

Towns Union Master Gardener Association

NEWSLETTER

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President

Marty Dellinger

Vice-President

Kim Duval

Recording Secretary

Our Officers

Janice King

Corresponding Secretary

Leslie Wade

Treasurer

Toni Smith

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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Monarda punctata

From the Garden of Tom and Jo Anne Allen

Editor's Words

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers have been very busy with garden clean-up and collecting seeds from the gardens getting ready for the cold winter months, the Satterfield Garden installation, prep and planting of additional daffodil bulbs at Lloyd's Landing and workdays at Cupid Falls Park. In addition, our elves have been crafting items from natural plant materials for the Kris Kringle Market that will take place on December 2nd.

Our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter is Leslie Wade, please see pages 3-4. Photographs of "What's Blooming Now" are found on pages 11 –12, and be sure to check out the Fall Clean-Up and Educational Outreach pictures at the Gold Medal Garden on pages 13-14. Pages 15-18 contain beautiful pictures of the Gold Medal Garden taken by Leslie Wade on the last day of the Farmers Market.

Happy gardening,

Jo Anne

***** Winter arrives on December 21, 2023 at 10:27 PM*****



Hummingbird checking out the Cardinal Flower in Margie Schramke's garden

Meet Leslie Wade

Not only is Leslie our featured Master Gardener Extension Volunteer for this quarter, she is also our Corresponding Secretary. Leslie moved to northeastern Gilmer County in 2017 with her husband and gardening partner in crime, Ed Campbell, and completed her Master Gardener Extension Volunteer training with the class of 2021. She signed up to volunteer in Towns/Union because she wanted to volunteer at Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. She was drawn to the Ethnobotanic Gardens and the heirloom apple experiment project. She has one son, Devin, who is 38 and lives in San Diego with his wife.

Leslie grew up in southern California and has lived in San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, Atlanta and now Ellijay, Georgia. She earned a BA in Communications from the University of California, San Diego.

Retired, but actively volunteering, Leslie had a 35-year career in communications (public relations, outreach and marketing) mostly focused on land use and development, urban planning, architecture and design and major transportation projects (highway and rail). She had her own consulting business for 20 years in San Diego and also worked for government agencies and a large civil engineering firm.

She really doesn't consider herself a gardener. She is an avid (if not lazy) fruit grower and she is passionate about native plants and habitat restoration. But that doesn't mean that she doesn't plant ornamentals, her fruit trees certainly are not native. She likes Doug Tallamy's suggestion that we aim for 90% native plants in our gardens to provide food and habitat for the declining native bird, animal and insect species.

Another major hobby is quilting. She prefers abstract and improvisational quilting though she will make a traditional quilt now and then. Her husband is now a quilter as well. Another hobby that they both enjoy is canoeing and in summer and fall seasons, you will find her canning and putting up food from their garden.

Currently, Leslie and Ed collect heirloom apple varieties and their collection includes some Northern, European, crabapples, cider and red-fleshed apples.

In her younger years, Leslie served on the Board of Directors of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, the business organization that guided the urban core of San Diego. She also volunteered on other civic boards in San Diego and served as the local president of the National Women's Political Caucus there. She is a former board member of the Gilmer County Democratic Committee. She is a big believer in political activism (the civilized type), regardless of party affiliation or lack thereof. She is also involved in the Mountain Light Unitarian Universalist Church in Ellijay.

For the past three years she has organized a virtual conference for members of the North American Fruit Explorers with 8-12 sessions over three days, as well as monthly virtual meetups for fruit growers that have focused on a range of topics. It has afforded her the opportunity to meet some of the foremost fruit growers and breeders in the country.

Leslie is a passionate fruit grower but she grows vegetables, herbs and native pollinator plants as well. She is a member of the North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) and she is always happy to point people toward the best places to order bare root fruit trees and berry bushes.

Favorite foods are all of them. She loves farm-to-table food, craft cider and an occasional cocktail. She understands a bit about soil biology and pesticide/fungicide use so she is always looking for sources of healthy, nutritious, low-spray foods in North Georgia.

Leslie and Ed love exploring our National Parks and wild places in the United States. They just attended a Wild and Seedling Apple Exhibition in Massachusetts where they hung

out with other apple nerds. They have traveled in Europe and in the coming years hope to visit the Normandy region (and it's many cideries) and Scotland.

Something that many of her friends do not know about her is that despite scoring as a genius on IQ tests (she says she certainly doesn't feel that smart now), she could not read when she was a child. She had a visual processing disorder that made it very difficult for her to read from grade school through college and into her ironically chosen career in communications. She didn't read a book for enjoyment until she was 30. Overcoming her disability and graduating from UCSD with a 3.8 GPA in her major and a minor in writing was one of her greatest accomplishments in life.

Jo Anne Allen
Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Leslie in top photo and
at left, Ed and Leslie in
their garden, orchard in
the background

December Garden Activities

Trees and Shrubs - Trees, shrubs, and perennials can still be planted or transplanted to a new location this month if the ground is not too frozen to work properly. Some trees and shrubs that will provide food for birds are dogwood, crabapple, holly, hawthorn, and pyracantha.

Continue raking leaves from your lawn and apply lime if your soil test indicates that it is needed. A hand-held shredder that acts like a vacuum is an alternative to raking. The shredded, bagged leaves can then be deposited in your garden.

If you have not already done so, mulch all trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs. A four to six-inch layer of mulch is good, placing the mulch close but not touching the stem or trunk of the plant.

Deciduous trees and shrubs can be pruned as needed when they are fully dormant.

Rake and dispose of fruit and leaves around fruit trees to help minimize over-wintering insects and diseases.

If rain and snowfall are inadequate, water all new plantings and bulb beds.

Flower Beds - Cut chrysanthemums back to about two to three inches once blooming is complete.

To keep your pansies healthy and blooming, deadhead (remove faded blooms) and fertilize, following label directions.

Spring flowering bulbs can still be planted this month.

Clean up flowerbeds and remove annuals killed by frost. Work old mulch and organic matter into beds before the soil freezes.

Apply pre-emergent herbicides to control winter weeds, following label directions.

Vegetables - Plan ahead. Order gardening catalogs and start planning your spring vegetable and flower gardens.

Prepare next year's garden soil by turning it over and incorporating organic materials such as pine bark, compost, or shredded leaves.

Pull any weeds that remain in your garden.

Cut any remaining tops off of asparagus plants and add a winter dressing of aged manure to the bed.

Houseplants - Do not over water houseplants during the winter months as this could lead to root rot.

Miscellaneous - As winter approaches, take time to review your past gardening year. Look at your successes and failures and make your next year's plans and goals accordingly.

If you decorate for the holidays with a cut Christmas tree, recycle the tree by pruning off boughs for use as frost and wind protection for tender and newly planted perennials and shrubs.

Prepare your garden tools for winter storage. Clean, sharpen, and store them in a bucket filled with oiled, coarse sand. They will be ready for you when spring arrives.

If you have not already done so, shut down outdoor irrigation systems to prevent freezing and drain garden hoses and store indoors.

Don't forget to feed the birds because as winter approaches, they may not be able to find an adequate supply of food. Keep fresh water out for the birds as well.

Lightly trim evergreens in your garden to use for holiday decorations. Magnolia, euonymus, boxwood, laurel, holly, cypress, and juniper all make long-lasting cut stems indoors.

Look for after Christmas sales on garden tools and equipment.

Make a wreath of dried herbs and flowers from your garden.

If you do not have a garden journal, get one and start keeping records of your garden. Record information such as future plans for design, plant and seed orders, planting schedules, insect appearances, garden highlights (like the date when you first see blooms on your spring bulbs), and more.

Celebrate the winter solstice (the arrival of winter) December 21st.



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January Garden Activities

Trees and Shrubs - For winter interest in your landscape, birch trees, crape myrtle, deciduous magnolia, coral bark maple, kousa and red-twig dogwood, stewartia, and trident maple all have interesting bark.

For winter blooms, plant flowering quince, witch hazel, and leatherleaf mahonia.

Prune trees and shrubs while they are dormant with the exception of those that bloom in the spring. They should be pruned just after they bloom. Evergreen shrubs can also be pruned late this month.

Be sure to water evergreens before the soil freezes if severe weather is forecast, because the roots are not able to take up water when the soil is frozen.

When pruning, make sure that your tools are sharp. For large branches, first cut through the bark on the underside of the limb to be pruned to keep it from tearing the bark. Next, cut from the top, close but not flush with the trunk. The swelling at the base of each branch is the branch collar and this should not be cut.

Plant ornamental trees and shrubs this month if the soil is not frozen.

Watch for borers, over-wintering insects, and scale on broadleaf evergreen trees, fruit trees, shrubs, roses, and perennials. Apply dormant oil spray when these pests are detected, always following label directions.

Water trees and shrubs during dry periods.

Prune nandinas any time between now and early spring by cutting out one third of the oldest canes.

Shrubs such as forsythia, spirea, and kerria can be divided now.

Flowerbeds - Watch for poison ivy when working outdoors. Even though the vine is leafless this time of the year, the branches can still cause a powerful reaction if accidentally touched.

If you have *Helleborus orientalis* (Lenten rose) planted in your garden – look for blooms beginning now to mid-spring.

To encourage new blooms, deadhead pansies (remove spent blossoms) and fertilize monthly with fertilizer that contains nitrate nitrogen (best for plants growing in cold soils).

Water outside containers planted with pansies and evergreens regularly.

Vegetables - If you have not already done so, prepare your vegetable garden area for spring planting when the ground is frost free and not soggy. Apply lime if your soil test indicates that you should. Contact your County Extension office for soil test directions.

The New Year is an exciting time to reevaluate your life and your garden. Cold days are great for sitting by a fire and planning your spring landscape changes and vegetable garden.

Request mail-order seed and plant catalogs and order seeds for starting indoors.

If the ground is dry, till soil in your vegetable garden to help eliminate insects and weeds and incorporate manure or compost to get the soil in good shape for spring plantings.

Houseplants - Remove amaryllis stems with the faded blooms. Keep it indoors with your houseplants then plant it outdoors in May.

Use water at room temperature when watering houseplants. Spray houseplants with insecticidal soap if you detect spider mites, mealy bugs, or scale on the leaves, always following label directions.

Give houseplants a half turn every month so they do not become misshapen.

Repot houseplants as needed and fertilize using a water-soluble fertilizer at eight-week intervals at half the recommended strength.

Miscellaneous - Now is a good time to install edgings around flowerbeds and construct walls, terraces, and walkways, when weather permits.

Instead of salt, use sand on icy walks and driveways. Salt can damage plants and lawns.

Have your lawnmower serviced so it will be ready when you are for spring grass cutting.

Inventory your garden tools and replace or repair as necessary. Sharpen your tools and clean rust from them with steel wool. Coat blades with a light oil and rub linseed oil on wooden handles to help preserve them.

Chop unwanted bamboo and English ivy to the ground. Follow up with weed killer on the leaves in April. More than one application of weed killer may be necessary, always follow label directions.



Prune trees and shrubs while they are dormant with the exception of those that bloom in the spring. They should be pruned just after they bloom. Evergreen shrubs can also be pruned late this month.



Inventory your garden tools and replace or repair as necessary.

February Garden Activities

Trees and Shrubs - Forsythia and quince are easy to force into bloom indoors. Cut branches when the buds show a touch of color and place them in a vase of water. They should bloom within a week or so.

February is a good month to plant and transplant trees and shrubs.

Prune flowering shrubs that flower before May just after they bloom; prune those that bloom after May prior to spring growth.

Prune apple and pear trees.

Continue dormant pruning; prune out any tree branches that are crossed, broken, or diseased.

Observe Arbor Day by planting a tree on February 16th. In Georgia, Arbor Day is celebrated the third Friday in February.

Fertilize established ornamental trees and shrubs always following label directions.

Cut back butterfly bush to 12-18 inches to promote thicker growth and more blooms.

Check the mulch around your landscape plants and add some if necessary. Trees and shrubs should have about a six-inch-thick covering layer of mulch.

Prune overgrown broadleaf shrubs late this month.

Prune evergreens. Do not severely prune pines, spruce, or junipers as they are unable to generate new growth from old wood.

If necessary, prune crepe myrtle by selecting 3, 5, or 7 main stems. Prune old seed heads and twiggy growth that grows from the base of the plant.

Prune Clematis armandii immediately after it blooms.

Flowerbeds - Fertilize spring bulbs as they emerge with 10-10-10, following label directions. Note gaps in plantings and plan fall bulb order.

Prune ornamental grasses down to 12-18 inches to expose base of clump to sunshine.

Prune climbing roses after the first flush of blooms. Now is a good time to tie main canes to a support before they leaf out and remove any stray canes.

Divide ground covers that have become too thick and prune back liriope before new spring growth begins by setting your lawn mower to its highest setting and cut.

Look for blooms on your Lenten rose (*Hellebores orientalis*).

Keep faded flowers and weak growth removed from pansies and keep them well watered and fertilized.

Soil Test - Take soil samples from your garden area in order to plan your fertilizer program. Contact your County Extension Agent for instructions on having your soil tested.

Prepare vegetable garden area for planting. Add fertilizer and lime if indicated by your soil test.

Houseplants - An occasional lukewarm bath in the sink or shower is a tonic for houseplants that overwinter in hot, dry rooms.

When the weather is extremely cold, close the window shades or place protective cardboard between houseplants and window glass to protect houseplants.

Compost - Add any remaining leaves and garden debris to your compost pile if you have one. If you do not have a compost pile, start one.

Miscellaneous - Clean out the old nesting materials in your bluebird boxes early in the month and they will be ready when the bluebirds are ready to nest.

Feed birds and provide them with a fresh supply of water.

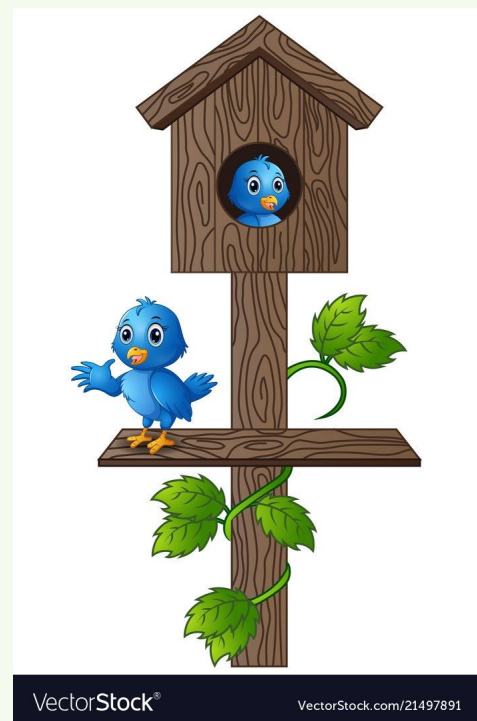
Use cat litter or sand on icy sidewalks instead of salt. Too much salt can burn nearby plant roots.

Service your lawn mower so it will be ready when you are for spring grass cutting.



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Fertilize spring bulbs as they emerge with 10-10-10, following label directions.



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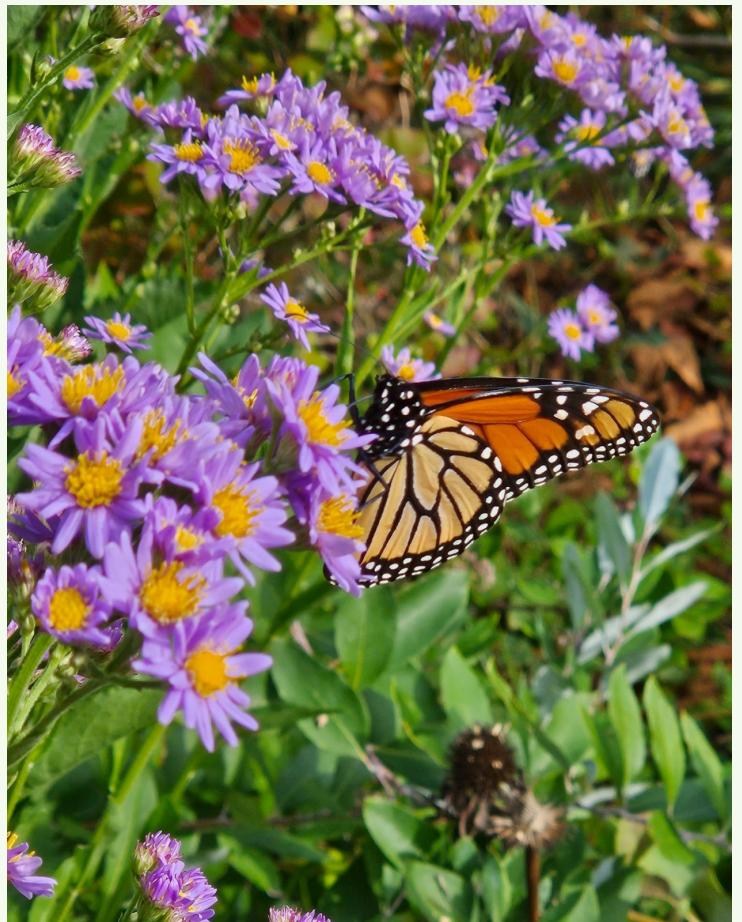
Clean out the old nesting materials in your bluebird boxes early in the month and they will be ready when the bluebirds are ready to nest.

What's Blooming Now (or was blooming recently)



Dahlias From Robin Volker's Garden

Monarch Butterfly on Aster
From Elaine Bliss's Garden



What's Blooming Now , Continued
From the Garden of Margie Schramke



Heart-shaped Double Hybrid Tea Rose

Angel Wing Begonia



Fall Clean-Up and Educational Outreach Event at the Gold Medal Garden

The **Fall Clean-Up and Educational Outreach Event at the Gold Medal Garden** was a rousing success! Below and on the following page are a few pictures.

Approximately 10 Master Gardeners attended (many who aren't the normal workers in this garden) and at least 20 attendees from the public. We started the day with a Q&A session, then moved into the garden to collect seeds which the public attendees asked numerous questions about. We heard many requests for a repeat of this event.

Looks like this may become a yearly thing!

Donni Folendorf

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer



Fall Clean-Up and Educational Outreach Event at the Gold Medal Garden



Gold Medal Garden Pictures Taken on the Last Day of the Farmers Market

Photographs by Leslie Wade



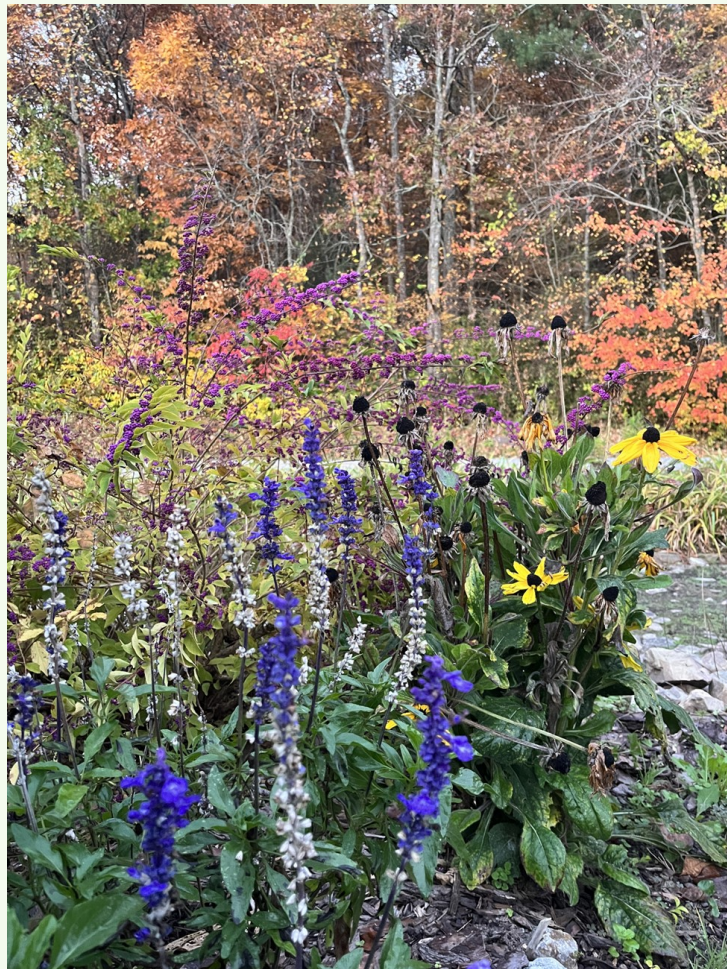
Gold Medal Garden Pictures Continued



Gold Medal Garden Pictures Continued



Gold Medal Garden Pictures Continued



Kris Kringle Market Workshop



Elizabeth Claypool



Becky Keller



Annette Hopgood



Mary Callow and Reecie Campbell

Kris Kringle Market Workshop



From left: Barb Wolf, Mary Callow,
Scott Hennells and Peggy Ruppe



Janice Schuler

Weeds

Solidago

Goldenrod

Solidago, commonly known as goldenrod, is a genus of about 100 to 120 species. Most are herbaceous perennials that like full sun and drier soils, found growing in open areas like meadows, fields and roadsides across most of the United States. It grows to a height of three to four feet but I have seen it growing higher than four feet.

Goldenrod flowers grow in golden clusters spiraling or alternating along the upper portion of stems or branching near the top into smaller, flower-bearing branches. Each flower is actually a very small composite of flowers, similar to a daisy. Bloom time is usually July through September but the picture accompanying this article was taken on November 24th. Propagation is by division of the underground rhizomes or by seeds spread by the wind.

The name solidago means to make whole and it has been used to treat a number of ailments. The dried flowers can be made into a tea.

When the weather is warm and moisture is plentiful, most species produce abundant nectar that attracts bees, wasps and butterflies. Birds are also fond of the seeds.

Goldenrod hybrids and cultivars are popular in Europe and are becoming more so here. 'Baby Sun' and 'Goldkind' are two popular varieties. It is deer resistant. Some of the species are best not planted in garden settings because of their spreading rhizomes. It has no serious insect or disease problems but powdery mildew and leaf spot may occur.

Sometimes goldenrod is confused with ragweed and wrongly accused of bearing the wind-borne ragweed pollen that causes allergies and hay fever.

The herbicide Glyphosate (Roundup) can be used to eliminate species goldenrod. Always follow label directions.



Jo Anne Allen

Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

There are many joys to discover in the winter garden. Winter-flowering plants like snowdrops and Lenten roses and the bark of trees and shrubs like trident maples and crape myrtles. We just need to take the time to look, there is enough to see us through until spring.

Stipules (Spiced-Up Oyster Crackers)

1 one ounce package Ranch Salad Dressing Mix
½ t dill weed
¼ t lemon pepper
¼ t garlic powder
¼ t chipotle powder
½ cup salad oil
5 cups plain oyster crackers



Preheat oven to 250 degrees F. Combine and mix all ingredients except crackers. Pour mixed ingredient mixture over crackers, stir to coat. Place in oven 15 – 20 minutes. Stir gently half-way through baking. Enjoy!

Book Corner

Title: Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer

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

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a botanist, decorated professor and an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. As a scientist, she asks questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. Learn about indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants from Robin Wall Kimmerer. Chapters include: Planting Sweetgrass, Teaching Sweetgrass, Picking Sweetgrass, Braiding Sweetgrass, Burning Sweetgrass and Epilogue: Returning the Gift.