

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties

NEWSLETTER

Published Quarterly

Autumn 2021

Volume 8, Issue 3

President

Nancy Peters-Benjamin

Vice-President

Cathy Haist

Recording Secretary

Our Officers

Gayle Kusak

Corresponding Secretary

Tommy Westbrook

Treasurer

Robin Volker

Meetings: Unless announced otherwise, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties meet on the second Thursday of every month in the Haralson Memorial Civic Center in Blairsville, 4:00 p.m. socializing, 4:30 p.m. meeting. We do not meet if inclement weather closes Union County or Towns County schools.

Editor's Words

page 2

Reminders

Meet Kerry Jones

pages 3 - 4

September 9, 2021— Monarchs—
Robin de Young

Garden Chores

pages 5 - 9

What's Blooming Now

pages 10- 13

Got Milkweed?

pages 14-15

October 14, 2021—Business, No
Speaker

'Tiger-Eye Hybrid'

page 16

Weeds I Love To Hate

page 17

November 11, 2021— Streambank
Health, Salamanders and Other
Creekside Critters—Callie Moore

Recipe/Book

page 18



Asclepias purpurascens growing in the Garden of Elaine Bliss. She said it is the first time it has bloomed in three years. Most species of Asclepias grow well in full sun, this is one species that requires some shade.

Editor's Words

As our season transitions from the hot, humid days of summer to hopefully the cooler days of autumn, we will begin to see the leaves changing to brilliant shades of orange, red and yellow. And the changing position of the earth in relation to the sun makes the 'light' look different.

Think about what you learned as you close down the summer season, note your accomplishments, what worked and what did not work and learn what needs to be done differently next year so you will have success in your garden.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Kerry Jones. I truly enjoyed getting to know more about Kerry, please see pages 3-4. Tommy Westbrook shared many pictures of his garden, including a picture of his Fairy Stick, please see pages 10-13. Gayle Kusuk made Yummy Corn Bites and shared with members at our August meeting and she shares the recipe on page 18. Read about how 'Tiger Eye Hybrid' actually performed in the garden on page 16 and on page 14, *Got Milkweed?* .

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

Autumn begins on September 22, 2021 at 3:21 p.m.



Blue-eyed daisies growing among parsley that has gone to seed, growing in the garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen. Seedlings were given to Jo Anne by Elaine Bliss.

Meet Kerry Jones

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Kerry Jones. He completed his Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training and was certified on August 15, 2020.

Kerry was an Army Brat and had the opportunity to travel, see and experience many things. He went to Leilehua High School in Hawaii. His favorite class was Future Farmers of America and that is where he developed an interest in growing things. He was exposed to growing truck crops and harvesting chickens; however, his passion was growing and harvesting pineapple, banana and citrus trees. His interest in pineapple fruit was lost while working for Dole Plantation picking pineapples after school from 4 pm to 12:30 am, rain, wind and dark of night. The pay was \$1.215 per hour and caused him to raise his economic expectations for his future.

Kerry has a BA in Urban Management from the University of Georgia and an MA from Pepperdine University in Human Resource Management. He also has had Military Police training when he served in the Army.

Robin, Kerry's wife, is from Illinois. They met in Augusta, Georgia and have four sons and seven grandchildren. Robin retired last year, after twenty-five years as a Certified Financial Planner. She now volunteers at their church, sings in the choir and is very active in the Misty Mountain Quilters Guild.

Kerry and Robin moved from Evans, Georgia almost six years ago and became full-time residents of Towns County. Kerry's father was born and raised in Hiawassee. When he would go to Hiawassee as a child with his family there was no TV, no indoor plumbing and no other children to play with. He learned to never say "I am bored!" That was mountain talk for "Can I please split wood and hoe the garden?"

Kerry is retired after 30 years as a Civil Service employee with the Army. He was Division Chief in Morale, Welfare and Recreation and his responsibilities ranged from managing for-profit businesses (clubs, bars, restaurants) to sports and recreation, volunteer programs, golf courses and more.

Kerry and Robin like to travel, volunteer and spend time with their family. He is a member of the Towns County Lions Club and the Towns-Union Master Gardener Association where he volunteers for events and projects and fund-raising activities. And, of course, there is his vegetable garden!

Kerry's next major project will be mulching the shrubs and trees around his house. There are 72 shrubs and trees to be mulched, a perfect job for this fall.

Past community work consisted of volunteering/serving on the Boy Scout Council, Girl Scout Council, American Red Cross, Better Business Bureau board and the board of the Augusta Training Shop for the Disabled.

Coming from Augusta, the home of The Augusta National Golf Course, Kerry has always enjoyed growing grass and azaleas. In Augusta his neighbors competed for the 'best kept lawn'. Twice a week cutting, edging and enjoying the look of a well-manicured emerald zoysia lawn is his pleasure.

Something that many Master Gardeners do not know is that Kerry is Santa Clause in the Hiawassee Christmas Parade and for the Lion's Club Christmas, giving to families in need. When his float rolls by, it is officially Christmas! See Santa on the next page!

Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Robin and Kerry's Home



Santa Clause (Kerry) in the Hiawassee Christmas Parade

September Garden Chores

Autumn is a good time to add perennials, trees and shrubs to your garden. Plant fall blooming perennials such as aster, chrysanthemum, goldenrod and black-eyed Susan for fall color.

Plant a fall garden: sow seeds/transplant seedlings of mustard, spinach, turnips, beets, carrots, kale, radishes, broccoli, lettuce, onions, collards, and cabbage.

Have your soil tested. Stop by your local Extension Office for a soil testing bag and instructions.

Gardening lore says plant trees, shrubs, and perennials in months which have the letter "r" in their names – September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April.

Fertilize roses one last time for the season so they will have time to slow down their growth before cold weather arrives.

Azaleas and rhododendrons are forming flower buds now for next year so keep these plants watered to insure good bud formation and flowers next spring.

Perennials perform better in soil that drains well. When digging beds this fall, add compost and soil conditioners to help with drainage.

For good selections, purchase daffodil, tulip, hyacinth and other spring blooming bulbs as they arrive at your nursery. Store in a cool area and plant in October when soil temperatures are in the 60's or cooler.

Plant garlic now for harvest next summer.



Do not prune or fertilize trees/shrubs now. Pruning and fertilizing will stimulate new growth that could be hurt as temperatures drop.

Cover crops like annual rye and crimson clover planted in unused areas of your garden help hold the soil in place and add organic matter when tilled into the soil next spring before planting.

Fertilize chrysanthemums now for lots of blooms this fall.



Clean up your vegetable garden space to decrease your pest problems next season.

Divide overcrowded groundcovers like ajuga and liriopse and overgrown clumps of daylily, iris and cone-flower this month.

Lightly trim and check your houseplants that have spent the summer on your patio for insects and disease and if necessary, treat them (following label directions) before moving them inside for the winter.

Dig sweet potatoes before frost.

To keep weed seeds from blowing into your cultivated garden area, keep turf surrounding your garden mowed, directing grass clippings away from your garden area.

Not all spring flowering bulbs bloom at the same time; check varieties and bloom times. For early color, "Early Sensation" is a daffodil variety that blooms in January.

Fertilize bulbs when you plant them because it is hard to locate them until they come up next spring.

Begin collecting dried materials for fall and winter arrangements and decorations.

Mulch trees and shrubs to protect your plants from temperature extremes and to keep the soil evenly moist. Keep mulch back 3 inches from the trunk to prevent damage and disease.

Plant your pansies and violas as the weather cools.

Rake up fallen leaves and add them to your compost pile to create a rich soil amendment. If you do not have a compost pile, start one.

Edge and weed existing perennial beds. Use a granular weed-preventer (following label directions) to reduce winter weeds and apply mulch.

Take cuttings of coleus and geraniums to grow inside until next spring.

Replace mulch under trees and shrubs to prevent diseases on next year's foliage.

Fertilize fescue lawns following label instructions.

Remove faded blooms from pansies to keep them blooming and healthy.

Do not apply pesticides when temperatures exceed 85 degrees or when it is windy.

Root leaves of African violet plants to give as Christmas gifts.



October Garden Chores

Clean up old plant debris from this year's vegetable garden because insects and diseases can survive winter weather in this material. Before storing your tomato cages, remove old tomato vines from them.

Add spent plants from your vegetable and flower gardens and leaves to your compost pile. Do not put diseased plant material in your compost pile or you may spread disease to other plants when you use your compost. If you do not have a compost pile, start one.

Fall is a very good time to plant perennials like coneflower and black-eyed Susan, and divide existing perennials.

Spread shredded leaves and manure over your vegetable garden soil and turn it under to improve soil fertility, structure, and water-holding capacity.



Divide perennials like daylilies, phlox, and iris.

Plant trees and shrubs now. Their roots will have time to become well established before the demands of spring growth. Remove any twine or wire that is wrapped around the trunk when you plant.

Collect seeds from perennials and annuals. Clean them and store in a cool dry place. Plant them next spring.

Harvest your pumpkins as the vines begin to dry.

Pick up fallen apples, peaches, pears and plums from under your trees and destroy them to avoid dis-

eases next spring.

Protect strawberries with a light layer of pine straw mulch.



As night temperatures approach the mid-50s, bring in houseplants that have spent the warm weather on your deck or patio. Check for insect infestation.

Rake fallen leaves from your lawn to keep them from matting down and killing your grass. Add them to your compost pile.

Lightly fertilize evergreen azaleas and rhododendron to prevent yellowing during winter.

Refurbish mulch around shrubs and trees but do not place mulch too close to the plant's trunk. Mulch helps control weeds, provides insulation for the roots during cold weather, and helps keep the soil moist.

Do not heavily prune shrubs or trees now, as this will force new growth that will be susceptible to cold weather injury.

As the weather turns cool, plant spring flowering bulbs like tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, and crocus. A general rule is to set bulbs three times as deep as the dimension of the bulb.

If your soil test indicates that your soil needs lime, now is the time to add it to your soil in the recommended amounts.

Dig sweet potatoes as the vines die back. Let them 'cure' in a dry, warm spot before storing.

If you have not already planted garlic, plant now for harvest next summer. Break garlic bulbs into individual cloves for planting, 3 inches deep and 4-6 inches apart.

Fertilize freshly planted pansies with a water-soluble fertilizer. Switch to a nitrate nitrogen fertilizer as the weather gets cooler.

Cut chrysanthemums and asters back to about five inches tall after they have bloomed so they will sprout strongly in spring.

Top-dress your perennial beds with one or two inches of compost, keeping it away from the crown of your plants.

Fertilize established bulb beds with one-half cup per ten square feet of bulb fertilizer, always following package directions.

Plant peonies now. Buds should be no more than two inches below the soil surface.

Harvest mature green tomatoes before the first frost.



Before the first frost, cut and preserve herbs.

Water your soil before harvesting your carrots so they will be easier to pull. Once harvested, trim the tops so the leaves will not draw moisture out of the carrots, making them limp.

Carve a pumpkin.

Continue planting pansies and other cool season annuals like snapdragons and ornamental kale.

After the foliage dies back, dig caladium bulbs and store them loosely in dry peat moss or vermiculite for the winter.

Divide overgrown Boston ferns and repot.

Keep evergreen shrubs and small trees watered to help prevent damage from low temperatures.

Replace areas of the lawn that are thin because of too much shade with a groundcover like liriopse or ajuga.

If you have not already done so, dig caladium bulbs, dahlia tubers and elephant's-ear for winter storage. Dry them under shelter for about a week then store them loosely in dry peat moss.



November Garden Chores

Fall is an excellent time to plant trees, shrubs, and perennials. Be sure to remove any wire that may be wrapped around the trunk and roots when you plant a tree.

Do not prune trees and shrubs now because the pruning will stimulate new growth that may be killed by freezes. Wait until January or February when they are dormant.

Do not be alarmed if your houseplants drop a few leaves when you bring them indoors after they have enjoyed the summer on your patio. This is normal as they adjust to less light and drier air inside your home.

Make a list of vegetable and plant varieties that performed well in your garden this season so you will be ready to order seeds for your spring plantings.

Have your garden soil tested if you have not already done so. Stop by your local Extension office for a soil test bag and instructions. If you need to add lime, add it now so it will have time to work into the soil. Wait until next spring to apply any fertilizer that is needed so the nutrients will not leach from the soil before spring planting.

Clean up your perennial borders by removing dry stems and dead leaves to help prevent a build-up of insects and diseases and add composted organic matter.

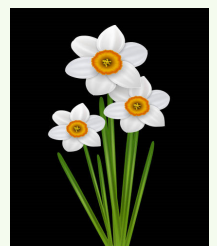
Set out fruiting plants from October to March.

Force bulbs to bloom indoors; a good choice is paperwhites.

Consider planting unused areas of your vegetable garden with a cover crop like clover or put a layer of leaves on your garden. Plow it under about three weeks before spring planting and this will improve your soil by adding nutrients and organic matter.

Collect okra seedpods, rose hips, gourds, and other material from your garden for dried flower arrangements and craft projects.

There is still time to plant pansies. Fertilize them every two weeks with a water-soluble plant food and to encourage more bloom, remove faded flowers regularly. Switch to a fertilizer containing "nitrate nitrogen" and follow label directions as the weather gets colder.



Inventory and clean up your garden tools. If you need a tool, you may drop a hint to friends and family since the Christmas season is near.

Dig up bulbs that need to be stored for the winter like caladiums, elephant's ears and dahlias.

Plant spring flowering bulbs now, and through the end of November.

To prepare your garden soil for planting next spring, turn your soil 8 to 12 inches deep with a spade or shovel to provide aeration and add composted organic matter.

Add a fresh layer of mulch to trees and shrubs to help insulate the roots as temperatures drop. Shredded leaves and pine straw are two choices.

Cut back on fertilizing your indoor plants and do not water them unless the soil feels dry.

Deciduous trees and shrubs can help with energy efficiency in your home. They provide shade in the summer and let sun shine in during the winter.

Plant Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*) now and it may bloom for you next February.

After your chrysanthemums and asters have quit blooming, cut them back to about five inches.

To keep your lawn healthy, rake fallen leaves regularly from your lawn. Use them in your compost pile or shred them and use them for mulch.

To help prevent damage to evergreen shrubs and small trees from low temperatures, make sure they receive adequate moisture as we enter the winter season.

Clean your tomato cages before storing them to prevent insects and diseases when you plant next spring.

Remove any remaining foliage left on peonies.



Leave hardy water lilies and fish in ponds deep enough not to freeze solid. Compost tropical water lilies.

Do not place your houseplants too close to a window because the draft can turn the leaves brown.

Scale insects on trees and shrubs can be controlled with dormant oils.

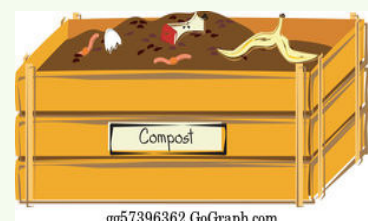
Pot up your Mandevilla vine and bring it indoors for the winter. Cut it back to 2 feet high and place it in bright light until spring.

Add a rain barrel to your gutter down spout to conserve rainwater for your garden.

If you do not have a compost pile, start one.

Keep your bird feeders filled with black oil sunflower seeds.

Keep pansies and other seasonal flowers watered regularly.



What's Blooming Now

(or what has just finished blooming or being beautiful)

Pages 10-13 from the gardens of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



Southern Shield Fern

Elephant's Ear



Joe-Pye Weed

What's Blooming Now

continued

Banana



Fairy Stick



Limelight Hydrangea



What's Blooming Now
continued



Brown-eyed Susan



Hardy Begonia



Northern Maidenhair Fern

What's Blooming Now
continued



Bigleaf Magnolia



Japanese Painted Fern



Ironweed left and Joe-Pye Weed center

Got Milkweed?

I just learned via Google that there are 73 species of native milkweed (*Asclepias*) in the United States, some rare, threatened and/or endangered. Monarchs utilize about 30 of these species as host plants, that is why it is important to grow milkweed in your garden. Monarch caterpillars only eat milkweed and need milkweed to lay their eggs. Bees and hummingbirds also like milkweed blossoms.

I have *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) and *Asclepias syriaca* (common milkweed) growing in my garden now and am growing from seed in my greenhouse *Asclepias incarnata* (swamp milkweed). I will plant these out in my garden when they grow a little larger. All three of these do well in most gardens and if your garden is a Certified Pollinator Garden, it is necessary to grow milkweed in it.

Most species of *Asclepias* grow well in full sun, in dry loamy soil that drains well. They are perennial, they go dormant in the winter months and then return in the spring. Fertilizer is not necessary and you can skip watering after it is established except during periods of drought. *Asclepias purpurascens* is one species that requires some shade.



Asclepias tuberosa—Butterfly Weed—Note seed pod just to the right of the flower

Individual flowers are small, consisting of five petals, pink to purple to white. *Asclepias tuberosa* has orange flowers. Flowers occur in round clusters, two inches in diameter. Bloom period is June through August and after the flowers fade, the plant produces large three-to-five-inch seed pods. Once established, *Asclepias* can spread from its rhizomatous root system.

Asclepias is susceptible to fungal diseases like leaf spot during periods of heavy rains or if over-watered. The milkweed beetle is one pest that can attack milkweed. They are not dangerous; they do not bite or sting and usually do no real damage to the plant. They can deform the seed pods and if the infestation is large, they can crowd out monarchs.

All parts of many species of milkweed are poisonous if ingested. The white milky sap makes it toxic, and it is most dangerous during the active growing season. The species most toxic is *Asclepias labriformis*. Milkweed poisoning can occur in sheep, cattle and occasionally in horses. Pet Poison Helpline reports milkweed is a moderate to severe poisoning in dogs and cats. If you suspect your pet has ingested milkweed, go to a vet. If you cut milkweed and get sap on your hands and then rub your eyes, it can cause temporary blindness.

Many suggest not planting *Asclepias curassavica* or tropical milkweed in your garden. It is native to Mexico and it can delay the butterflies' instinctual fall migration through northern Texas to the point of their destruction. Other common names for *Asclepias curassavica* include scarlet milkweed, Mexican milkweed, bloodflower and silkweed.



Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Asclepias syriaca—Common Milkweed



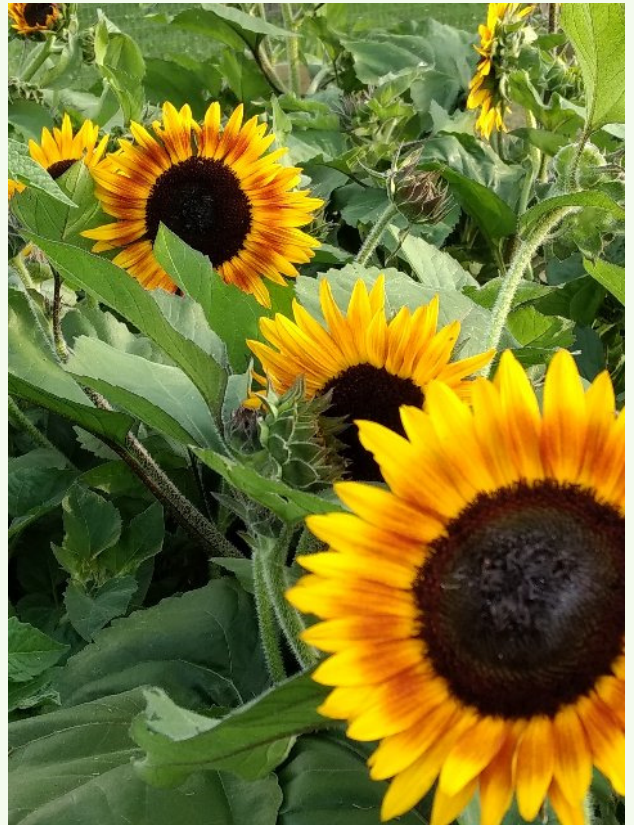
Look at these Happy Dancers! Picture submitted by Elaine Bliss, flowers grown by Elaine's friend, Andrea.

'Tiger Eye Hybrid' Sunflower

In early May I planted 'Tiger Eye Hybrid' sunflowers in one section of my vegetable garden to help attract pollinators. Burpee describes this sunflower as a compact, dwarf variety that will produce eight five-inch blooms per plant. The flowers are bicolor, with burning yellow petals and red-ringed disks. Burpee was correct! The sunflowers performed just as stated in the catalog and were even prettier than the catalog picture. And they attracted bees, butterflies and many other pollinators. I will count this as one of my many garden successes!

Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Weeds I Love To Hate

Nutsedge

Cyperus rotundus

Nutsedge or nutgrass is an invasive perennial grass-like weed in the sedge family. It is among the most problematic weeds of agriculture worldwide because it is difficult to control and can form dense colonies that reduce crop yields.

It seeks out moist, poorly drained sections of your lawn or garden. It has yellow-green leaves and as it matures, it forms a spiky yellow head. It has an extensive root system that may reach up to four feet deep.

Nutsedge survives from one season to the next by producing small underground bulb-like seeds called nutlets. The plant dies off above the ground with the first frost of the season but the nutlets under the soil survive over the winter and regrow the next year.

It is difficult to control because it produces many tubers that give rise to new plants when pulled. It is possible to control small stands by persistent pulling. Pulling will eventually weaken the plants and cause them to die out. Herbicide treatments are the best way to control nutsedge.



Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

Photograph by Tom Allen

Yummy Corn Bites

Submitted by Gayle Kusak, a recipe she found on the internet

3 cups fresh corn – divided
1 cup corn meal
1 cup 2% milk
1 tsp. sugar
4 oz. cream cheese
¼ cup butter, softened
2 eggs – room temperature
3 cups shredded cheddar cheese



Preheat oven 350°

Puree two cups of corn, whisk in corn meal, milk, sugar, remaining corn.

Beat cream cheese, butter and eggs together – fold in cheese – stir into corn mixture.

Fill mini-muffins tins $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way. Bake 8-10 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Enjoy!

Book Corner

Title: The Garden View

Author: Tara Dillard

From the library of Jo Anne Allen and she gives this book 5 green thumbs out of 5.

Choosing the right plants and keeping them lush and healthy is only part of what makes a garden look inviting and peaceful. Physical layout, plant spacing and height, and thoughtful placement of garden accessories dramatically impact a garden's ambiance. Designing a beautiful garden is simple once you understand the concept of "viewing axes", those vantage points from which a garden will most often be seen. Whether you're planning a new garden or redesigning an existing one, you can give it maximum appeal by following Tara's expert advice. Chapters include: Introduction, What are Garden Axes, Creating Double Axes, Choosing Focal Points, The Pathway View, A Winter's Garden View, Taking Time for Good Design, Garden Views into Your Home, Necessities, Important Rules for Designing Beautiful Garden Views and In Closing.