Day

Hosted by: Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners at 170 Church Street, Dunlap, TN 37327 Saturday, March 18: 9am - 12pm. Reserve trees at https://www.flipcause.com/secure/reward_step2/MTcwMjA1/76113

Trees available:

- elderberry \$3.99
- flowering dogwood \$3.99
- indigo bush \$1.99
- oak, cherrybark \$1.99
- oak, white \$1.99
- pecan \$1.99
- redbud, eastern \$1.99
- tulip poplar \$1.99
- Virginia pine \$1.99
- persimmon \$3.99
- buttonbush \$1.99

More about Tennessee Tree Day at <https://www.tectn.org/tennesseetreeday.html>

Sheldon D. Barker • 423.949.2611 • sdbarker@utk.edu • Sequatchie County

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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.

UT Gardens Plant of the Month

Large Glossy Leaves of Lusterleaf Holly Shine in any Landscape

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



With its large, glossy leaves and abundant red berries, lusterleaf holly (*Ilex latifolia*) is a showstopper in the garden landscape whether grown singly, in a grouping, or as a screen. You can see the holly growing as screens at the University of Tennessee Gardens, Jackson, where this photo was taken. Photo courtesy of Celeste Luckey Scott.

Hollies are versatile plants with a wide range of uses in the landscape. Perhaps my favorite species of this genus is *Ilex latifolia*, commonly called the lusterleaf holly.

From a distance, the leaves of *Ilex latifolia* are often mistaken for those of the Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*. I recall the first time I saw a specimen of this plant. It was being used in a living screen, and I was about 30 yards away when I made this incorrect assumption! I was initially drawn to the large, flat leaves. They were wide at the base and tapered towards the tip, leathery in texture, and some were even larger than the size of my hand. Upon closer inspection, I noticed the plant's heavy berry load. The berries, which were immature and green at that time, were forming in huge clusters nestled at the leaf axils (where the leaf attaches to the branch) and encircling the stem. As the season progressed into winter, the berries turned a deep, dull red and were visible from a great distance, which

only added to this plant's beauty.

Ilex latifolia has a narrow, dense pyramidal shape, reaches average heights of 20 to 25 feet, and growth is considered slow. The large, broad leaves can reach 6- to 8-inches long and 3- to 4-inches wide. They are dark green and their upper surface is shiny and lustrous, which lends itself to the plant's common name of lusterleaf holly. The leaf margins are edged evenly with small, coarse teeth, not spiny. *Ilex latifolia* prefers the heat of summers in the South and is hardy from USDA hardiness zones 7 through 9. There are several cultivars, but the straight species is the most commonly found at garden centers and is a grand addition to any landscape.

In my opinion, this species has the most beautiful foliage of all the hollies. It is resistant to heat, insects, and diseases and could serve equally well as a specimen, in a grouping, or as a component of a living screen. While this holly is not currently used widely in landscapes, it is worth considering, and in the authoritative "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants," Michael Dirr writes that *Ilex latifolia* "certainly ranks among the best of the broadleaf evergreens."

Specimens of *Ilex latifolia* can be seen growing on the UT Gardens, Jackson, grounds in a screen planting located on the northern side of the east end of the conifer bed, as well as in a tapestry screen planting beyond the annual trial berms on the west side of the garden.

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 questions or comments please contact: utgardens@utk.edu



Gardening Tips

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

Lou Erickson

January Tips

I know it is winter but there are a lot of tasks one can complete during the dormant season to ensure success during the growing season.

Vegetable Garden

- Harvest any remaining fall cool-season crops. The most cold hardy are likely to be spinach, kale, collards, and Brussels sprouts.
- Work on your garden layout and planting plans. These plans should be based on a rotation among plant families. It also should include any changes that are required due to pest and disease issues that were seen this past season. extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-A.pdf
- Test germination on remaining garden seeds to ensure viability for the upcoming season.
- Gather materials for producing transplants (if you grow your own). These should include new or sanitized trays and containers as well as a sterile growing substrate. extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-B.pdf
- Order seeds for your garden, especially those you plan to grow as transplants.
- Information on UT Garden Trails at: <https://www.uthort.com/category/trial-info/>
- UT Gardens Herbaceous Annuals: <https://ag.tennessee.edu/utg/Pages/annualtrialprogram.aspx>
- In some parts of Tennessee, seeds will need to be started in January (cool-season crops for spring transplant).
- If you had terrible insect problems in your vegetable garden this year particularly grubs, squash vine borers, and other soil insects, tilling your garden in the winter can help to control them. Many of these insects burrow down in the ground and spend the winter in a larval stage. Tilling can bring them closer to the surface and low temperatures can help to kill them. Don't do this if the ground is too wet, but if the soil is workable, this can help to start the season off clean.

Indoor house plants

- Amaryllis bulbs are out in abundance this time of year. If you didn't receive one for the holidays, go out and buy one. These bulbs make a beautiful show indoors and can help to make up for the loss of color now that the holiday decorations are being put away. Put your bulbs in a bright sunny location and water lightly until growth begins. Once you see signs of growth, make sure there is ample water but don't keep it saturated. Within six weeks, you should have a stunning bloom.
- Leftover poinsettias can keep their color long after the holidays are over, with just a little care. Remove the foil wraps and give them a basket or other basin to catch overflow water. Give them bright sunlight and even moisture and the colorful bracts can remain bright for months. When the color starts to fade, cut the plants back by half if they have grown leggy and treat them like a houseplant. Give them bright light and even moisture and wait for spring to move them outdoors.

Perennials, annuals, and bulbs

- Check your seed starting supplies and get everything on hand that you are going to need.
- Start perennials, geraniums, snapdragons, sweet peas, and pansies. Many other plants such as lobelia and verbena also need to be started indoors by the end of the month to be ready for spring.
- Start ordering early from mail-order sources for the best seed and plant selection.
- Soil moisture levels should still be good, but do pay attention, to containerized plants outdoors, which may need some extra water, especially before a hard freeze. Pansies and other winter annuals are blooming well, provided you planted them early enough. We usually have periods of warmer weather throughout the winter, and when we do, consider adding a little extra fertilizer to your plants. Clip off the spent flowers to keep them blooming. Pansies and violas can freeze solid, then defrost and keep blooming.

- Hopefully, you have planted all of your spring bulbs by now, but if you find a bag of bulbs that didn't get planted, plant them as soon as possible. Keep in mind that all spring bulbs must go through a chilling process of a minimum of twelve weeks to be able to grow tall and give you the best results. You can't hang on to those bulbs for another year they would dry out and be lost. If you planted early, you may have noticed the foliage emerging. For many bulbs that is normal, and you need to avoid damaging it. Keep in mind some early bulbs early crocus and daffodils can start blooming in February so their foliage should begin to appear.

Shrubs and trees

- Avoid the use of salt-based products on sidewalks and drives. Sand or cat litter provides good traction on slick spots without damage to lawn, ornamentals, or concrete.
- Take hardwood cuttings as well as from Roses. <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/plant-propagation-by-stem-cuttings-instructions-for-the-home-gardener>
- If you have plants that need to be relocated to a different part of your landscape, we are smack dab in the middle of the dormant period, so move at will. You may want to pick a day that is not too cold. Not only will it be easier on you, but also your plants. Pay particular attention to the roots. The tops are acclimated to cold and can take it, but the root system has been protected by soil and mulch and is not particularly cold hardy. Wrap the root ball if the move is any distance, and get them replanted ASAP. Subjecting the roots to extended cold or drying out, can lead to damaged or even dead plants.
- When the temperatures are below freezing, avoid much contact with plant material outside. Frozen plants are brittle, and limbs can be broken easily. If ice or snow is on your plants, use caution around them. Heavy loads of snow can be lightly brushed off, but stay away from ice-laden plants. You can't remove the ice without breaking off branches. If you have shrubs that are subject to winter damage gardenias, etc. and temperatures are predicted well below 15 - 20 degrees, a light covering with sheets, blankets, etc. can help. Avoid using plastic, which can encourage more temperature fluctuations, if the sun is out.
- Watch out for newly planted trees and shrubs, and water if needed. While the temperatures are colder, plants won't use as much water, nor will we lose it to evaporation, but some moisture may be needed if it doesn't get it naturally.
- It is always better to be prepared. In the event of winter damage to your outside shrubs, don't be too quick to prune. Any broken limbs or branches should be removed as quickly as you can, but if you simply have burned foliage, leave it alone until spring. Hopefully, any damage will be superficial, and the plants will bounce back on their own. If not, the damaged foliage can serve as a buffer in the event of more winter weather. Hopefully, this information will be simply referencing material, and we won't have to use it this winter season.

Fruits

- Prune Grapes.
- Prune Fruit trees and spray them with Lime Sulphur and Dormant Oil to prevent insects and diseases.
- Spray Copper Spray to prevent Peach Leaf Curl.

Selecting Bird Seed for Winter Feeding

Source Tennessee Watchable Wildlife for a full list of seed types visit

<http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/backyardinfodetails.cfm?uid=10032214204144001>

There is no one type of bird seed preferred by all birds, so try offering a variety of seeds in different feeders. Ensure your feeder is compatible with the seed you are purchasing.

Black-oil sunflower seed - Providing sunflower seed will attract Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, Mourning Doves, Dark-eyed Juncos, Tufted Titmice, Blue Jays, American Goldfinches, several species of sparrow and woodpecker, in addition to the occasional large-billed birds, like Brown-headed Cowbird, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle.

Millet - White millet and its varieties are the favorite food of most small-beaked, ground-feeding birds like sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Eastern Towhee, and Mourning Doves.

Cracked corn - Medium cracked corn is nearly as popular with ground-feeding birds as is millet; however, it tends to spoil sooner with the water-absorbent interior of the kernel. Supply small amounts, mixed with millet, on feeding platforms or in waterproof tube feeders. Avoid finely cracked corn, since it turns to mush quickly, while coarse cracked corn is too large for small-beaked birds. Cracked corn attracts sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, Eastern Towhee, Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, and crows.

Mixed birdseed: Milo, oats, wheat - Seed mixtures of sunflower seed with milo, wheat, and oats are widely available, but birds typically pick out the sunflower seed and discard the other seeds to an uneaten pile on the ground which may attract rodents. There is little benefit to purchasing this mixture as much of the "filler" is wasted by the birds.

Winter Bird Feeding is a great booklet by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, https://feederwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BirdNote01-Winter-Bird-Feeding-for-PDF_2012-10-22-RGB.pdf

Feeding Birds: A Quick Guide To Seed Types at [All About Birds https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/types-of-bird-seed-a-quick-guide/](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/types-of-bird-seed-a-quick-guide/)

Videos

Here are some great videos that discuss winter activities for the gardener.

- [Hand Pruner Care – Garden Notes](#)
- [Disinfecting and Cleaning Garden Tools](#)
- [Getting Tools Ready for Winter](#) and [Fall Garden Tool Care](#)
- [QA Basic Tools for the Garden](#) and [Tools Every Gardener Needs](#)
- [Intro to Birdwatching](#)

Great YouTube Channels

Need something to do on these cold winter days check out these YouTube channels and websites

- Master Gardeners of Hamilton County TN YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7SlaCGMpJQbfOsfPZy0MgQ>
- UTHort YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1kIH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>
- Family Plot: Gardening in the Mid-South at <https://www.familyplotgarden.com/> the WKNO tv series (seen on WTCI 45.2 at 6:30 Central) is hosted by Chris Cooper, Extension Agent in Shelby County, Chris' guest discuss a variety of gardening and landscaping topics.