

# Towns Union Master Gardener Association

# NEWSLETTER

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Volume 10, Issue 4

President

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Our Officers

Janice King

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Meetings: Master Gardener Extension Volunteers of Union and Towns Counties meet on the second Thursday of every month alternating locations between the Haralson Memorial Civic Center in Blairsville and the City Hall in Hiawassee, 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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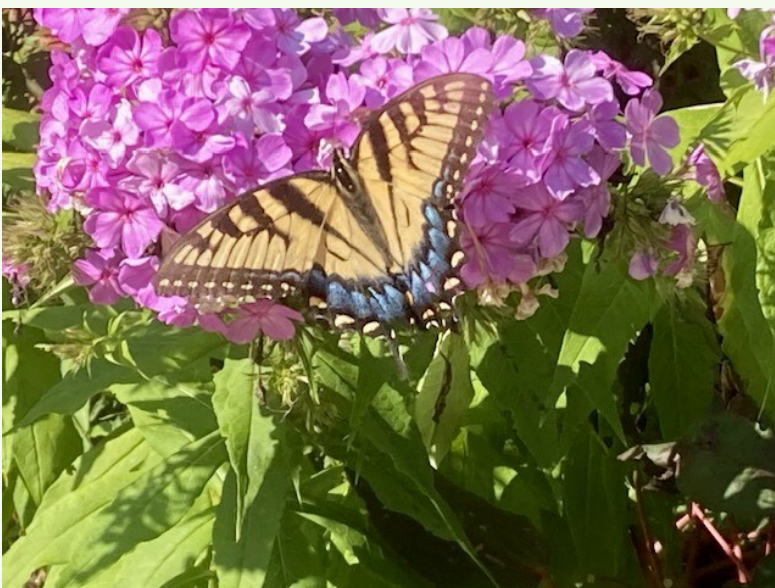
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From Gayle Kusak's Garden: Yellow Swallowtail Butterfly on Phlox 'David's Song'

## Editor's Words

As we move into autumn and the temperatures drop a bit, it's enjoyable to get back in the garden again, - get your fill before winter sets in.

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers and trainees have been very busy with summer maintenance 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, and Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. Our elves have been preparing for the Kris Kringle Market, crafting items from natural plant materials.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Rachel Phillips, please see pages 3-5. Photographs of "What's Blooming Now" are found on pages 15 –20. And be sure to check out the Experiment with Seeds at Lloyd's Landing, pages 12 - 13.

Happy gardening,  
Jo Anne

\*\*\*\*\* Autumn arrives on September 22, 2023 at 7:30 a.m.. \*\*\*\*\*



Competing sedums!  
'Atlantis' in the front, and  
'Vera Jameson' with its  
beautiful deep pink flowers  
in the back. From the gar-  
den of Tom and Jo Anne  
Allen



## Meet Rachel Phillips

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Rachel Phillips. She completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training in April of 2023 and has a projected certification date of April 2024. Rachel currently resides in Blairsville, Georgia with a cat and a puppy. She also has custody of and is raising two of her nephews, one who has joined the workforce and the other is still attending Union County High School.

Rachel was born in Marietta, Georgia and shortly thereafter her family moved to Mansfield, Georgia, a small town east of Atlanta. As a teenager she moved to the Northeastern Georgia mountains where she attended and graduated Union County High School, attended classes at North Georgia Technical College in accounting and met her now estranged spouse. They were married for 28 years and have two children, one daughter and a son. Her daughter is the wife of a military helicopter pilot and they reside with their family in Junction City, Kansas. Her son attends Kennesaw State College and has just completed his freshman year with a 4.0 GPA.

Rachel's family has always been her passion and as her children grew older, she had more time to develop other interests. She always had an interest in plants and the outdoors so she co-founded a landscaping business in Blairsville that has been successful for many years.

Her hobbies and passions include gardening, short hikes on the Appalachian Trail, a drive over to Coopers Creek or creating an outdoor oasis with soil, rocks and plants. Native plants are among her favorites.

A simple ad on Facebook Marketplace, a guy pleading for someone to help his significant other in her gardens, as to relieve him of those duties, brought her to the next chapter of her life as a Master Gardener. Elaine Bliss just happened to be that significant other. Through Elaine, Rachel met many mentors and Master Gardeners such as Doug Koke and Jo Anne Allen. To quote Rachel, "Their encouragement, guidance and support has brought me to where I am today as a Master Gardener in training. I am forever grateful for their friendship and guidance and hope to someday help a future Master Gardener, as they have [helped] me." I enjoyed getting to know Rachel better and hope you will too.

Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Rachel's puppy, Little Bit, helping out in the garden.

Pictures on pages 4 and 5 are from Rachel's Garden



At left: An assortment of plants growing in Rachel's container garden

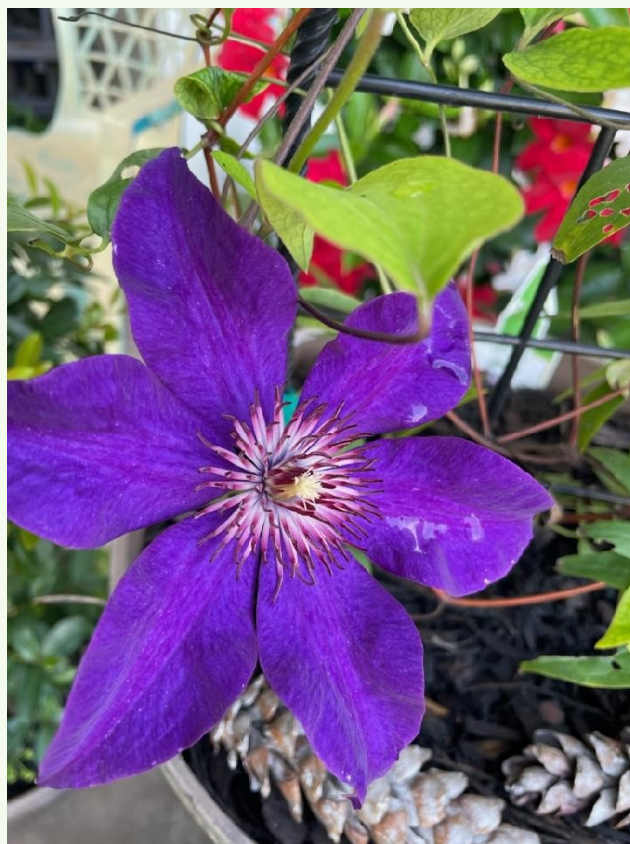


At right: An ornamental pepper plant



## Rachel's Garden, Continued

At right: Clematis



At left: Mandevilla



## September Garden Chores

**Trees and Shrubs** - 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.

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.

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

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

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

Plant garlic now for harvest next summer.

Cover crops like annual rye, buckwheat 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.

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

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.

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

**Flowerbeds** - 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.

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.

Fertilize chrysanthemums now for lots of blooms this fall.

Divide overcrowded groundcovers like ajuga and liriop and overgrown clumps of daylily, iris and coneflower this month.



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 in our area.

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

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

Plant your pansies and violas as the weather cools.

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

**Lawns** - Fertilize fescue lawns following label instructions.

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.

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

**Houseplants** - 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.

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

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

**Miscellaneous** - Begin collecting dried materials for fall and winter arrangements and decorations.



Fall Garden



Fall is a good time to have your soil tested.

## October Garden Chores

**Trees and Shrubs** - 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.

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.

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

**Fruit Trees** - Pick up fallen apples, peaches, pears and plums from under your trees and destroy them to avoid diseases next spring.

**Vegetables** - 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.

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

Harvest your pumpkins as the vines begin to dry.

Protect strawberries with a light layer of pine straw mulch.

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.

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.

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

Divide perennials like daylilies, phlox, and iris.

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



next spring.

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.

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.

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.

If you have not already done so, dig 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.

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

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

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

**Houseplants** - 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.

Divide overgrown Boston ferns and repot.

**Miscellaneous** - Carve a pumpkin.



Cut chrysanthemums back after they bloom.

## November Garden Chores

**Trees and Shrubs** - 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

**Fruit Trees** - Set out fruiting plants from October to March.

**Vegetables** - 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.

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.

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.

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

**Flowerbeds** - 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.

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.

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.

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.

Remove any remaining foliage left on peonies.

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.



Keep pansies and other seasonal flowers watered regularly.

**Lawns** - 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.

**Soil Test** - 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.

**Houseplants** - 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.

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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



Pansies can still be planted if the weather is not too cold.



Clean up your garden tools prior to storing them until spring.

## **Lloyd's Landing An Experiment with Seeds**

There is not much that looks worse in landscaping than a daffodil bed after it blooms. And, of course as all good gardeners know, it is important to leave the foliage until it dies a natural death in order to provide nutrients for next year's bulbs.

The Children's Daffodil Project team at Lloyd's Landing planted 1,000 bulbs this past year and were rewarded with a stunning spring bloom. Lloyd's Landing is a public park in Hiawassee and the garden is very visible to visitors and to motorists passing by on the highway. So, what to do to hide the brown stalks, support future bulb growth, and provide a colorful summer garden which would not interfere with the bulbs for next year?

The great experiment was to seed with zinnias and cosmos in the hope they would survive and thrive. And while they were not seeds, one of our Master Gardeners, Sally Haislip, propagates from seed and brought several flats of one-inch seedlings of zinnias and cosmos, which were planted on top of the bulb bed. And you can see from the pictures what happened! The garden has been as stunning throughout the summer as it was when the daffodils were blooming. The plan for late summer is to overseed again and count on these beautiful flowering plants to survive the winter, self-seed, and once again pop up as the bulb foliage is dying back.

The verdict is in, and the experiment was a success. A great way to have the best of both: the early daffodil garden in splendid yellow and the glorious colors of the summer.

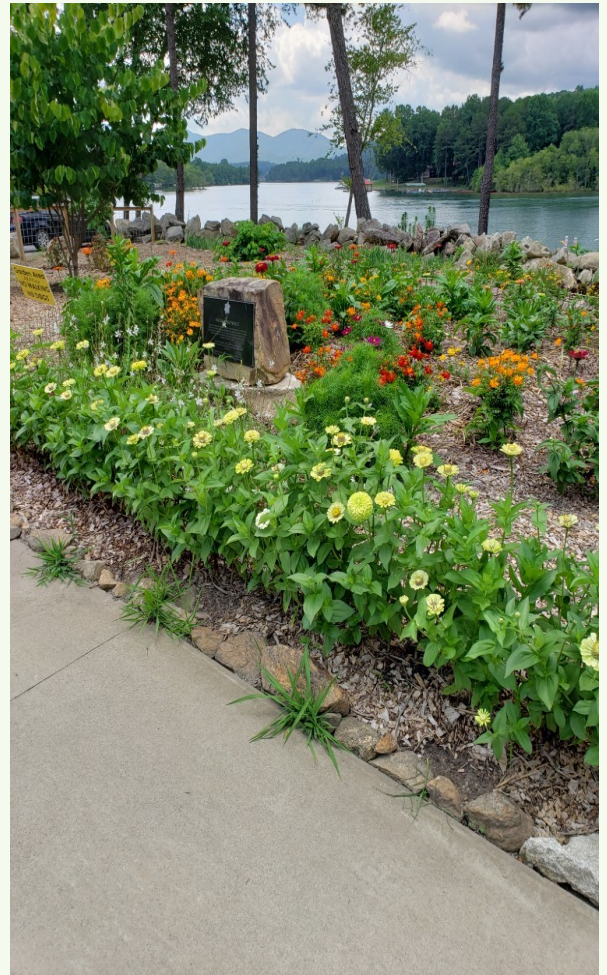
Grace Howard  
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



The daffodils in full bloom at Lloyd's Landing, March 2, 2023.



Lloyd's Landing: The glorious colors of summer, the zinnias and cosmos in full bloom.





## Partial Sun or Partial Shade?

Sunlight is critical to the growth of plants, so when gardening, it is very important to evaluate the availability of sunlight in your landscape. Consider how sunlight falls around your gardens. A spot can be a lovely sunny space in early spring but may be shaded by a canopy of trees later in the season. Also, your home and other structures in your landscape cast shadows and exactly where they fall depends on the time of year as well as the time of day.

Once sunlight availability has been evaluated, consider light requirements of the plants you intend to grow and then match the right plant to the right place in your garden. A plant requiring full sun may not bloom and produce spindly growth if planted in the shade. Shade loving plants can burn and produce stunted growth if planted in too much sun. Matching plant cultural requirements to the site will result in healthier plants that develop fewer problems with insects and diseases.

Full Sun – Unfiltered, uninterrupted sunlight from sunrise to at least 3:00 p.m., with morning sun being better than afternoon.

Partial Sun – 5 to 6 hours of direct sunlight with shade or filtered sun the rest of the day.

Partial Shade – Dappled sun all day long or dappled sun interrupted for up to 4 hours by either full sun or full shade. Partial shade also refers to conditions under tall trees (indirect light).

Full Shade – Solid, sunless shade such as provided by a building or a dense overhang of foliage.

Crepe Myrtles (*Lagerstroemia indica*)—Summer flowers, attractive bark, as seen in the two pictures below, brilliant fall color and structure in the winter garden make them year-round garden performers. The plants in the two pictures below are 25 years old and as they have aged, the smooth, light brown/bronze bark peels off to reveal smooth, pinkish inner bark. From the garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen, photos by Tom Allen.

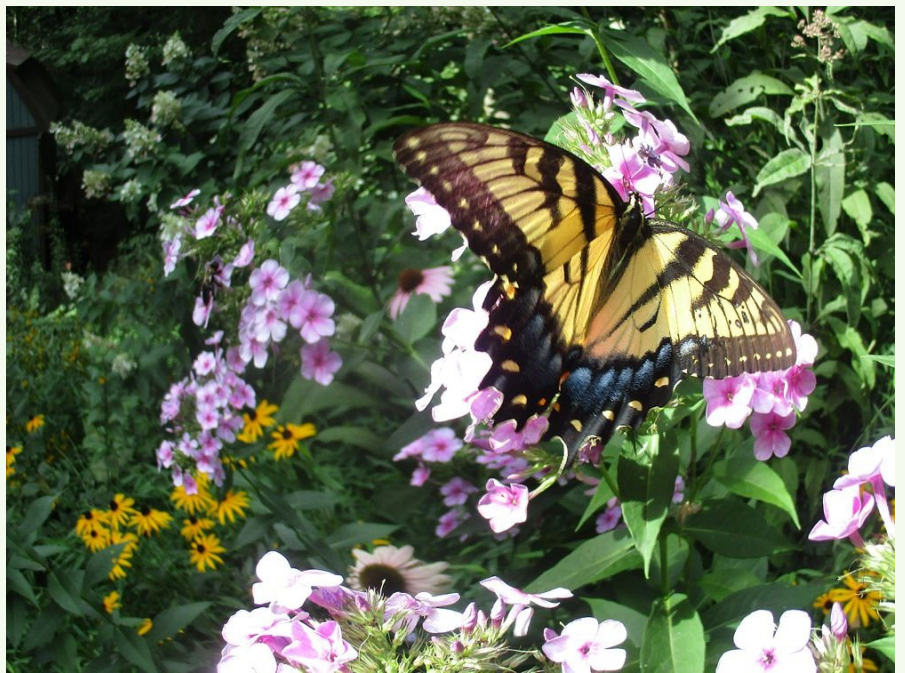




What's Blooming Now  
From the Garden of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



Tall Ironweed



Yellow Swallowtail



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



Hummingbird Moth



Honeybee on Purple Coneflower

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



Left: Tomatoes preparing themselves for a sandwich



Right: Joe Pye Weed



## What's Blooming Now , Continued



Left: Pale Indian Plantain from the Garden of Henry and Tommy Westbrook



Right: *Ocimum basilicum* 'Siam Queen', Thai Basil from the Garden of Gayle Kusuk



What's Blooming Now , Continued  
From Gayle Kusak's Garden



Left: *Capsicum annuum*,  
Poblanos

Right: *Cymbopogon*,  
Lemon Grass

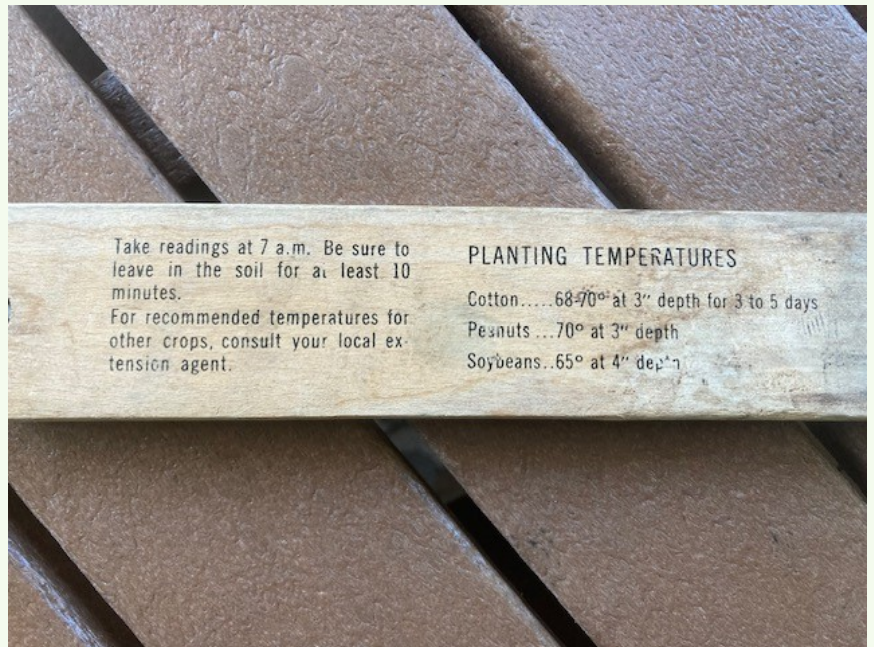




## What's Bloomin Now, Continued



If you closely enough, you can see several cantaloupes amongst the vines. This picture was taken the first part of July. We had and are having an awesome harvest, eating cantaloupe from the garden just about daily. The variety here is 'Ambrosia'. From the vegetable garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen, photo by Tom Allen.



Gayle Kujuk found this soil thermometer in an antique store a few years ago. It's got advertisements for a herbicide company but it sure makes sense, was probably pretty useful in its day.



## Weeds

### *Phytolacca americana*

#### Pokeweed

One of the more famous weeds, it ventured into the pop culture arena as shown in the lyrics of “Polk Salad Annie”, by Tony Joe White. It was released in 1968: “Every day for supper time/she’d go down by the truck patch/and pick her a mess of polk salad/and carry it home in a tow sack.”

Pokeweed is a poisonous, herbaceous perennial plant. It is poisonous to humans, dogs and livestock. In spring, shoots and leaves (not the root) are edible with proper cooking (“poke sallet”). But later in the growing season they become deadly, and the berries are also poisonous.

Pokeweed grows 4 to 10 feet tall. It has simple leaves on green to purplish stems and a large white taproot. The flowers are green to white and are followed by berries which ripen to purple, almost black and are a food source for many birds. It is native to eastern North America, the Mid-West and the South.

Pokeweed can be found growing in forest edge habitats, fence rows, under power lines and in old fields and pastures, many times where birds are able to roost. Birds disperse the seeds readily and then pokeweed grows and colonizes aggressively and can survive for many years.

It is considered an invasive plant and a pest species to farmers. Seeds and roots should be disposed of and not composted to reduce chances of spreading it. Stems and leaves can be composted. It is difficult to completely dig it out once it grows into a large plant because a very big carrot-like root develops. To get rid of pokeweed permanently, spray the leaves with a glyphosate-based solution, always following label directions.



Left: Pokeweed seedling.

Right: Mature pokeweed with berries turning from green to purplish black.





## Tomato Tart

Source: Facebook

1.5-2 pounds tomatoes (all shapes, colors, sizes)

1 thawed sheet of puff pastry

1 egg

1 C ricotta cheese

1/4 C plain goat cheese

Juice of half a lemon

Zest of a whole lemon

1 T chopped chives

1 T chopped basil

Salt and pepper to taste



Slice tomatoes and layer in a colander, salting each layer as you go. Let drain over the sink. Mix together ricotta cheese, goat cheese, lemon juice, lemon zest, and chives. Roll out puff pastry on a baking sheet with parchment paper, then use a knife to create a 1" border around all 4 edges—don't cut all the way through. Press tomatoes dry with kitchen towels to remove excess moisture. Spread ricotta mixture inside the border of puff pastry, then top with tomato slices. Whisk egg with 1 T water and brush along the border of the pastry. Bake according to instructions on puff pastry box, typically about 15-20 minutes at 400 degrees. Top with basil, flaky salt and freshly cracked pepper. Enjoy!

## Book Corner

Title: The Complete Book of Ground Covers 4000 Plants that Reduce Maintenance, Control Erosion, and Beautify the Landscape by Gary Lewis (Timber Press, Inc.)

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

Thoroughly researched and well written, it took Gary Lewis eight years to complete this compendium, seeking to bring ground covers out of the utilitarian shadows and into the spotlight. Not only can ground covers cover dirt and outcompete weeds, they also help control erosion, reduce maintenance, bring beauty to the garden and help unify a garden. Chapters include: Introduction to Ground Covers, Planning for Success, Designing with Ground Covers and Ground Covers A—Z.