

# Towns Union Master Gardener Association

# NEWSLETTER

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Meetings: Unless announced otherwise, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties meet on the second Thursday of every month in the Fellowship Hall at Sharp Memorial Methodist Church in Young Harris, 4:00 p.m. socializing, 4:30 p.m. meeting. We do not meet if inclement weather closes Union County or Towns County schools.

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Tommy Westbrook at the Gold Medal Garden with one of the hornbeam wood trellises that he constructed to support the vining plants in the garden.

Photograph by Marcia Little

## Editor's Words

A big welcome to our new Master Gardener Extension Volunteer trainees and congratulations to them on completing their training course.

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers and trainees have been very busy with spring work in the Gold Medal Garden, the Daffodil Projects at Lloyd's Landing and Meeks Park, the Hiawassee Town Square Park, Vogel State Park, the container plantings at the tennis courts at Meeks Park, Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center, United Community Bank's Customer Appreciation Day Tomato Giveaway and preparing for our annual plant sale. (Which was a huge success!)

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Michele Simcox, please see pages 3-5. Photographs of "What is Blooming Now" are found on pages 14 -18. And be sure to check out Planting Day at the Gold Medal Garden on pages 12-13.

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

\*\*\*\*\* Summer arrives on June 21, 2023 at 10:58 a.m..\*\*\*\*\*



Peony 'Sarah Bernhardt'  
from the Garden of Tom  
and Jo Anne Allen

## Meet Michele Simcox

Michele Simcox is our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter. She resides just south of Blairsville in Union County near Vogel State Park. Michele has three daughters and she completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training in April of 2023. Upon completion of her service hours, she will be certified Master Gardener Extension Volunteer in April of 2024.

Michele grew up in Plantation, Florida, a town just west of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She received her degree in Elementary Education from the University of South Florida in 1983. She continued her education and earned her Master's in Educational Leadership.

Michele, now retired, was privileged to work as an elementary school teacher for 33 years. She has also worked with livestock on cattle ranches.

Her hobbies and passions have always been centered on nature and preservation. She raised her family on a small farm because she wanted her children to learn and appreciate a self-sustainable life. She enjoys hiking, fishing, swimming, horse-back riding and gardening.

Currently, Michele has a lot of work ahead of her because she has just recently purchased a home. The following page has a picture of one of Michele's daughters cleaning up some of the undergrowth on her new property. Taking the Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training course gave her the knowledge to create her own landscape. She has container gardens and is familiarizing herself with the mountain ecosystem.

Past community work consisted of volunteering and working with the homeless. She now works with women in recovery.

Michele loves gardening and working with plants in any capacity, especially propagation. The Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training program taught her the science of gardening and the balance of the ecosystem in the mountains which was totally foreign to her as a Florida country girl. The following two pages contain pictures of a recent project of a pond that she has just completed.

Favorite foods include Mexican dishes and seafood. Thus far, Michele has not had the opportunity to travel a whole lot but she enjoys Mexico and Wyoming. Hiking in Yellowstone National Park and Grand Tetons National Park in Wyoming was a beautiful experience for her.

Many of Michele's friends do not know that she received "Environmental Teacher of the Year" for the state of Florida. She received this honor for a program she developed on her school campus, a walk-through aviary containing 44 birds. Ultimately, the goal was to teach respect for one another and to respect our fragile environment. She was fortunate to have a principal who totally supported her vision. Her junior gardening program was an after-school program where students learned to grow plants and would enter them in competitions. The students also learned about environmental subjects such as ecosystems and stormwater run-off.

I found Michele to be a most interesting person and I enjoyed getting to know her better and I am sure you will too.

Jo Anne Allen

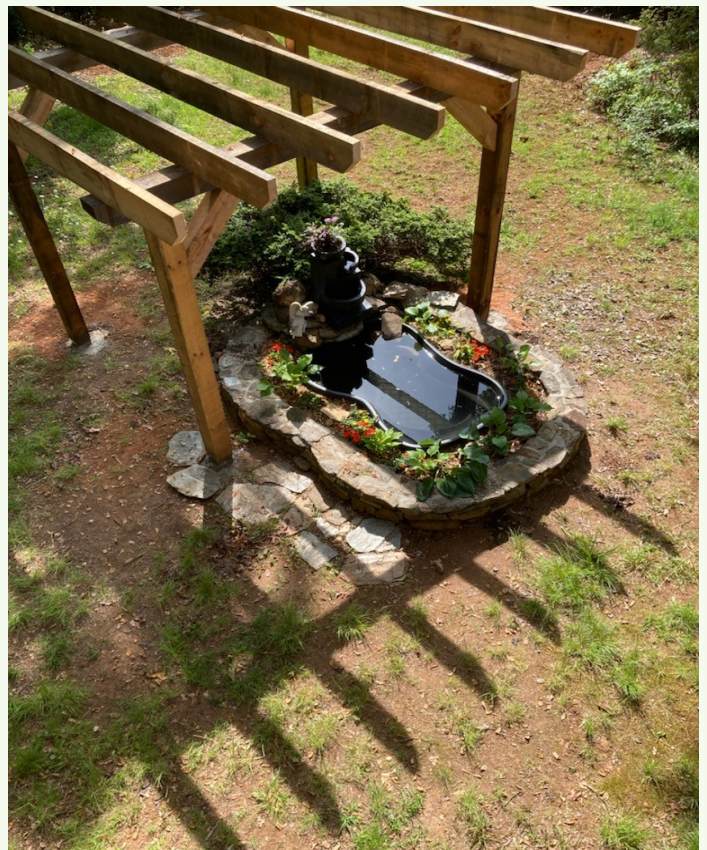
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer





Michele's daughter, Lindsey, loading the wheel barrel

Pond project recently completed by Michele





Pond project recently completed by Michele



## **June Garden Chores**

**Trees and Shrubs** - Cuttings of deciduous shrubs may be rooted in late June; root 6-inch clippings in damp sand, keeping it moist and roots may form by September.

One of the best things you can do for your trees and shrubs is to eliminate nutrient and water competition by removing the grass and weeds growing at the base of your plant and add about two inches of mulch.

Remove small sprouts from the base and from the trunk of tree-form crape myrtles.

Prune azaleas (if needed) after they have finished blooming and make sure they have about 2 inches of mulch.

Prune climbing roses after blooming finishes, cutting away weak, old or woody canes.

Prune hydrangeas (if needed) when most of the flowers have faded.

**Vegetables** - Don't kill the big green caterpillars that get on your parsley or fennel. They will soon become beautiful swallowtail butterflies.

If you like the taste of homegrown tomatoes but do not have garden space, patio type tomatoes can be grown on a sunny porch (6 hours minimum sun) in a pot 24-inch or larger.

Fertilize tomato plants regularly, inspect them for signs of leaf diseases and spray with a fungicide if necessary. Always follow label directions.

Harvest vegetables regularly to prolong production and enjoy your vegetables at the peak of their freshness. One ripe vegetable on your okra or squash plant halts blooming on the entire plant. Use a knife when harvesting so you will not damage your plant.

Watch for Japanese beetles in your garden. Hand-pick them or spray with an insect killer, always following label directions. Systemic products are also on the market, but they may kill beneficial insects as well as the Japanese beetles.

Plant corn in several short rows, side by side, instead of a long single row because wind currents pollinate it, not insects.

Plant herbs in sunny patio pots near your kitchen and you can start harvesting leaves in a few weeks. Your plants will grow best if you harvest regularly.

Container grown vegetables and flowers can dry out quickly on a patio in full sun. Daily watering may be necessary.

Be careful if you must work in your garden when the soil is too wet. When planting, the wet soil will clump together and possibly leave air pockets that will dry out your plant's roots. Water in new plantings well.

Mulch your vegetable garden with pine straw or wheat straw. You can use three sheets of newspaper to cover the ground around your plants, then cover the paper with straw.

Water cucumbers regularly so they won't have a bitter taste.

Check garden crops daily for disease and insect problems.



Harvest onions, garlic and Irish potatoes when two thirds of the plant tops have died down.

Pull weeds from vegetable gardens and flowerbeds weekly.

**Flowerbeds** - An easy formula for creating a beautiful container garden is to use a single tall plant with a trailer that spills over the edge, along with some plants to fill in the gaps.

Divide iris after they bloom.

Use soaker hoses to irrigate annuals, perennials, shrubs and vegetables.

Remove faded flowers from summer annuals to prevent a lull in blooming.

Some quick growing annuals you can grow in your garden are cleome, cosmos, marigold and zinnia.

Look for seedlings under your Lenten roses and transplant them to other shady spots in your garden or share them with a friend.

Check dahlias for spider mites and spray with an insecticide if necessary, always following label directions. Clip the faded flowers to encourage blooms through the summer.

Stake tall growing flowers like dahlias, lilies and hollyhocks.

Cut back chrysanthemums so they won't be too leggy later in the summer and fall when they bloom.

Continue planting annuals for summer color and to fill in bare spots in your flower garden.

Summer blooming bulbs can still be planted.

Fertilize flowerbeds.

**Houseplants** - Houseplants that have been moved outdoors may require more water during summer months.

Divide overgrown Boston ferns.

**Miscellaneous** - During hot weather, raise the height of your mower to help your lawn withstand hot, dry weather.

Install a birdbath and enjoy the show.



Divide iris after they bloom.

## **July Garden Chores**

**Trees and Shrubs** - Water trees to keep them alive during the dry summer months. Water the ground at the base of the trunk and out as far as the limb canopy reaches.

Trees and shrubs may need to be lightly trimmed in the summer months to maintain a desired shape but save all major pruning jobs for the late winter.

Avoid wetting the foliage of roses when watering them as this encourages leaf disease.

For better health of your creeping juniper, prune out old, dead foliage underneath the plants.

**Vegetables** - If you have not planted your tomatoes, corn, beans and okra, do so by mid July to allow time for them to mature before cool weather.

Water early in the day or late in the evening for best results. Much of the water will evaporate if you water in the middle of the day. For more efficient watering, water at the root zone with soaker hoses.

Cut back by half herbs like basil and oregano to promote leaves and to prevent them from producing seed.

Look for and remove hornworms (big green caterpillars camouflaged among the stems) on your tomato and pepper plants.

Mulch your garden to retain moisture, lower the temperature, reduce the number of weeds and prevent the soil surface from compacting.

Japanese beetles are hard to control. Hand pick if you can but you may need an insecticide. Always follow label directions.

Remove vegetable plants from your garden once they have finished bearing to prevent disease/insect buildup.

Plant pumpkin seeds now for pumpkins in October.

Remove tomato suckers (a shoot growing between the main stem and a branch) and root them for new plants. Select 5 – 6" long suckers and root in water and then plant in your garden.

Pick squash, cucumbers and okra regularly to keep the plants producing.

A big rotten spot on the end of a ripe tomato means it has blossom end rot. Purchase a product from your garden center that specifically treats this and apply lime to your garden soil in the fall to decrease susceptibility next growing season.

Extreme heat can cause tomatoes and peppers to stop setting fruit. This is a temporary condition and they will continue to set fruit once temperatures drop.

Dig Irish potatoes and harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow and shrivel up.

Remove water-robbing weeds from your garden. One weed that goes to seed this year makes many weeds next year.

**Flowerbeds** - If your annuals and perennials need to be rejuvenated, cut one-third of the existing growth, water and fertilize. In about ten days, your annuals will bloom again with a fuller, healthier ap-



pearance and in September, your perennials will be more compact and less likely to topple over or split in high winds.

It is not too late to sow seeds of quick growing annuals such as marigolds and zinnias.

Cut back dahlias to half their height after they bloom for fall flowers.

Divide crowded bearded iris clumps making sure each root has a healthy fan of leaves.

In addition to summer annuals, coleus and caladium, two plants with beautiful foliage color, can be planted for long-lasting summer color.

Cut back tall overgrown chrysanthemums in early July for compact growth. Then allow the plant to grow for fall blooms.

Cut purple coneflower and black-eyed Susan for a nice bouquet. This will help the plants continue to bloom for a longer period and give you much pleasure.

Hanging baskets continually exposed to sun, wind and high temperatures may need to be watered every day.

Stake tall plants.

Remove faded flowers from annuals and perennials to encourage more blooms.

**Houseplants** - Remove standing water from flowerpot saucers and watering cans where mosquitoes can breed.

Treat mealy bugs on coleus and African violets with a cotton swab saturated with rubbing alcohol.

**Miscellaneous** - Fireflies are fun to watch and are beneficial. The larvae eat mites, snails, slugs and other soft-bodied insects.

To help keep your compost pile from drying out, make the top of your pile concave so rainfall is directed to the center.

Make sure your mower blades are sharp. A ragged cut causes grass to use more water.

Keep shovel blades sharp with a file or grinder. A sharp blade makes digging hard soil easier.



Hanging Baskets may need frequent watering

## **August Garden Chores**

**Trees and Shrubs** - Prune overgrown blueberries after harvest. Shorten tall central stems to encourage more horizontal branches.

Rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias prefer acidic soils. Discarded coffee grounds and tea leaves added to the soil around these plants can provide a natural means of maintaining soil acidity.

If trees and shrubs need pruning, only lightly prune them early this month so new growth will have time to mature before cold weather arrives.

Remove crape myrtle seedpods as soon as they form to encourage late summer bloom.

Fertilize roses with 10-10-10 fertilizer, 1 tablespoon per foot of height.

Cut faded blooms from your roses so your plant's energy will be directed to producing new flowers instead of seeds.

**Vegetables** - Summer heat may cause some of the blooms on your vegetable plants to drop. The plants will hold the blooms again once the weather is cooler. To reduce some of the effects of the heat, apply a three-inch layer of mulch around the plants and water regularly.

Cucumbers and squash can still be planted. It is too late for corn, lima beans, okra, pole beans, and tomatoes this season because they will not have enough time to mature before cold weather.

Plant garlic In August for harvest early next summer.

Test your soil now and you will have time to improve it, if necessary, before next spring's planting season. Your County Extension Agent has soil testing instructions.

Plan your fall vegetable garden now: collards, kale, mustard, spinach, beets, onions, turnips, broccoli, and radishes. Plant mid-to-late August.

Water plants several hours before applying insecticides so the insecticide will not burn them. When applying insecticides, always follow label directions.

To prevent insect and disease problems in your vegetable garden, remove plants when they have finished bearing.

Harvest squash, okra, and cucumbers regularly so your plants will continue producing. Use a sharp knife with a narrow blade to avoid damaging the plant.

Remove weeds before they make seeds.

Begin propagating outdoor herb plantings for an indoor winter herb garden.

**Flowerbeds** - Cut back annuals, such as begonias, petunias, impatiens, and geraniums when they get "leggy". Water them well and lightly fertilize. This will encourage compact growth and more blooms in about three weeks.

If your clematis vine has turned completely brown, do not dig it up. Prune out dead stems and leave it alone and it may sprout new growth next spring.



If your older peony plants had diminished flowers this past spring, dig, separate, and replant them.

Brighten up your hanging baskets by clipping out dead leaves and flowers and fertilizing with a slow-release fertilizer. Water regularly and replace any plants that have died with new plants.

Begin planting fall blooming bulbs.

Remove faded bedding plants from your garden and re-seed with marigolds, cosmos and zinnias to provide color during the fall months.

Fertilize chrysanthemums and fall blooming asters regularly until the buds show color.

Divide and transplant daylilies, Shasta daisies and iris.

Collect Hosta and blackberry lily seeds to save for planting next spring.

Patio plants and window boxes dry out quickly. Check their watering needs daily.

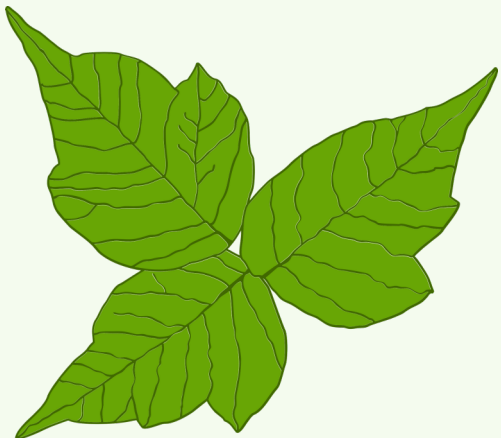
Root 4" cutting of coleus in water. After roots have formed, plant them in a pot and enjoy them indoors for the winter.

Gather wildflowers for drying.

Fertilize annual bedding plants that are in bloom; follow label directions.

**Miscellaneous** - Place a garden bench in a corner of your garden so you can sit and enjoy the summer evening sounds.

Be on the lookout for poison ivy along the ground and climbing up trees. To control it, spray with a non-selective weed killer, always following label directions.



Poison Ivy



Flowers for Drying



## Planting Day at the Gold Medal Garden



Margie, Harriet and Marcia



Harriet and Margie



## Planting Day at the Gold Medal Garden continued



Margie

### Some Garden Puns

From [growingfamily.co.uk](http://growingfamily.co.uk)

1. I beg your *garden*.
2. Your good *weed* of the day.
3. *Peas* and quiet.
4. Never a *dill* moment.
5. Absolutely *radishing*.
6. Don't *moss* around.
7. *Turnip* the volume.

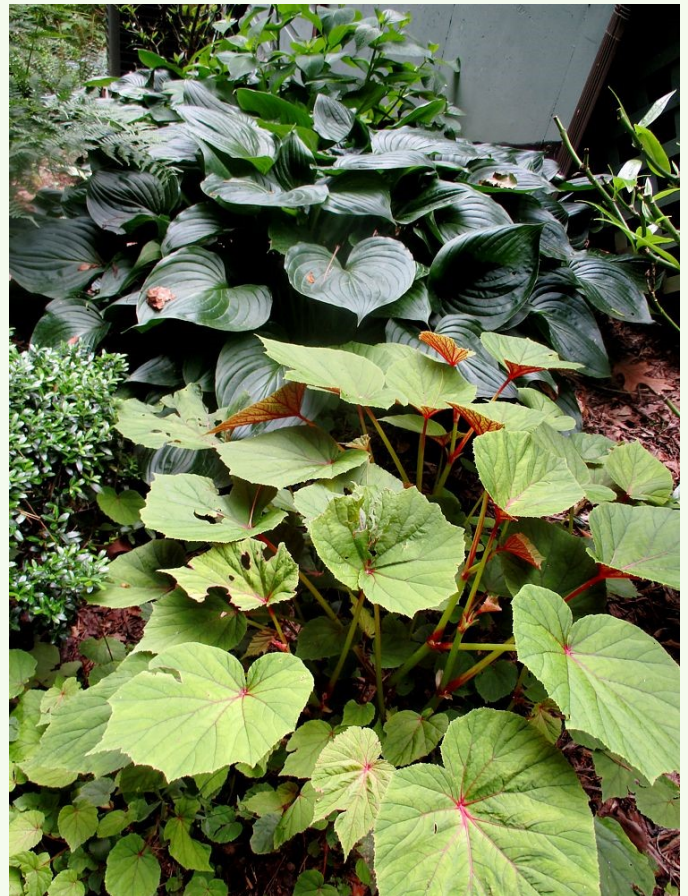
What's Blooming Now  
From the Garden of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



Bigleaf Magnolia

Tommy's Bigleaf Magnolia actually had 4 blooms on it this year!

Begonia in the foreground,  
Hosta in the back





What's Blooming Now , Continued  
From the Garden of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



*Itea virginica*

Japanese Painted  
Fern





What's Blooming Now , Continued  
From the Garden of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



Pale Indian Plantain

Sweetshrub





## What's Blooming Now , Continued



*Asclepias variegata*, Red-Ring Milkweed, blooming in Tommy Westbrook's garden now



Fire Pink, from the garden of Elaine Bliss



## What's Blooming Now , Continued



Elaine Bliss's friend Andrea's Cardoon managed to overwinter last year!  
Beautiful!



## Weeds

*Asclepias syriaca*

Common Milkweed

Eastern North America is the native range for *Asclepias syriaca*, Common Milkweed. It is a sun-loving perennial which commonly occurs in fields, open woods, waste areas, road sides and along railroad tracks. Mature height for Common Milkweed is 2 to 3 feet. Bloom time is June to August. The pink, mauve, purple or white blooms are showy and fragrant. Blooms are domed shape, slightly drooping clusters (umbels) and appear mostly in the upper leaf axis over a long bloom period.

The stems are upright and stout with thick broad oblong, light green leaves that can reach up to eight inches long. Stems and flowers exude a milky sap when cut. Flowers give way to prominent seed pods (2 – 4 inches long) which split open when ripe, releasing numerous silky-tailed seeds for dispersal by the wind.

The blooms attract butterflies but gardeners should be aware, it is a very aggressive grower. Many gardeners (and I am one) consider it to be too vigorous and weedy for borders. It spreads by seed and underground rhizomes and can be very difficult to control.

To control Common Milkweed, apply glyphosate (Roundup), always following label directions. More than one application may be necessary. You can also hand pull the entire plant, including the roots and pull out as much of the rhizome as possible. The best time to pull the plant is when it is young, before roots are deeply established.

Chrysanthemums in the front, just emerging, *Asclepias syriaca* in the center and *Asclepias tuberosa* in the back, center, getting ready to bloom



### Sautéed Fresh Corn

Adapted from *Barefoot Contessa Parties!* Cookbook

Yield: 6 to 8 servings

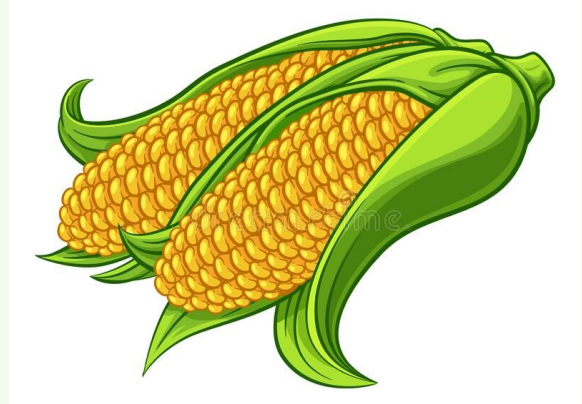
8 ears of corn on the cob

3 T unsalted butter

1 t salt

¼ t black pepper

½ t fine sugar



Husk corn. Cut the kernels off each ear. Melt butter in sauté pan. Add corn and sauté, stirring frequently. After about 6 or 7 minutes, start testing for doneness, you want the corn to be cooked but still crisp, not mushy. When cooked, turn off the heat and sprinkle with salt, pepper and sugar. Enjoy!

### Book Corner

Title: The Living Landscape Designing for beauty and biodiversity in the home garden

Author: Rick Darke & Doug Tallamy

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

Since the publication of Doug Tallamy's Bringing Nature Home and Rick Darke's The American Woodland Garden, many have come to realize the importance of native plants in sustaining wildlife and are adding more natives to our gardens. It can be a challenge to make a garden that is friendly both to wildlife and its human creators. The Living Landscape shows you how to accomplish this. Chapters include: Layers in Wild Landscapes, The Community of Living Organisms: Why Interrelationships Matter More Than Numbers, The Ecological Functions of Gardens: What landscapes Do, The Art of Observation, and Applying Layers to the Home Garden.