



In This Issues

- 1 President's Message
- 2-7 MCMG Corner
 - Upcoming Events
 - MG Member articles
- 8 Meeting Notes

From The President

I would like to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to lead such a wonderful, worthwhile organization. I am up for the challenge and looking forward to a great year.

The 2018 board met with the 2019 board at a retreat December 4, 2018, to plan for the upcoming year. The torch has been passed. Exciting things were discussed and will happen under the leadership of the new board.

One garden chore shared by all master gardeners is pouring over the garden catalogs that started arriving just before Christmas. In January, you have time to really give them a careful look and start to place orders that will deliver those grand visions of our new, improved gardens.

You can brighten up those cold, gray, January days by bringing Spring-flowering branches indoors for forcing. Good choices are forsythia, pussy willow, jasmine and flowering quince.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at our January 3, 2019 meeting.

Glenn Fesmire
President
MCMG



M G CORNER

Madison County Master Gardeners
Officers for 2019

President- Glenn Fesmire
Vice President Projects- Vicki Bunch
Vice President Programs- Sue Ann Barnes
Secretary- Mary Kay Havranek
Treasurer- Mary Nenarella
Board Member- Rob Johnson
Board Member- David Sams
Board Member- Marie Kyper
Board Member- Stephen Pope

SAVE THE DATE **MCMG SPRING PLANT SALE** **MAY 4, 2019**

WANTED from Master Gardeners – Articles, hints, Recipes, trivial questions and answers, something that did or did not work for you in the garden...anything pertaining to gardening for the newsletter.

Send to Liz Whitsitt, lizv@tds@net

This note is in response to communication over the last day and a half about a suspicious solicitation email that you or your EMG volunteers may have received. Thanks to many of you from around the country for making us aware of this issue.

The EMG National Committee would like to make clear that this request is NOT connected to national, state, or local EMG activities, and we DO NOT endorse or support any of the content or activities connected with this suspicious email.

Natalie R. Bumgarner, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Residential and Consumer Horticulture
nbumgarn@utk.edu | ag.tennessee.edu | UThort.com

Master Gardener's Christmas Party 2018

This wasn't the first Master Gardener's Christmas Party, previously the Sam's graciously opened their home for a party, until it became too big for them to have at their home. Thank you, Carol and David for your gracious hospitality and thoughtfulness from previous years.

We all had a marvelous time! Good food, good music and good company.

A great crowd of people and Celeste came with her two little ones, Lane and Ellie. Lane was all boy and little Ellie with those sweet cheeks of hers that are so irresistible of reaching out and giving a tender little squeeze.

We choose basically finger foods for the menu; mini ham and cheese sliders, several antipasto platters, dips, cheese balls, fresh fruit, salads, and a special Master Gardener cake. Some added deserts of cookies and pound cake.

Music brought by Manuel McKnight and Kathleen Trent: from Kenny G to

For the contests. Manuel McKnight and David Barnhill were are prestigious judges for the Hand-crafted Christmas Decorations and Traditional Cookies, with Patti Raper as the administrator.

The winners for the Hand-crafted Christmas Decorations are:

1st Place - Christine Warrington, Plaque with Bird Feeders - Prize \$50 gift card for Hobby Lobby

2nd Place - Dorothy Blackburn -Wooden Snowmen- Prize \$30 gift card for Morris Nursery

3rd Place - Deborah Alexander - Needlework Stocking-Prize \$20 gift card for Jason's Deli

The winners for Traditional Christmas Cookies are:

1st Place- David Sams - Prize \$50 gift card for Bed, Bath, & Beyond

2nd Place - Christine Warrington - Prize \$30 gift card for Four Seasons Nursery

3rd Place - Barbara Tucker- Prize \$20 gift card for Panera Bread

A few years ago, I created a Christmas Game of Trivial Pursuit of Origins and Symbols of Christmas for my family. We had little give away's, mostly donated from Celeste and two items from Jason (a fresh wreath and bush). Thank you, Celeste, and Jason! We had a couple of people who just couldn't help themselves from answering out loud, even after they had won a prize, Barbara Tucker and Mary Nanerella...go girls.

What was new and different was the arrangement of the tables. We lined them up all together where people sat across from one another in a family style atmosphere. I encouraged everyone to meet at least two new people that evening. Contributed by Kathleen Treat

Ladies of Hope: Seventy-four thousand people died of drug overdoses doses in the United States last year. This will change the course of American history if it continues. Already American lifespans have fallen 3 years in a row for the first time in Known history! Most of the young women at the Hope Recovery Center have never had much of a chance to find success in life. They have generally been physically or mentally abused by a male, usually a relative, yet remain amazingly responsive to decent treatment. Gardening with them is one was to show them that people do care about them and that they can be successful in the things they do. I find working with them to be highly rewarding. See Mary Kay Havranek if you are willing to help with your presence and emotional support.

Overwintering plants: The large garden cart which Carol and I bought a year ago last spring looked like it was going to take space away from overwintering plants in the garage. Then we found that it would hold 11 macrophylla hydrangeas or similar plants in 1-2 gallon pots and allow them to be easily wheeled in and out of the garage according to the weather. Last year a neighbor froze these plants to death while I was gone over Christmas. This year I stay here and take care of them. Meanwhile, 200 hostas sleep in pots under a tarp where they won't be excessively watered when it rains. Many of these will be sold at our plant sale or given to master gardeners in the next 2 years. Two hundred is too many!

Bananas: Our clump of hardy bananas is huge! It freezes to the ground or nearly so every winter and leaves a mass of several hundred pounds of rotting foliage to be dealt with in the spring when there are way too many things to do. Last year I cut the plants off 3 feet high in the fall after the first light frost when the firm plants were easy to deal with? The plants froze to the ground but cutting them in the fall

didn't hurt them. This year I cut them off 1 foot high and covered them with leaves. They are monocots like grass. That means that their growing point is near the bottom of the plant rather than at the tip of the stem as in dicots.

Doing well: I now have several pots of rain lily bulbs in the garage. These are spring or summer bloomers with pink or white flowers. One variety makes seed pods with viable seeds! They flower only when it rains and not when I merely irrigate them and seem to grow fine without ever going dormant like tropical plants do. I bet that they would naturalize and bloom repeatedly all summer. Or are they hardy enough to naturalize? Most of these bulbs need to be distributed before Carol and I move.

Now is the time to: Collect and purchase seed and supplies for spring and to make a planting schedule. If one intends to grow transplants the seed should be planted by the middle of February. That date will be here before we know it. Cool season transplants can be set out during March and warm season plants, during April or May.

Planning ahead: The next year will be the best gardening year ever! Every year is the best gardening year ever! Is next spring the time to spend more money and time mulching to save time and work? Lower work levels are the name of the game now at our home.

Christmas Party: About 30 people participated in our very well planned Christmas party. I believe there is a place for this social interaction and fully support it.

Final thought: Happy Gardening New Year everyone!

It seems the most common question about organic gardening (right up there with “how do I control pests”) is what can I feed my plants if I don’t use 10-10-10? There are many choices.

The first and most obvious as covered in the November newsletter, is creating a healthy soil that is rich in organic matter and “un-compacted” enough to hold moisture and oxygen where the roots of the plants can reach them.

A soil rich in decomposed organic matter has nutrients readily available to the plants, however, that is not always enough to carry the plant through the season and produce the fruit you are looking for. Read you soil test results carefully. If you are low on specific nutrients, below is a guide to adding organic amendments.

Nitrogen. Blood meal, cotton seed meal, fish meal. (But know where these products come from. Bone meal and bloodmeal might be coming from slaughter houses-and it is unknown what they have been fed or inoculated with.) Remember too much nitrogen might give you lots of beautiful foliage but not much fruit.

Phosphorous - Organic Phosphorus fertilizers come primarily from mineral sources like rock dust or colloidal phosphate (also called “soft phosphate”), or from bone sources, such as steamed bone meal or fish bone meal. -

Potassium- (Potash) For plant vigor. Too much leads to a high pH. You can use green sand (has 18% potassium but also other minor nutrients) or Sulphate of Potash (50% potash) Adjust based on % in amendment.

Magnesium- Too much binds soil. It can be added with or without calcium so you will need to see if you need calcium first.

Calcium- Use dolomite if calcium is needed.

Sodium-Should always be under 100ppm. Add gypsum if sodium level is too high.

Sulpher- Important- It is found in Gypsum and is acidic. It is used to bring down pH when needed.

Micro-nutrients. Azomite may be needed to correct some minor nutrients.

If soil is too acidic- add lime to bring up pH. Lime takes months to change the acidity.

How to Amend the soil Spread the needed amendments over growing area. Lightly work them into the top of the soil by hand with a three prong cultivator.

Once you soil is amended and your crop is growing, a mid season side dressing with compost is beneficial in that you are continuing to build up the organic matter while feeding the plant. If a plant is looking unhealthy or is being bothered by pests, it probably needs a boost of nutrients. Pests always go for the weakest plants.

My first choice is always worm castings but they are not always available in the amounts you might need for your garden. Some fertilizers suggested in the Born To Grow Organic Gardening series are:

Down to Earth - **Vegan Mix 3-2-2.** Side dress, scratch it in and water.

General Organics-BioThrive. Liquid fertilizer for fast action.

Root Naturally- **Sea 90-** This is 90 micronutrients and can be used in combination with an organic NPK fertilizer.

There are many sources of organic amendments and fertilizers. I usually look for the OMRI label so I know it has passed the organic test. Much of the soil in the US today has been depleted of trace minerals. By adding back organic matter and growing your produce with organic fertilizers, you will benefit from those elements being absorbed through the roots of your plants and made available for you to eat in your fruits and vegetables. Your produce will be more flavorful and....your pollinators will love you!

December: Giant Leopard

Its Blooms Stand Out in the Winter



Farfugium japonicum 'Giganteum', commonly known as Giant Leopard plant, is a beautiful addition to shade gardens, adding color in the gray of winter. Photo by A. Smith, courtesy UTIA.

12/5/2018

Alexandria Smith

UT Gardens' December 2018 Plant of the Month: Giant Leopard

Looking to add something unique to your shade garden this year? *Farfugium japonicum 'Giganteum'*, commonly known as Giant Leopard plant or simply farfugium, is one of my favorite foliage plants in the gardens. This clump-forming perennial has glossy, leathery foliage that adds dramatic texture and gives a tropical feel to even the most lackluster spaces in a garden, and as a bonus it blooms in late fall when few other plants are in flower.

Like the species, leaves are thick and are deep green in color, but as its name implies, *Giganteum* leaves can grow up to 18 inches across. While other species of farfugium like full shade, this one does best with a few hours of dappled sun in well-drained moist soil. Farfugium will wilt during our extreme summer temperatures or in dry spells but thrives if sited correctly and is not allowed to go dry.

Hardy to zone 7b or zone 7 with added winter protection. Foliage is semi-evergreen during mild winters but dies back to the ground once temperatures are around 20 degrees Fahrenheit with new foliage emerging in spring. With the mild winter in East Tennessee last year, our clumps in the Cornelia B. Holland Hosta Garden bloomed in December and foliage lasted until mid January. The daisy-like blooms are bright yellow and emerge on tall, leafless stalks and provide an unexpected burst of color in the gray of winter.

Farfugium is fairly low maintenance and does not have any serious disease or pest problems, but it is susceptible to foliar slug damage. Remove spent leaves throughout the season and cut off flower stalks when blooming is done. For best results planting should occur in spring for healthy establishment. Again, be sure and provide deep watering during hot summer months to keep farfugium looking lush.

Farfugium is most effective if planted in mass, near ponds or streams, woodland gardens, perennial borders, or in containers. In shade gardens, the striking foliage provides a nice contrast with companion plants such as hostas, ferns, Japanese maples, columbine, and astilbe. Like hostas, you can't have just one in your garden.

In addition to *Giganteum*, other interesting cultivars include '*Aureomaculata*' and '*Crispatum*'. Both are hardy from zones 7 to 10. Guaranteed to attract the eye, *Aureomaculata* also features deep green glossy foliage but sports bright yellow irregular spots. *Crispatum* is lighter green with striking ruffled margins. These cultivars and *Giganteum* will begin to satisfy a farfugium addiction that seems to begin whenever any gardener starts with one plant. While readily available in its native home of Japan, several cultivars have slowly made their way to North America over the last decade. Visit your local nurseries or shop online for available selections.

Wanted!!

Articles for the Newsletter

You can earn volunteer hours by writing about some garden you visited, some technique you tried which worked (or did not), or share your enthusiasm for some special plant, or condensing a gardening article you read.

Keep contributing. Keep reading. Keep sharing.

Please send your contributions to:

Liz Whitsitt lizv@tds.net

Pam Stanfield pamstanfield@gmail.com

January Meeting

CELESTE SCOTT
New Master
Gardener Reporting
System

WTREC
605 Airways Blvd

facebook.

**Check Out
UT Gardens Jackson
On Facebook!**

Lots of great info being shared there, and you don't have to wait for a monthly newsletter!

The Bridge to Knowledge

The University of Tennessee Extension

Madison County

309-C North Parkway

Jackson, TN 38305

Phone 731-668-8543 Fax 731-668-8440

Email cscott52@utk.edu (Celeste Scott)

Board of Directors

President- Glenn Fesmire
Vice President Projects- Vicki Bunch Vice
President Programs- Sue Ann Barnes
Secretary- Mary Kay Havranek
Treasurer- Mary Nenarella
Board Member- Rob Johnson
Board Member- David Sams
Board Member- Marie Kyper
Board Member- Stephen Pope

Master Gardener financial standing
information is available upon request.