



Fall 2021
Volume III, Issue 3

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Welcome fall! We hope you've had a good summer of gardening, with enough bounty to freeze, can, or consume! See our list of fall garden tasks on page 11 and remember to leave some leaves and litter for the insects and critters.

This issue continues our focus on specific plants, including hostas and coleus, and native alternatives to the frequently-seen, non-native nandina. Terri Lyon's column is all about saving seeds, something to consider as we start to clear our gardens this season and make plans for spring. Louminda Torbett details her experiences with the wrong—followed by the right—way to plant ball and burlap trees. And Elin Johnson introduces us to one of our members, Nancy Robinson, who is also an extraordinary photographer.

Companion planting is the topic of the book review, and we introduce a helpful website, UTHort.com. The North Carolina Arboretum is featured in our Gardens to Tour column.

As Blount County Master Gardeners, we are here to assist with gardening questions. Please call 865-982-6430 to have them answered. If you want to learn more about the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener training and volunteer program, see the announcement on page 32 or visit our website: bcmgtn.org

You can also engage with us on Facebook :

<https://www.facebook.com/BlountCountyMasterGardeners/>

The Blount County Gazette is published quarterly. If you would like to suggest topics or contribute content to our next issue, especially items for the Events Calendar, please contact the editors, Louminda Torbett and Becky Hornyak, at bcmggazette@gmail.com.



Hosta Addiction

Elin Johnson, Blount County Master Gardener



Hosta “Sagae”

There used to be a place in Sweetwater called “The Fruit Market.” They sold veggies and fruits in season, and in spring they sold plants. I looked forward to their spring offerings and bought both annuals and perennials there. One spring (maybe in the 1980’s) they offered two cardboard boxes full of bare root hostas for sale. They were labeled “Green” and “Variegated”, and I bought one of each. This was my introduction to hostas. I loved both of them!

Then at some point someone gave me an issue of *Horticulture* magazine. This was the beginning of my love of flower magazines. But this first issue also initiated my devotion to hostas. There was an article about a man in Manhattan who had a lovely, shady garden between tall buildings, and hostas were featured prominently. Prior to that, I had no idea there were so many different varieties (big and small--green, blue, and gold), displaying many types of variegation. The photographs showed them with various companions—ferns, shrubs, and wildflowers. Not only that, a nursery offering many of them was advertised, and I immediately ordered their catalog. I was permanently hooked!

In 1998 I retired and started gardening in earnest. I joined the Friends of the UT Gardens looking for people who loved plants the way I did; and shortly thereafter, when the East Tennessee Hosta Society was formed, I joined it, too. Its motto was “Gather Friends Like Flowers”, and that’s what I’ve been doing ever since. And hostas became the major plant in my gardens. I also joined the American Hosta Society. Their publication, the *Hosta Journal*, is worth the dues, in my opinion. It shows pictures of up-to-date varieties and has articles that tell you about any developments in the hosta world. By the way, there are thousands of named varieties,

big, medium, small, and mini sizes with many colors and different types of leaves. (Check out www.hostalibrary.org) The AHS has annual conferences. (I've only attended the one that was held in Nashville.) But there are regional divisions that hold their own conferences, and I have attended several of the ones held by the Dixie Region. These conferences are absolutely wonderful.

By the way, the East Tennessee Hosta Society was scheduled to host the Dixie Region's Conference in 2020, but it had to be canceled. The 2021 Conference was also canceled, but we are supposed to host the one to be held in 2022. You might consider attending.

Everyone who has room in their yard wants the big ones. One large variety that has been popular for many years is Hosta 'Sagae'. The picture at the beginning of my article is 'Sagae' that resided under a Japanese maple at my first garden in Sweetwater. Today's most popular large variety is Hosta 'Empress Wu', a huge hosta; and its sports are being put on the market every year. My favorite big hosta of all time in my gardens was H. 'Earth Angel', and it also makes the popularity lists every year.



Hosta 'Earth Angel'

But three of my favorite big ones were not well known—a yellow one, 'Dandy Lion' and a big blue one, H. 'Thunder Boomer'. I bought them at Dixie Region Hosta Conferences, where vendors always have many different varieties to choose from.

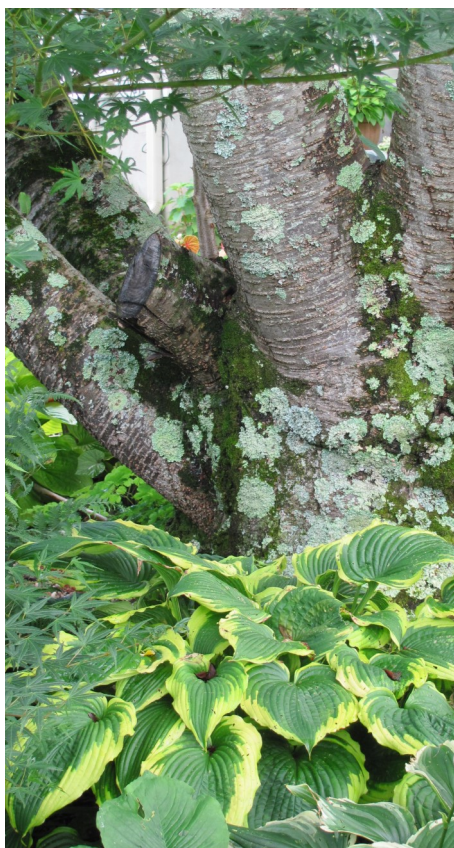


H. 'Dandy Lion'



H. 'Thunder Boomer'

Another big beauty that I really enjoyed was Hosta 'Spartacus'. It grew under the north side of a large cherry tree in my Sweetwater yard where the trunk was covered with lichens.



H. 'Spartacus'

Medium to small hostas have been the most numerous of the hostas I have grown. When I lived in Sweetwater, I accumulated more than 100 different varieties of hostas. Here are some more of my favorites. One of the most popular varieties that is always one of the top five hostas on the popularity list is Hosta 'June', a medium sized variegated variety, gold with a blue edge. It deserves its reputation.



H. 'June'

Another middle-sized beauty that is very popular is Hosta 'First Frost'. It has also had a lot of recognition and stays on the popularity list. It has yellow variegation. On the other hand, its brother, 'El Nino', has white edges but has not had the same popularity. Nevertheless, 'El Nino' is also a great hosta.



H. 'First Frost'



H. 'Lakeside Neat Petite' and 'El Nino'

You'll notice that most of my hostas are in containers. I started doing that early on. I find it easier to take care of my hostas when they are not in the ground where it's too easy for the snails and slugs to get to them. When they do show up, I use the iron phosphate snail bait. Most of the big stores have their own brands they have developed now. They are safer than the previous slug baits that were poisonous to birds and animals.



H. 'Dark Star'



Growing in pots turned out to be a really good idea, because I now live in a condo, and it was easy to move the pots to my new location. I don't have room for large hostas, but still have some 30 medium, small and mini varieties. Most are located along the back wall of my condo where the sun doesn't reach them until late afternoon. They seem to be happy there. On the left is H. 'Lakeside Paisley Print', top – 'Bachelor Party', bottom – 'Whee', and the small variegated hosta over 'Whee' is 'Fruit Loop'. The tiny gold one on the corner of the table is 'Chartreuse Wiggles'. In the picture on the right is a favorite, 'Fire Island'.



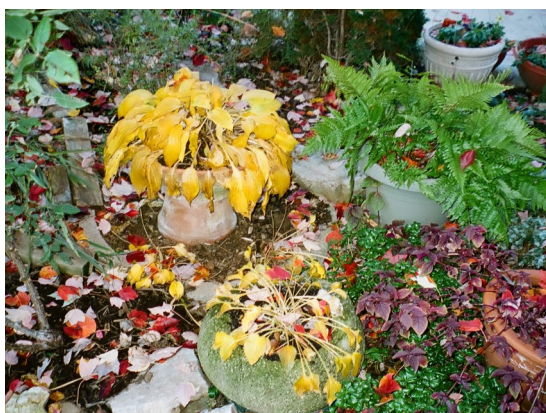
H. 'Fire Island'

On the other side of my tiny yard, Hosta 'Orange Marmalade' grows under a small tree, accompanied by yellow Asiatic lilies and Hakonechloa grass.



H. 'Orange Marmalade'

Hostas usually turn yellow in the fall and provide bright color when located in an area where they are accompanied by lovely fall foliage. The pots on this bank were located under a red maple and created a pretty fall picture among the fallen red leaves. Hostas truly provide all-summer beauty in your garden.



H. 'Dinner Mint'



Next time I'll introduce you to some of my mini hostas. They are my special favorites.

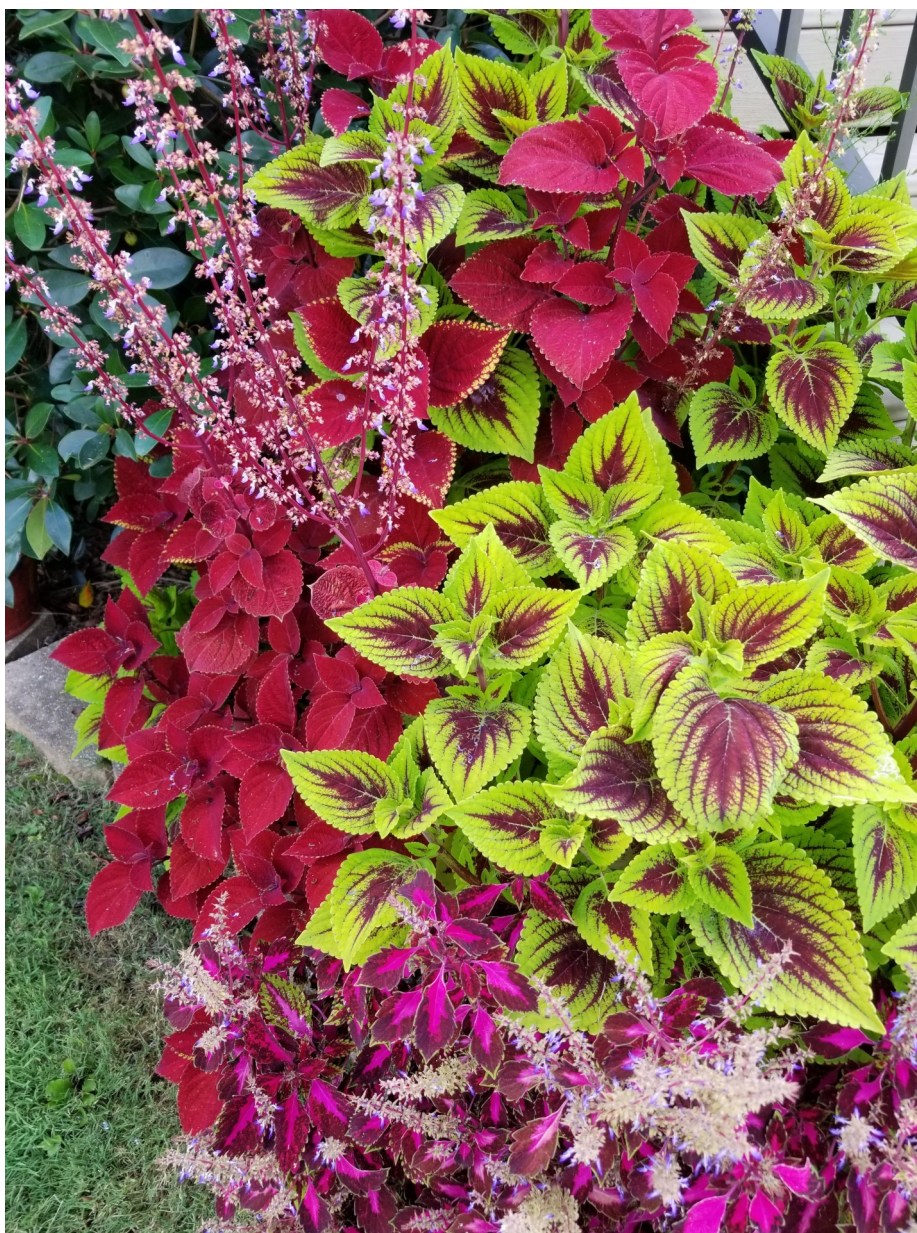
All photos by Elin Johnson.

Coleus

Louminda Torbett, Blount County Master Gardener

For me there is never a wrong time to start planning for spring gardening. Since moving back to East Tennessee and learning the ins and outs of gardening in clay soil, and dealing with spring temperature swings up and down and hot summers, I have had the joy (and sometimes sorrow) of learning what does (or does not do) well in my own garden. One huge success for me has been coleus.

Coleus is a tender, tropical plant that we grow here as an annual. It does well with morning sun and with afternoon shade to protect it from the heat of the afternoon. It prefers a soil pH that is slightly acidic to neutral (6.0 to 7.0) and rich, loose soil. I had to amend my dense clay soil with top soil and composted cow manure. Because they are a tropical plant they love our East Tennessee heat but are easily damaged by late April temperature drops. This past year I planted in late April and had to replace a few plants that were damaged by a late freeze. Next year I will wait until after Mother's Day.



Border mix

Month to month progress photos:



June



July



August



October

Coleus need to be kept moist, especially when newly planted. I have a drip irrigation system in my beds that is on a timer for early morning watering. Container plants require more frequent watering. Be careful not to overwater as this will cause root rot. Water when the top inch of soil is dry or if you see the plant starting to wilt.

I tend to plant mine close together (about 10” apart) so that they fill in to provide a mass of color and texture. If you want a bushier more compact plant, simply pinch off the top growth to encourage the plant to promote branching. Some gardeners like to pinch off the spiky flowers but I leave mine for the bees.

The wealth of varieties of coleus available at your local plant store can be overwhelming with colors ranging from maroon, green, yellow, pink, red and a mixture thereof. I like to choose a mix of colors paying special attention to having some with yellow or chartreuse in the leaves to provide a bright punch in the shade. I also select mine according to the sizes listed on the label (tall in the back to short in the front). I have successfully grown coleus in planting beds and in pots.



Mixed pot—morning sun and afternoon shade



One of the best things I like about coleus plants is that they provide color and interest for a full three seasons. At spring planting they add an immediate pop of color to the garden while you are waiting for other plants to bloom. Through the summer they grow quickly. By late summer and through the fall they provide spiky blooms that the bees love.

Fall Garden Tasks

Excerpts from the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

SEPTEMBER

- Begin planting cabbage, kale and pansies in the latter part of the month.
- Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage new growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning this late in the season. The plant will not properly harden off, and an early freeze can injure new growth.
- Apply a pre-emergent herbicide on your lawn to control cool-season weeds, such as chickweed, henbit, dead nettle, and annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*). For best control, apply by Labor Day.
- Divide and repot any tropicals you have outdoors to prepare them for their winter home.
- Order or purchase bulbs by October 1, when the best selections are available.

OCTOBER

- Collect the seeds of any annuals you would like to grow again next year. All them to dry completely before storing. A paper bag is great for containing the seed and allowing it to dry.
- October is the preferred time to plant ornamental kale, Swiss chard, and pansies.
- You still have time to order bulbs. Get them in the ground by early December.
- Before the first frost, dig up caladiums and shake off soil. Allow them to dry completely and store in a warm, dry place for the winter.
- October is a good time to plant trees and shrubs since dormant plants will be under less stress. Newly installed deciduous plants require almost no watering during the winter months, but don't forget that a thorough initial watering is paramount. Monitor evergreens, such as junipers, hollies and aborvitae for watering needs if rain is sparse. Even in winter a plant with leaves on it will transpire. Winter wind desiccation can hurt an evergreen tree that lacks sufficient moisture.
- Wash your pumpkins, gourds and winter squash in a mild bleach solution before displaying or storing to help prevent rot.
- Bring in your tropical plants and houseplants before frost. Many plants don't fare well when temperatures drop into the 40s.
- After frost cut back your deciduous herbaceous perennials to lessen the chance of disease or insects overwintering in your beds. Hardy lantanas and salvias are perennials that are borderline hardy and may benefit from retaining their stems through the winter. Any tender plants, such as cannas and elephant ears, appreciate a layer of mulch for extra winter protection.
- Other perennials can be mulched with a thin layer of organic material, but keep the mulch away from the crown or it could hold too much moisture and rot the plant.

NOVEMBER

- It's an ideal time to plant or transplant trees, shrubs and fruit crops. Be sure to water well and add a good 3- to 4-inch layer of mulch to new plantings.
- It's not too late to fertilize your cool-season fescue lawn. Use a turf fertilizer and follow label directions. The fertilizer encourages good root development and helps improve the color of the lawn.
- As soon as the leaves fall from fruit trees and berry bushes, spray for the first time with a dormant horticultural oil. Spraying helps control overwintering insects and diseases. Apply according to label instructions.
- Incorporate compost in the annual and vegetable gardens for next growing season.
- 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 protect them from wind.
- Stop fertilizing indoor plants until spring.
- Force bulbs indoors like narcissus, hyacinths, and amaryllis for color early in the new year. Start paperwhites in late November for Christmas flowering. Keep your paperwhites from flopping over by adding alcohol.
- Mulch existing trees and shrubs to help reduce weeds, provide insulation from freezing temperatures, and conserve moisture.
- Reduce peony botrytis blight and hollyhock rust by removing and disposing 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, to reduce the carryover of disease during the winter.
- Cut chrysanthemum and other perennials' stems back close to the ground once they have begun to die back. Leave ornamental grasses to provide winter interest until spring.
- You can continue to 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.
- It's the ideal time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Consider planting some of the minor bulbs such as winter aconite, glory of the snow, species tulip, narcissus and grape hyacinths.
- Mulch flower beds with 3- to 4-inches of good compost or fine mulch to keep soil temperature stable and prevent winter plant injury from frost heaving. As the compost or fine mulch decomposes, it will enrich your garden soil as well.

Source: <https://ag.tennessee.edu/utg/pages/monthlytasks.aspx#AnchorTop>

Sustainable Gardening

Terri Lyon, Blount County Master Gardener

“The garden suggests there might be a place where we can meet nature halfway.” ~ Michael Pollan

I love the Michael Pollan quote for its suggestion that we reimagine why we garden. That our garden is a place where we can serve our needs and honor nature’s needs.

The Importance of Seed Saving

Browsing Bevin Cohen’s *Saving Our Seed: The Practice & Philosophy*, this quote struck me:

“...no other work on this Earth is as important.”

The quote seems dramatic when you consider the numerous ways we could make the world a better place. But consider this: if you browse your pantry and look at the labels, you’ll see *90% of your food comes from seeds*.

Now that commercial agriculture has taken over most people’s food production, 75% of varieties have disappeared. This may endanger our global food supply.

Seed-savers are desperate to make sure plant varieties don’t disappear. But why is it essential to preserve a variety of greasy bean?

Heirloom seeds have been cultivated over generations. Hybrid seeds are bred for specific characteristics, which means they can, for example, be resistant to disease. However, companies patent hybrids to protect their profit and, for some, saving seeds would not work anyway because the next generation is not true to the first.

Another issue is that producers breed hybrids for shipping. Instead of choosing flavorful plants, companies select plants that won’t spoil when it takes a long time to send them to faraway places. That is why tomatoes you buy in the winter have no taste.

Saving Seeds and the Environment

By making the choice of heirloom plants and saving the seeds, you are making a positive impact on our environment by:

- Increasing biodiversity
- Better seed availability
- Better adaptation of varieties to your area
- Preservation of your food heritage

Increasing Biodiversity

Saving seeds increases biodiversity. Biodiversity is the number of life forms in an ecosystem, and more life forms mean a healthy system. But as our human population increases, we are developing areas that used to be habitats. That means that life forms can’t survive and risk extinction.

A habitat may contain the only source of food for a species. For example, a monarch caterpillar only eats milkweed. If the monarch butterfly lays its eggs on a different plant, the caterpillars won’t have food and will die.

Better Seed Availability

Another reason to save seeds is an investment in the future food supply. In Bill Best’s *Saving Seeds, Preserving Taste: Heirloom Seed Savers in Appalachia* are stories of generations of farmers that applied ‘scientific’ techniques to find the most viable varieties. They had to make sure they had enough food.

Excellent varieties of plants evolve through natural selection, and gardeners over the years have seized on that approach to cultivate and save varieties that taste yummy and perform well. They watched for 'sports,' or mutations that arose and carefully saved and tested them in the laboratory (garden) to see how they performed. After generations of this careful approach to preserving seeds, it would be a shame to see the varieties die out because people rely on just a few commercially available varieties.

And seed savers may be the ones that prevent extinction, as in this quote:

"Varieties often degenerate in the hands of big producers. They don't have time to select them for good flavor or other characteristics you love in a particular variety. The classic example is the Delicata squash seed that was grown a few years back. It was contaminated with extremely bitter genetics. There was only one grower in the country that year and the line was completely ruined. The industry had to go back to seed savers to repair the line. This kind of thing happens all the time." - Seed Ambassadors Project

Better Adaptation of Varieties to Our Area

Saving your local seeds means you have varieties that produce well in our area rather than seeds produced and shipped across the country. These plants are adapted to our soil, climate, and other growing conditions. These plants don't require as much care. So you can avoid dousing them with commercial pesticides and fertilizer. And it is good to know your hard work will result in a great harvest.

With changes in the climate we must adapt to pests and diseases. A diversity of seeds is an arsenal in that battle.

Preserving Your Food Heritage

The preservation of the heritage and stories of the people who came before us is not an environmental reason to save seeds, but it is essential. In some communities, seed legacies are passed along to grandchildren. One story in Bill Best's book is about a grandfather that had to sell all his material valuables to survive. So his legacy was the family's carefully preserved seeds. Other stories are about how seed saving and swapping helps families stay in touch and honor their shared heritage. Finally, when the U.S government sent the Cherokee Nation to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears, the Nation preserved their heritage by sewing seeds into their clothing.



The Blount County Public Library's Seed Library

You can get seeds from our wonderful seed library. "The Seed Library @BCPL exists to empower local home gardeners to grow and save seeds, learn about the history, culture, and growing of all kinds of plants with an emphasis on Southern Appalachian heritage varieties, and share a portion of the seeds of their harvest back to the community."

For details on how to donate or to 'check out' seeds go to <https://www.blounttn.org/1464/Seed-Library>.

Seed-Saving is Important!

Cohen believes no other work on the Earth is as vital as seed-saving. After reading his book, I understand better what is at stake for our future.

Physicist and activist Vandana Shiva fights against commercial agriculture's GMOs and patents, and created a seed-saving nonprofit cooperative. She says:

"That is why the act of seed saving is such an important political act in this time. And that is the part that is linked to self-organizing—organizing yourself to save the seeds, have a community garden, create an exchange, do everything that it takes to protect and rejuvenate the seed."

Shop for heirlooms and save the seeds.



Blount County Public Library Seed Library—ready for deposits and withdrawals!

Tree Transplanting - Lessons Learned

Louminda Torbett, Blount County Master Gardener

This seemed like a “no-brainer” – buy a balled and burlapped tree and have a landscape professional plant it in my yard. Keep it watered and watch it grow! That is just what I did two years ago. I wanted larger trees (3” caliper or larger). That meant they would be too heavy for my husband and me to plant by ourselves. So off we went to the nursery and picked out four beautiful redbud trees. Then we hired a recommended landscaper to plant them for us. Two years later, one has died and three are struggling. So, we called a licensed arborist to diagnose the problem. It turns out the trees were planted too deeply with the root collar (root flare) planted from 2 to 8 inches below the level of the ground. We have now had the root collars exposed and hope the trees will thrive.

Lesson Learned: Discuss thoroughly with the landscaper. Do not assume anything.

What are a balled and burlapped trees?

Balled and burlapped (B&B) plants are dug from the nursery with a ball of soil around their roots. The root ball is tightly wrapped with burlap held in place with twine, nails, and possibly a wire basket. Both fine and coarse roots are contained in the root ball so transplant shock is somewhat reduced. B&B plants are much more expensive than bare-root trees and are much heavier.



Rootball with burlap wrapping

Advice from University of Tennessee Extension:

Pre-plant Handling

Careful handling of the root ball is absolutely necessary to prevent damage to the tree prior to transplanting.

Root balls are fragile regardless of the production technique used; however, B&B trees and those in soft fabric containers are the most easily damaged. Never pick up or carry a tree by its trunk, especially a B&B tree, due to the weight of the root ball. Always secure the tree during transport so the root ball is not damaged, resulting in broken roots. Trees should be watered well prior to transporting and should be covered to reduce water loss. Plant the trees as soon as they arrive at the planting site. If this is not possible, water the trees well and place them in a holding area away from wind and the direct sun. B&B trees should be healed-in to protect the root ball from desiccation if immediate planting is not possible. Regular watering should be provided until the planting is completed.

Planting

The most common mistakes in transplanting trees are planting too deep, and over or under watering. Careful attention to properly preparing the planting hole greatly increases the odds of successfully transplanting trees. The planting hole should be at least three times as wide as the root ball, have sloped sides, and be no deeper than the rootball. Plant the tree about two inches higher than the surrounding ground to allow settling of the root ball and prevent ponding of water at the tree base. If the tree is bareroot, be sure to spread the roots before backfilling. If a container tree is being planted, be sure to cut and spread out the roots to prevent girdling. After the tree is set in the planting hole at the proper depth, gently remove the pinning nails or rope lacing so the burlap can be cut and removed from the sides of the root ball. The burlap at the bottom of the root ball should be left. Removing the bottom burlap may injure the roots. If a wire basket has been used, cut away as much of the basket as possible without disturbing the root ball. This will avoid any conflicts with the roots or with any equipment used later if the tree dies and the stump is removed. Remove any rope or other tying materials, plant tags or labels from the trunk to avoid girdling.

Gently backfill the planting hole with the soil that was removed from the hole with no additional amendments. If amendments are used, differences in soil pore sizes will be created causing problems with water movement, water retention and root growth between the root ball, planting hole and surrounding soil. When the hole is about halfway filled in, pack the soil tightly and water the tree to settle any air pockets and to assure good contact between the soil and tree roots. Finish backfilling the hole, then water the tree thoroughly. Mulch should be placed around newly planted trees to help conserve moisture and reduce competition for moisture from turfgrass. Be careful not to over-mulch (2 to 3 inches is the optimum depth), keeping the mulch 6 inches away from the trunk of the tree to avoid disease problems and rodent damage.

The need for watering following transplanting cannot be overemphasized. The larger the tree that is transplanted, the more watering is necessary. Tree wraps are not necessary following transplanting, as research has shown that they have no beneficial effects. Loose-fitting guards may be installed for protection from animal or equipment damage as long as they permit good air circulation.

Source: sp572 UText tree planting guide

Placing the tree

Place the tree in the bottom of the hole on undisturbed soil with its stem vertical. Handle the tree by its root ball or container to avoid trunk damage. Never drop the tree or you will loosen the root ball and break roots. Make sure that the root collar is at or above the surrounding soil grade. The trees we received from the nursery had soil on top of the root ball burying the root collar. See the side note on Root Collar Depth. My landscaper did not remove the excess soil to expose the root collar and ended up planting the tree too deep. Source: <https://forestry.usu.edu/news/utah-forest-facts/planting-landscape-tree>

Root Collar Depth

The root collar is the point on a tree's trunk where the root system starts, just above where the flare roots go out horizontally from the trunk (shown by the index finger in the picture below). The original nursery soil depth should have been at or just above the root collar. However, most B&B trees in nurseries, because of current production methods, have root collars buried deeper in the soil. Therefore, if you plant the tree with the top of its root ball or potting soil level with your landscape soil surface, the root collar will end up too deep. This can cause the buried trunk to decay and makes the formation of girdling roots more likely as the tree grows. The remedy is to find the root collar and remove excess soil that has been placed on top of the root ball, then plant at the root collar depth. Much of the root system is lost with very deep root collars (collars buried more than 1/3 the depth of the root ball), so consider returning such trees to the nursery. Source: <https://forestry.usu.edu/news/utah-forest-facts/planting-landscape-tree>



Exposing the root flare

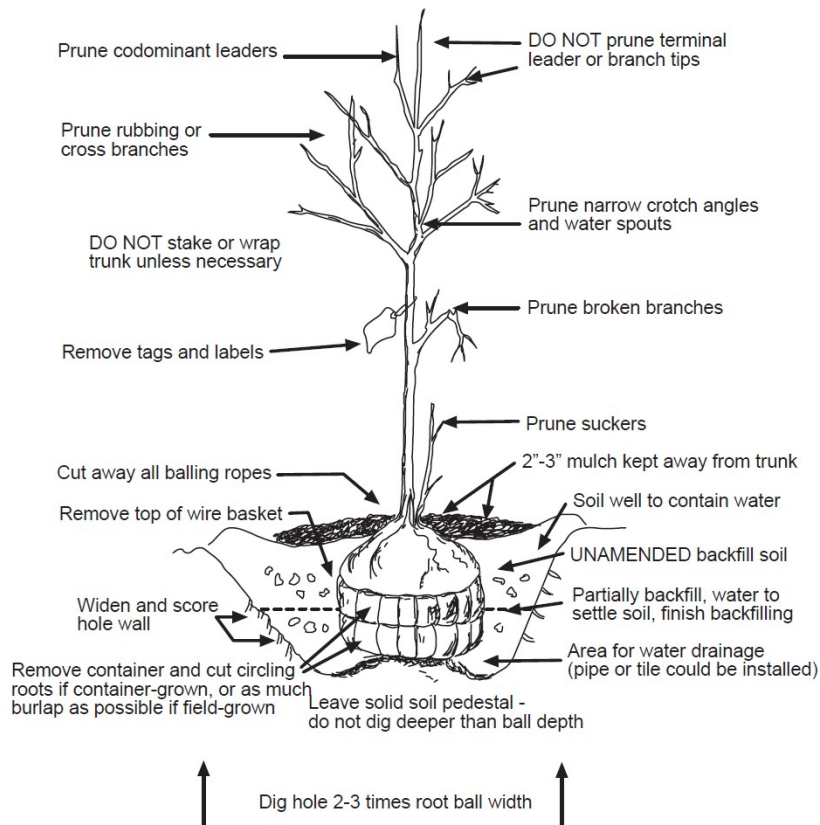
Damaged root flare



Watering

Up to 95% of a tree's roots are cut off during transplanting, greatly decreasing its ability to take up water. Water, therefore, is a tree's greatest need at planting time and for a year or two after transplanting until a good root system is established. Thoroughly water newly planted trees, applying the water with a hose or bucket to the entire planting area and letting it soak in well. Fill any holes that open due to soil settling but do not pack wet soil.

Lesson Learned—we did not water enough.



Source: Appleton and French 1995

Transplanting Guidelines

1. Plan ahead to match the species to the area or site to be planted, i.e., plant the right tree in the right place. Is the site appropriate for the tree that you want to place there?
2. Select high-quality plants without visible damage at the nursery or local garden center. Look for vigorous growth, good leaf color and roots that are white and firm.
3. Be careful in handling and transporting the tree to the planting site. Take extra care not to damage the bark or the root system.
4. Properly prepare the planting hole. The hole should be at least three times as wide as the root ball, have sloped sides and be no deeper than the root ball.
5. Plant the tree as soon as possible. Do not use soil amendments. Backfill with the same soil which was removed from the hole. Mulch.
6. Water, but do not overwater, newly transplanted trees. Irrigate slowly so that water infiltrates and soaks the ground. Watering for several years, especially during droughty periods, may be necessary un-



Planting day—February



After exposure of root flare. Thriving for now.

Master Gardener Spotlight—Nancy Robinson

Elin Johnson, Blount County Master Gardener



Nancy Robinson and her woodland garden



I am a native East Tennessean from Sweetwater, Monroe County. When I retired, I started going to the UT Gardens in search of people who were as interested in plants as I was and I joined what was then called the Friends of the UT Gardens. We went on bus trips occasionally. One of these trips was to the botanical garden at Asheville, NC. Along the way, I would occasionally see something and ask a question about it to my friend sitting beside me. Nancy Robinson was sitting in the seat in front of us, and she would look around and answer my questions. That was the beginning of my friendship with Nancy, a real expert on wildflowers (and a great many other plants as well). I don't remember when I first visited her marvelous forest garden on Chilhowee mountain, but I have been there several times and consider it one of the really unique and important gardens in East Tennessee.

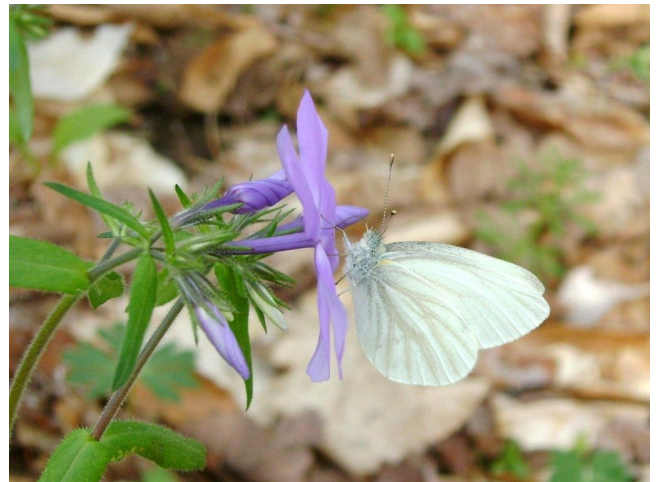
Nancy was one of the original Blount County Master Gardeners. At some point, she suggested that I come up to Maryville and take the training. So in 2008 I did, and it was one of the best decisions I ever made. Nancy is also a member of a garden club, and over the years she has kept them supplied with her marvelous pictures. I was lucky to be added to her mailing list and have kept a file of her absolutely exceptional pictures. I'd like to share some of them with the present membership.

Over the years and along with her husband, Hal, Nancy developed a ten-acre wonderland on Chilhowee Mountain. On this steep mountainside, she created a marvelous wildflower garden where one can wander the paths and view the marvels of a southern Appalachian forest, along with its many inhabitants—the flowers, the shrubs, the ferns, the animals and the insects. Not all of the plants you will discover are native. Nancy has planted many things from all over the world. A small creek meanders along at the bottom of the slope, providing another environment for her plants. Visiting her garden is an experience you will never forget! Here are a few of the wonders you might encounter.



Nancy has found it necessary to protect some flowers like this lady's slipper and her trilliums with wire enclosures to keep them from the deer. And, yes, there are orchids in Tennessee. She calls your attention to mushrooms and lichens that are sometimes as beautiful as flowers.





There are many wildflowers—trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*), blue wood phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), blackberry lilies (*Belamcanda chinensis*) and Indian pinks (*Spigelia marilandica*). This is only a tiny few—there are a great many more.

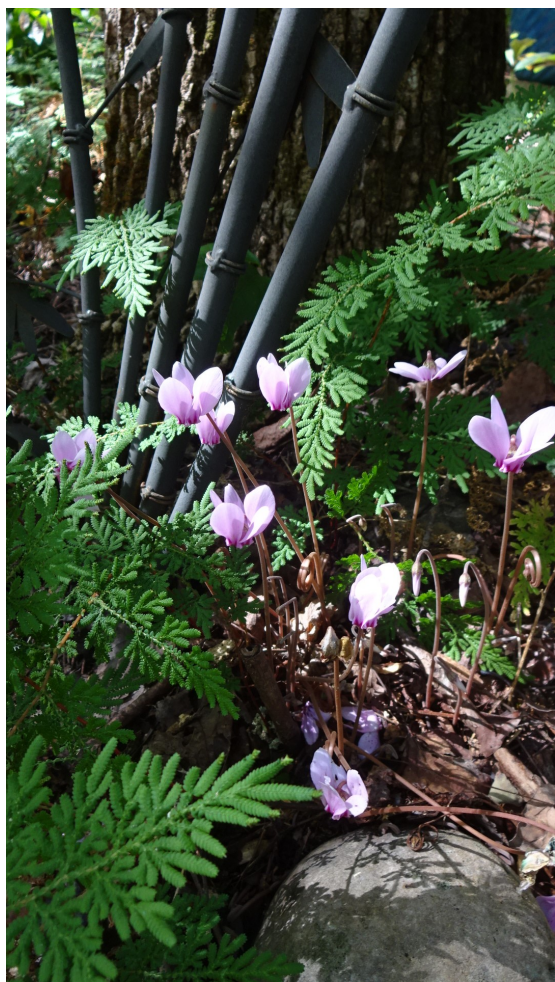
When she reviewed the article, Nancy told me, “Blackberry lily is not native.....First saw it on the back road through Friendsville when we moved up here. Loved the blackberries’ seeds and did not see the flowers until I got some of the seeds and planted them”. She has belonged to the North American Rock Garden Society for many years and takes part in their seed swap program. There are many plants in her garden that started from those seeds. She is the only person I ever knew who had the patience to grow daffodils from seed. And she has created many beautiful Lenten Roses from seed.



Nancy sinks pots of water in the ground to provide places for frogs to lay their eggs and develop from tadpoles into adult frogs.



Salamanders and box turtles reside on the mountainside as well as many other forest animals, and many butterflies abound, attracted to the many flowers. This black swallowtail has found a Joe Pye weed.



Hardy cyclamen and arborvitae fern (*Selaginella*)



Tiarella and wood poppy (*Stylophorum diphyllum*) surrounded by moss

This is only a tiny sampling of Nancy’s pictures recording the beauty of an East Tennessee forest environment. If you have not experienced the wonders of this beautiful place, try to find a way to see it. Nancy is a person who truly personifies the term “**Master Gardener**”!!



Sunset in Blount County



Nothing is more beautiful than a Luna moth



The creek meanders along, lined by ferns, moss covered rocks and various seedlings. Nancy once told me in an email, “The creek was singing today.”

Planting for Pollinators

Becky Hornyak, Blount County Master Gardener

Native Alternatives to Nandina

Nandina (Heavenly Bamboo, *Nandina domestica*) is frequently seen in East Tennessee yards and landscapes. Many people like the shrubs for their colorful leaves and manageable sizes. However, nandina is a potentially invasive plant in Tennessee, and is already invasive elsewhere in the region, according to both the Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Council (<https://www.se-eppc.org>) and the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council (www.TNEPPC.org).



Nandina in March, still with lots of color



Nandina in March, still with lots of berries

People may also think that they are helping birds by growing a shrub that produces berries. However, there is some evidence that the berries are toxic to birds when eaten in large quantities because they contain cyanide, although birds usually don't eat them unless they are starving. That is why in spring the bushes are still covered in berries! Bird-lovers should consider avoiding nandina entirely, removing the berries, or planting dwarf cultivars that do not produce fruit.

Fruitless Dwarf Cultivars:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| 'Fire Power' | 'Seika' |
| 'Gulfstream' | 'Monfar' |
| 'Nana' or 'Nana Atropurpurea' | 'Murasaki' |
| 'Woods Dwarf' | 'AKA' |
| 'Lemon Lime' | |

Invasive Cultivars to Avoid:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 'Alba' | 'Leucocarpa' |
| 'Compacta' | 'Moon Bay' |
| 'Jaytee' | 'Moyer's Red' |
| 'Harbour Dwarf' | 'Monum' |

In “Better Berries for Birds” by Doreen Cubie (*National Wildlife* magazine, February-March 2021 issue), the author says that birds are like insects in that they prefer nutrients from native plants, and will seek them out even when berries from non-native plants are available. “Native berries contain more of the fats, carbohydrates and nutrients that birds need to survive the cold months,” she says. Native berries also contain antioxidants, which help migrating birds power through their flights without suffering physical stress. In contrast, fruits of invasive plants are characterized as “nutrient poor.”



Beautyberry



Arrowwood viburnum



Chokeberry in bloom in spring

Berry-producing native plant alternatives to nandina include winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*); American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*); viburnums, especially the arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*); chokeberry (*Aronia* spp.); elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.); crabapple (*Malus* spp.); southern bayberry/wax myrtle (*Morella cerifera*); sumacs (*Rhus* spp.), and rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei*)—if you’re willing to share your blueberries with the birds, that is!

Sources: Home & Garden Information Center, Clemson Cooperative Extension

<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/nandina>

Seven Islands State Birding Park—<https://tnstateparks.com/parks/seven-islands>

Gardens to Visit—The North Carolina Arboretum

Becky Hornyak, Blount County Master Gardener

Asheville's North Carolina Arboretum is hosting an Outdoor Sculpture Showcase through September 26, with works of sixteen regional and national artists displayed throughout the grounds. The Arboretum offers 65 acres of cultivated gardens, including a Heritage Garden, Quilt Garden, Stream Garden, and Holly Garden, as well as a Forest Meadow and Willow Pond. There are 10 miles of hiking and biking trails, an on-site café, a gift shop, and a large bonsai collection. We visited in early April, and the bonsais were not on display at that time.

The Arboretum is about 2.5 hours from Maryville, on the west side of Asheville. Located at 100 Frederick Law Olmsted Way, it's open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. April through October, and 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. November through March. See ncarboretum.org for more information or to plan a visit.



Quilt Garden in spring



Dragonfly sculpture



Bluebells and daffodils (right)
Monarch life cycle sculpture

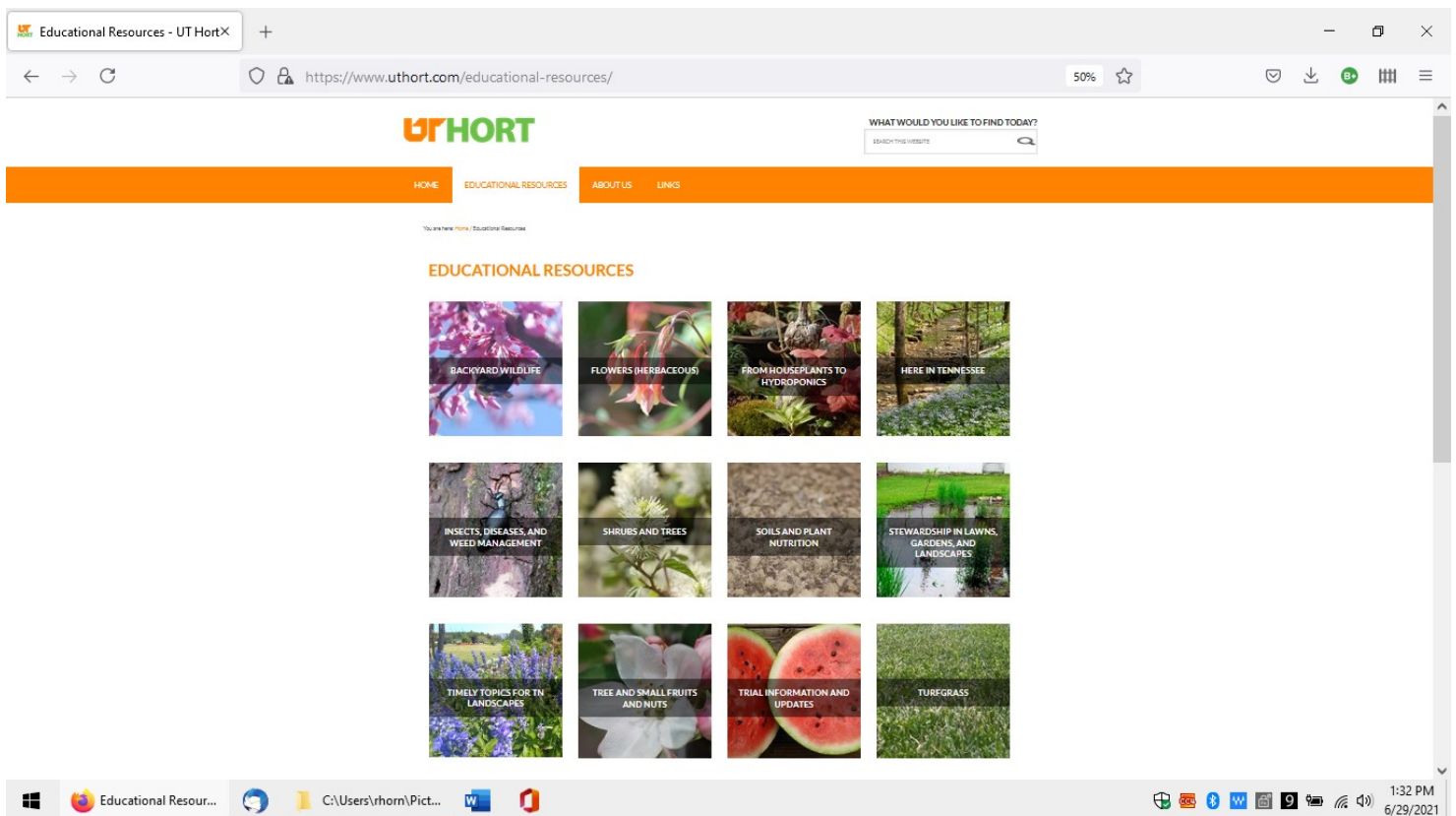


Frederick Law Olmsted



A great resource for all things horticultural-related is the University of Tennessee Extension website UTHort.com. It features links to many of the UT Extension publications on gardening and information about upcoming events. Topics covered are Backyard Wildlife; Flowers (Herbaceous); From Houseplants to Hydroponics; Here in Tennessee; Insects, Diseases, and Weed Management; Shrubs and Trees; Soils and Plant Nutrition; Stewardship in Lawns, Gardens, and Landscapes; Timely Topics for TN Landscapes; Trees, Small Fruits, and Nuts; Trial Information and Updates; Turfgrass, and Vegetable Gardens.

For example, under the Stewardship section is information on herbicides, home composting, rain barrels, and links to publications on “Sustainable Landscaping” (viewing residential landscapes as part of a larger ecosystem with unique niches and growing conditions can help homeowners to make wise decisions when it comes to planning for and installing a landscape design) and “Leveraging Your Landscape” (intended to help homeowners and landscape professionals analyze and change the function of outdoor spaces). In the Backyard Wildlife section is a link to “Managing Wildlife,” which includes information on both attracting wildlife to your yard, as well as dealing with problematic wildlife, such as groundhogs.



Kids Corner

Jaquie Stiver, Blount County Master Gardener

Greetings gardening friends,

I have come to the conclusion that I have overthought this newsletter contribution. I have doubted my ability to write anything inspiring or at least interesting, and I have realized that similar thoughts prevent joy, progress and possibly opportunities to share our love of gardening with children.

It is so much easier to give in to doubt and fear and never garden with kids at all. Seriously, wouldn't they rather play video games, watch tv or spend time with friends? Hanging out with someone way older than them (even if it is family) is not likely high on their list of things to do.

Truth is, if we adopt this belief it will work out to be a kind of truth: Kids don't want to garden. Actually, that is what *we* tell ourselves when *we* don't dig deep and try.

The specifics matter little compared to the act itself. We adults get lost in specifics. Kids just want action. We adults want to over-plan, over-prepare and over-explain. Kids just want to dig holes, drop in some seeds, shove in some plants and then play in the water. **The joy is in the act.**



So, after much rambling, the point I would like to leave you with is, just do it! Plan a little, pick some easy-to-grow flowers, herbs or vegetables (or steer the kids to such if you can take them shopping with you), and then with a few words and suggestions, let them have at it. The results of their gardening experiment may not look like anything anyone has ever seen before but it will be more fun—and things *will* grow. After some tending along the way, the edible treats or beautiful blooms will be enough to hook them and have them asking you about the next gardening adventure.

Happy gardening! Jaquie



Container Tips, Tricks, & Techniques

James Hutchison, Blount County Master Gardener

Fall Container Planting

Fall will soon be here and I often get questions about keeping containers going with seasonal plantings during the cooler weather. What plants are available? Are my containers winter hardy?

Actually, there are lots of choices for plants and containers. I sometimes use small evergreen shrubs and pansies. Mums can be center stage for fall with pansies and then switched over to a small shrub or grass specimen for a winter display. I like to use heuchera a lot in fall and winter, and then plant it in the ground the following spring when I switch over to annuals. Creeping Jenny is good for a different color and texture but it's pretty invasive to place in the ground. Watch out for that. Some ferns are good for winter displays and stay green all year.

As to containers - plastics are good. Heavy glazed pots can withstand freeze thaw cycles but they aren't 100% guaranteed to do so. Terra cotta is often damaged with freeze cycles. I use some heavy plastic containers inside of Terra cotta and others I'm unsure of. That way, the soil and the expansion is contained inside of the plastic and not the outer pot. As long as there are no drainage impediments it should be fine.

Plant containers and keep the patio or deck festive for the fall and winter season. It can help to brighten up an otherwise gray and dreary January afternoon!



This is a shade garden recipe straight from the White Flower Farm people. Their catalogue has it for sale as a group under the name of "Sunset City". There are three Begonia Waterfalls Encanto Pink plants, two Coleus Mainstreet Sunset Boulevard, and one Begonia Gryphon. This one turned out really well on my back patio. It gets about 2 to 4 hours of filtered sun and otherwise pretty dense shade. Planted in a 22" X 18" high container. Looks really great and creates a good focal point. I'd rate this one pretty close to a 10. Easy and performs as depicted and promised.



This is one of my own creations. The plants are pretty much available everywhere. Starting left, Trailing Purple Lantana, Zinnia Profusion Yellow, a multi-colored calibrachoa of purple/yellow. Center is Cordyline—the rich burgundy color—and on the right is Landmark Lantana Citrus. The colors and textures make for a great combination! The tall and slender container helps too, but this looked good the day in early May when I planted it. It hasn't needed much pruning to keep it in size.



This composition is again my own. The thing to note here is this was just pruned back fairly hard. This is made up of the Cordyline, two Landmark Lantana Citrus, two “Supertunia” Gold, and then several sprigs of Tradescantia Zebrina. This had become so bushy and full, the plants were barely defined anymore and the lantana was overtaking the petunia. A couple of weeks from now it will be full again and full of more blooms! This container is a little bit larger - probably 24” X 20” high, a really tough and serviceable good plastic container.

This is another creation of my own. L to R: Sweet potato vine Lime, Tradescantia Zebrina, “Supertunia” Blue, Big Leaf Begonia, and Zinnia Profusion Yellow. The pretty soft yellow lantana and the Big Bounce Red Impatiens are planted in the ground. This is another 22” X 18” high planter that borders a driveway.



The Book Nook

Carrots Love Tomatoes, Secrets of Companion Planting For Successful Gardening by Louise Riotte

First published in 1975, this companion planting guide has been a favorite of many gardeners. This book was recommended to me recently by two fellow Master Gardeners so I knew I had to check it out. This is truly a classic how-to on utilizing the natural properties of plants leading to a more successful gardening experience and bountiful harvest.

The author, Louise Riotte, wrote 12 books on gardening including *Carrots Love Tomatoes* which has sold over 500,000 copies. Ms. Riotte passed away in 1998 at the age of 89.

The following is an excerpt from the section on Vegetables: Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)

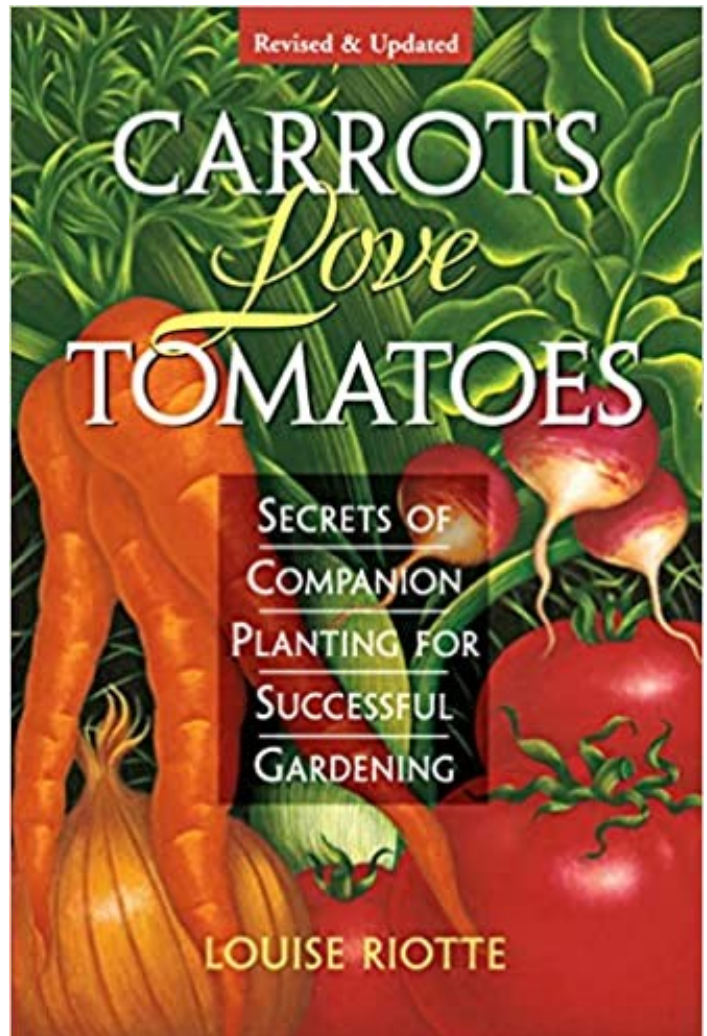
“Parsley planted with asparagus gives added vigor to both. Asparagus also does well with basil, which itself is a good companion for tomatoes. Tomatoes will protect asparagus against asparagus beetles because they contain a substance called solanine. But if asparagus beetles are present in great numbers, they will attract and be controlled by their natural predators, making spraying unnecessary....”

“In my garden I grow asparagus in a long row at one side. After the spears are harvested in early spring I plant tomatoes on either side, and find that both plants prosper from the association. Cultivating the tomatoes also keeps down the weeds from the asparagus. The asparagus fronds should never be cut, if at all, until very late in the fall, as the roots need this top growth to enable them to make spears the following spring.”

© 1975, 1998 by Storey Publishing, LLC

Personally, I learned so much from those two paragraphs that I can't wait to delve more deeply into this book.

Reviewed by Louminda Torbett, Blount County Master Gardener



BCMG Note Cards

The photo note cards are \$10 per set and are blank inside, making them perfect for all occasions: birthdays, thinking of you, etc. They also make wonderful gifts for family and friends. To place your order, please go to <https://bcmgtn.wildapricot.org/Flower-Theme-Note-Cards>

The note cards feature Honey Bee on Crimson Clover by Sandy Vandenberg; Sunflowers by Sharlee Hatten; Eastern Tiger Swallowtail by Dan Curry; Coneflowers and Russian Sage by Mary Alford; Morning Glory and Bumble Bee by Brandi McCray; Spicebush Swallowtail on Tithonia by Wanda Banks; Green Pepper by Corinne D'Aprile, and Bee on Autumn Clematis by Thomas Carpenter.



AUGUST

31 Fall Gardeners' Festival at the Plateau
Discovery Gardens, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.,
320 Experiment Station Rd., Crossville



SEPTEMBER

18 Butterfly Festival, UT Arboretum, 901 South Illinois Avenue, Oak Ridge

21 Native Plant Seminar—Tennessee Native Plant Society (tnps.org), 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Edible Natives by Pandy Upchurch

25 Blue Ribbon Country Fair at the Great Smoky Mountains Heritage Center, 123 Cromwell Drive, Townsend, 10AM-5PM, parking donation of \$5

28 *Blount County Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting - 6:30 pm via ZOOM or in person at the Blount County Public Library*

OCTOBER

7-9 Fall Plant Sale, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center, 605 Airways Blvd., Jackson
<https://westtn.tennessee.edu/other-events/>

19 Native Plant Seminar, Tennessee Native Plant Society (tnps.org), 6:30-7:30 p.m.

The Color of Conservation by Robin Whitfield

21 Woods and Wildlife Field Day beginning at 7 a.m., UT Arboretum, Oak Ridge

26 *Blount County Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting - 6:30 pm via ZOOM or in person at the Blount County Public Library*

NOVEMBER

16 Native Plant Seminar—Tennessee Native Plant Society (tnps.org) 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Invasive Plants of Tennessee by Margie Hunter

30 *Blount County Master Gardeners Monthly Meeting - 6:30 pm via ZOOM or in person at the Blount County Public Library*

Right Now! Attracting Pollinators to East Tennessee Gardens is a publication of the Blount County Master Gardeners, with all articles written by members. It features 81 plant descriptions, about two-thirds of which are native to Tennessee, and photos of all the plants, most of which were taken by members. There is an extensive chart of plants attractive to pollinators, including bloom time and whether the plant is a pollen source, a nectar source, or a host plant for butterfly larvae. Finally, there are website and book recommendations, and native plant, nursery, garden center, and online plant resources. *Right Now!* is available at these locations in Maryville: AG Central Co-op, Ginger's Flowers (seasonal), Out of Eden Garden Center, and Southland Books; in Knoxville at Wild Birds Unlimited and Stanley's Greenhouses; and by mail order through the BCMG website, bcmgtn.org.



Blount County Master Gardeners

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Like us on Facebook, too.

Blount County Master Gardeners (BCMG) is a volunteer service organization with the goal of training volunteers who can provide the public with research-based information on a variety of horticultural topics. It is built upon solid visions, values, and community support.

