



# Master Gardeners Hear it ...

UT Extension The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

Volume 15, Issue 4

April 2008

## President's Letter

## MASTER GARDENERS OF HAMILTON COUNTY

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Master Gardener President for the 2008 - 2009 calendar year. We have a very exciting year ahead, and I look forward to working with each of you. Let's all just in and run to the finish line in meeting our goals for this year.

I would like to take this time to ask each of you (Board Officers, Governors, Chairpersons and Master Gardeners) to consider your talent or talents. There is much work to be done. As always we will all play a huge part in the success of the up coming projects this year. As we grow in numbers we are able to accomplish greater things. You, yes you, are important and we want you to step up to the plate and shine. I trust that you all know that the body is the main part of any organization. Please, please, please, let's not be stumbling blocks. Decide now to "Lead, follow,

or get out of the way!" This old slogan may seem trite, but it is based on a great truth in organizations. I have said these things because we are committed to some really great projects and we must all work together in order to reach our goals. The Food Bank Garden party Fund raiser is a "Big" deal! So get on you mark, get set, get ready and let's

.....Gooooo! We will have fun reaching our goal. Mark your calendars for the up coming events:

- April 12th Mary's Garden (we will be departing from the Agriculture Bldg.)
- April 19th workshop @ Chattanooga Area Food Bank Garden 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Bench/arbor workshop \$5.00
- April 12th TN Valley Day-lily Society, 11:30 a.m. Wally's Restaurant, 6521

Ringgold Road, East Ridge. Speaker Larry and Cindy Grace from Graceland Garden in Dothan, Alabama FREE

- April 24th Master Gardener Graduation and Award Banquet Central Baptist Church 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- May 3rd Chattanooga Area Food Bank Garden 9:00-12:00 Rain barrel and hypertufa workshop \$5.00
- May MG Board Meeting
- May 17th - 18th Rose Garden Tour (this is an opportunity for us to work with the Rose Society)
- May 22nd MG meeting
- May 30th Chattanooga Area Food Bank garden party @ Rock City Gardens

Hey it's Spring time, let's go out into the garden, and fluff the mulch.

-Linda Billingslea

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One of the many wildflowers discovered on the Pigeon Mountain Wildflower Walk.

March 21, 2008

## Upcoming Events

•**April 12th, Spring Wildflower Festival & Native Plant Sale Reflection Riding.** Come and choose from hundreds of native trees, shrubs and wildflowers – all for sale. Stay and make a day of it exploring our 300 acres of native woodland gardens and over twelve miles of hiking trails and paths. The Spring Native Plant Sale features hearty native plants for sale as well as a number of events including guided wildflower walks, a variety of talks on native plants and a few longer hikes exploring Reflection Riding's upper trails.

•**April 15th, 10 am - 1pm; Greenhouse Growing; Farmer For a Day at Crabtree Farms, Free Training**

This informal training will introduce participants to growing in a greenhouse. Mike Barron, Crabtree's Greenhouse Manager, will instruct volunteers on how to grow and care for perennials and annuals in a greenhouse setting. He will share his growing knowledge, from pruning to hardening plants through question and answer. Wear appropriate attire for gardening, such as comfortable work shoes and clothes (things that can get dirty).

• **Membership Meeting, April 17th**

• **April 19<sup>th</sup> (8-1) and April 20<sup>th</sup> (11-3) Spring Plant Sale at Crabtree Farms.** Customers can choose from a wide variety of vegetable starts including heirloom tomatoes, herbs and annual flowers. All plants are cultivated in the greenhouse at Crabtree Farms using sustainable methods. Due to popular demand, Crabtree Farms will be offering over 6000 plants at this year's sale.

## APRIL 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3 Board Meeting	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Potatoes	11	12 Plant Sale
13	14	15 Green house	16	17	18	19 Plant Sale
20 Plant Sale	21	22	23	24 Graduation	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## MAY 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Board Meeting	2	3 Plant Sale
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15 Membership Meeting	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

•**May 1st, Board Meeting at 6:00**

•**May 3rd, 9-4, Spring and Plant Sale, 1100 Gateway Ave.**

• **Membership Meeting, May 15th**

## GRADUATION AND AWARDS BANQUET (Monthly Membership Meeting)

It's that time of the year again when we welcome the 2007 Interns into our Hamilton County Master Gardeners Program. We will also be giving out the 3-5 and 10 year membership awards.

Spouses and significant others are welcome. Please let us know if you plan to attend and how many will be coming.

**Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup>**

**6:00 to 8:00**

### Central Baptist Church

Since this is our largest membership gathering for the year, we are asking everyone to bring either a hearty appetizer or casserole. We need just a few desserts.

Our new Hospitality Chairman is Denise Chivington. She will be needing helpers this year, so please sign up to help her and receive "A" hours.

Directions: Central Baptist Church (Abba's House) is at 5208 Hixson Pike, Hixson. Traveling Northeast on Hixson Pike cross over Hwy 153, pass Northgate entrance, pass Capt D's, then you see Abba's House on the right, turn right into the church complex. If you look to your right there is a long one story building it says, Central Baptist Faith Building...That is where the party will be held. If you need help that night call 903-1196.

Please email Denise at [dgchivington@comcast.net](mailto:dgchivington@comcast.net) or call 332-5972 if you plan to attend.



### Spring Tour Sponsored by Master Gardeners

**April 19th, 2008**

On Saturday, April 19th, from 1-5pm, five gardeners will be opening their gardens for a spring tour. The tour is open to Master Gardeners and their families, friends who may be interested in the Master Gardener program. This is an opportunity for gardeners to share their gardens and to visit a selection of private gardens.



Master Gardener Lynne Finell lead a wildflower walk at Pigeon Mountain, GA. Approximately 19 Master Gardeners plus their friends& families attended on March 21st.

## Tom's Tidbits for April 2008

### Celebrate Our Success as Master Gardeners

It is hard to believe. The 2008 Master Gardener Classes are fast approaching completion. There are so many wonderful new interns with so much energy. They have all jumped into numerous activities already. I'm sure these new Master Gardeners will be involved for years to come. At least five interns have already completed their 40 service hours. That's remarkable! Remember new interns have until this time next year to complete their first forty hours to become a certified Tennessee Master Gardener. But, why wait? Get involved in all the activities coming up like the Food Bank Garden Tour in May and the Hamilton County Fair in September. These are the big events for our group. There are many other committees working throughout the year on numerous other projects. Our Master Gardener of Hamilton County organization tallies up over 5000 volunteer hours per year. Call a committee chair and go for it.

#### **Sertoma was superb!**

Thanks to everyone who helped with The Sertoma Lawn and Garden Show. The educational sessions were terrific. Most were

taught by Master Gardeners. A couple of Master Gardeners developed new PowerPoint lectures just for this program. They were excellent and will be used again. In fact, we are starting to get a collection of PowerPoint talks on a variety of subjects. If anyone wants to use these or develop a talk on their own please contact me. The sessions were well attended this year. Special thanks to committee chair Sue Henley and her crew for setting up the booth and answering so many gardening questions. They actually set up two booths to accommodate the number of interns who wanted to help. The Sertoma group was so thankful. They may put our name on the marquee next year.

#### **Marvelous mentors**

As most of you already know my wife has been struggling with cancer and the impacts of chemotherapy. Several times I have had to attend to her needs during class times. I want to personally thank all of the mentors who helped me with the classes. That includes some of the wonderful Master Gardener

speakers. They made sure everything went smoothly, even if I couldn't be there all the time. In fact, I know it went better than ever.

The food was great. They made each class into an event. We ate off china dishes for heavens sake! Gardening and food sure breaks the ice in any group. What a comfort knowing the class was going so well. Thanks to all for their continued support and prayers.

#### **Party time**

All of the interns will receive their certificate of class completion at the graduation ceremony on April 24<sup>th</sup>. There will also be certificates for completion of hours, awards for 3yr, 5yr and 10 years of service. The graduation ceremony is at the Central Baptist Church –Faith Building on Hixson Pike. It is always a great event. Bring your spouse or a friend to cheer you on. Bring a dish to pass and enjoy. I hope everyone will be there to celebrate their accomplishments. The weather usually cooperates for a great spring evening event. See you there!

For Masterful Gardens

Tom

## Here's the buzz!

By

**Jerry Smolinski**

Bees are dying.

Dying all across America. Lots and lots of bees.

On a warm April morning, John Keeley's farm southeast of Portland, Oregon is lively with sound. His dogs bark, his sheep and lambs bleat as they waddle across rolling fields. Birds twitter, and turkeys cackle. But the white boxes scattered around his 85 acres are mostly silent.

Keeley keeps bees to pollinate his orchards: cherries, apples, peaches, plums and chestnuts. "You can easily double your fruit-tree production just with bees" he says. This winter he lost 12 of his 14 honeybee hives. "In February, they seemed to be all right," he says. "By March, they were all dead."

Beekeeper James Doan began finding empty hives last fall. Entire bee colonies have vanished, leaving their honey behind. When deserted hives began appearing daily, "we knew it was something different," he says. Now, more than half of his 4,300 hives are gone.

Like most beekeepers these days, Keeley doses his hives with a variety of treatments to keep the bees free of affliction: disease, mites and invasions by marauding animals such as skunks. But honey-bee populations are plummeting nevertheless. "We're losing between 40 and 60 percent of our bee population annually in this country," says Gordon Wardell, an entomologist based in Tucson. "The bee industry is right on the edge."

Managed honey bees, such as Keeley's, aren't the only pollinators in the air. Michael Burgett, an entomologist based in Corvallis, Oregon, in the Pacific Northwest alone says, "there are some 900 species of native bees". Many plants, such as tomatoes, get along fine with mere wind pollination. But because modern agriculture demands high yields from densely planted crops, they need modern commercial honey bees, in massive quantities, in order to seize the day when the bloom is peaking.

Starting in Florida, the great bee die-off has spread to 24 states. Whole colonies are dying. In Western states, commercial beekeepers report up to a 60 percent loss of their bees, with losses 70 percent in Texas and on the East Coast. It's unprecedented.

*Article continued on page 6*

## ***The Buzz; continued***

Few people realize that many of America's food crops – from almonds to watermelon – rely heavily on commercial honeybees for pollination. No bees, no fruit. One study finds that these bees pollinate every third bite of food that we consume.

Constant trucking puts stress on the bees, suppressing their immune systems and making them vulnerable to viruses, mites, and diseases. Also as part of their forced migration, the bees are fed a limited diet of high fructose corn syrup – about as healthy as humans trying to live on Cokes. Other research indicates certain pesticides and genetically altered organisms have been artificially spliced into many field crops.

The real cause of the die-offs has yet to be determined. Its effect on the food supply may be significant. Longer-term, it may also force a rethinking of some agricultural practices including our heavy reliance on human-managed bees for pollination.

Research is only beginning and hard data is still lacking, but beekeepers suspect everything from a new virus or parasite to pesticides and genetically modified crops. Scientists have hastily established a colony collapse disorder (CCD) working group at Pennsylvania State University. The US House of Representatives' Committee on Agriculture held hearings on the missing bees.

For many entomologists, the bee crisis is a wake-up call. By relying on a single species for pollination, US agriculture has put itself in a precarious position, they say. A resilient agricultural system requires diverse pollinators. This speaks to a larger conservation issue. Some evidence indicates a decline in the estimated 4,500 potential alternate pollinators – native species of butterflies, wasps, and other bees. The blame for that sits squarely on human activity – habitat loss, pesticide use, and imported disease – but much of this could be offset by different land-use practices.

Researchers are looking not just at chemicals but at genetic, nutritional and physical ways of managing bees.

"The ultimate solution is genetic" says Burgett, who's working to find mite-tolerant bees. "But that takes a lot of time. It would develop on its own if we absolutely forbid the movement of bees in the U.S., but we can't do that because of the huge pollination requirements."

The federal government is currently funding the Honey Bee Genome Project, mapping the bee's entire genome. In the long run, having a genetic guide to the honey bee will probably help save it.

In the mean time, Bees are dying. Dying all across America. Lots and lots of bees.

**BUSY BEES:** A crew tends beehives near Sacramento, Calif., in January. The bees were trucked in from North Dakota to pollinate the almond crop. Beekeepers in 24 states have seen an alarming die-off in their hives.

RANDY PENCH/SACRAMENTO BEE/MCT/  
NEWSCOM



## **Gardening News:**

### **Garden centers still top shopping venue**

Garden centers and local retail stores will again be the top destinations for spring shoppers, according to 2008 [Early Spring Gardening Trends Research Report](#) released by Garden Writers Assoc. Foundation. Garden centers were consumers' first choice last year, and the trend continues this year, with 48% planning to shop at these locations. More than half of consumers (54%) said they'll spend money on lawn and grass products. Vegetable and fruit plants came in second with 39%, followed by annuals (38%), trees and shrubs (35%) and perennials (31%). Last year, veggies came in 4th on the list of spending priorities. GWAF said rising gas and food prices coupled with a fluctuating economy contributed to increased popularity of edibles.

### **Wal-Mart will recycle tires into mulch**

More than 2.5 million tires will be recycled by Wal-Mart in 2008 to manufacture garden mulch. [Majestic brand rubber mulch](#) mini nuggets hit store shelves earlier this month, joining the mass merchant's other eco-friendly offerings. Wal-Mart said the product is ideal for landscaping and covering play grounds, pool decks and pond areas. The rubber mulch, available in red or black, is non-toxic and latex-free.

### **Backyard orchards — the next big thing?**

The popularity of fruit trees is on the rise, according to an article in The New York Times. Dwarf and semi-dwarf trees are showing up in suburban backyards and urban patios. Suppliers around the country have seen significant increases in fruit tree sales, like the 12% to 15% annual sales growth reported by Dave Wilson Nursery in Hickman, Calif., which has one of the country's largest selections of fruit trees.

### **Univ. of Ga. gardens to go 100% sustainable**

Univ. of Ga. hort. professor Allan Armitage e-mailed to say that he and the staff who manage the university's ornamental trial gardens have made a commitment to be [completely sustainable](#) by 2009. Practices implemented to reach this goal include: reduction of water waste; application of organic fertilizer and beneficial soil microorganisms; use of beneficial insects, organic pesticides and banker plants; manual removal or organic herbicides for weed control; and reduction of nonrenewable resources such as plastic pots. Erica Mehan will act as the gardens' sustainability coordinator. Armitage invited commercial floriculture companies to assist in the gardens' sustainability efforts. This year's sponsors: Ball Hort., Daniels Plant Food, Ellegaard, Organica Biotech, Mobley Plant Farm and Blackmore Co.

### **Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses supplies organic market**

This spring, [Elzinga & Hoeksema \(E&H\) Greenhouses](#) in Kalamazoo, Mich., will ship organic vegetable and herb potted plants from a new 4-acre [USDA-certified organic facility](#). E&H will ship the plants to Meijer retail stores throughout the Midwest. E&H expects to grow more than 1.3 million plants in the new greenhouse this year. The greenhouse was designed with sustainable elements such as a closed-loop ground heat exchanger, a closed-loop pressurized water heating system, high-efficiency condensing boilers, solar panels and in-floor heat. Outside the greenhouse is a large heat pump and 200 4-foot-by-10-foot AES solar energy collectors.

**MASTER GARDENERS OF  
HAMILTON COUNTY**

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[http://  
mastergardeners.tennessee.edu/](http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu/)

**Board of Governors**

**2007-2008**

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*Secretary*– Ron Bohrer

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Tom Stebbins

*Certification Officer*–Gretchen Rominger

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