

# The Leaflet



January/February 2017

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## Active Projects Reviewed

The mission statement of Tennessee Master Gardeners states that its purpose is to "... promote environmental stewardship....provide information and education ...". Our projects are the main way we accomplishing this mission. At our January 2017 meeting we presented an overview of our 2016 projects; we will review any changes to these projects and consider other projects at upcoming meetings. Meanwhile, if you have questions or concerns about these projects or want to propose other projects contact a RCMGA officer or bring your ideas to the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Our current project list is:

- Adams Beautification
- Beautification Award
- Community Garden (*formally CCC Community Garden*)
- Courthouse Landscaping
- Fair Booth
- Garden Tour (*2018*)
- Extension Office Landscaping
- Plant Sale (*Sat. May 13, 2017*)
- Preserving Robertson County Heritage
- RCMGA Facebook Page
- RCMGA Scrapbook
- RCMGA Web Site
- Ridgetop Station Park Arboretum
- The Leaflet (*Newsletter*)

## Notes to Members

**Gardening Classes:** Check out the schedule for gardening classes at the Metro Nashville Public Libraries: Native Plants of Middle Tennessee, March 4<sup>th</sup>; Square Foot Gardening, March 11<sup>th</sup>; Organic Gardening, March 18<sup>th</sup>. Too many to include in Events but too good to miss!

**Dues Due:** Please remit RCMGA member dues (\$10) to Shelley Pritchard, treasurer. First year dues (class of 2016) are waived.

**RCMGA Contacts:** A contact list of active members will be included on our web site (rcmga.org), in the "RCMGA Members Lounge" section. If you do not have a user/password, email Julee Orr at julee@mojoridge.com. Please note this site requires a separate userid/password from the TN MG web site (mastergardeners.tennessee.edu).

**What's Green in Your Garden?** Do you have pictures of your spring things? Did you accomplish a lot outside during this warm "spell" this week? Post pictures on our RCMGA facebook page. Contact Nicole Adams or Lynn Cantrell (Contact info on Page 4) if you have problems.

**Confused About Entering Volunteer Time** on the TM MG Web Site? How? What? Where? What if...? Come to the tutorial Thursday, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6pm at the Extension Office. Or, let us know if you need to schedule another time.

### NEXT MEETING

**Feb. 23, 2017**  
**7 pm**

Speaker:

**Trina Fulton**

Program:

**Lasagna Gardening**

The Robertson Co.  
Master Gardener Assoc.  
meets the fourth Thurs.  
of every month.

Meetings are at 7pm  
at the UT Extension  
Office, 408 Main Street,  
Springfield, TN

# Tapping for Maple Syrup in TN

By Karen Ribble

If you are fortunate enough to have access to some sugar maple trees, making maple syrup can be a rewarding endeavor. I have done it twice. I dove into it hardly knowing enough to get started. No one taps trees in Texas so I was completely ignorant. I was lucky, worked hard and managed to bottle two gallons the first year, 2015. If you want to take on this kind of project, plan ahead and have plenty of dry hardwood on hand. Things will go much smoother for you than it did for me.

Hopefully one of the first things you learn before tapping, is that the time to tap is when the temperature freezes at night and rises above freezing during the day. The changing temperature causes pressure in the trees and makes the sap flow. The best sap (sap with the most sugar) is early in the flow. It may already be past this year. The time to tap keeps getting earlier.

Like many things, you can spend as much money as you want to on it. I like to do things inexpensively as I usually have more time than money. You can get everything you need locally. Instead of fancy spiles, I used hardware and tubing from local hardware and plumbing places around town. Have plenty of five gallon buckets on hand.

The next thing you learn is that the sap to syrup ration is forty to one. You need forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. It takes eight full buckets to get one gallon of syrup. Some of my big trees are way down in a ravine from where I want to cook that sap up closer to my house. Now I know why maple syrup is so expensive. Oh did I mention I tried doing that over an open fire. Don't even think about doing that! It doesn't work. Like I said, Completely ignorant.



Last year, 2016, I down-sized. I read somewhere that one of the biggest mistakes people make is getting in over their heads the first year and never doing it again. That is probably true, but I am tenacious if nothing else. I bought a wood stove last year and then learned that you need hardwood to keep a fire hot enough to boil syrup. You can't burn any old wood into it and expect the sap to cook. It won't get hot enough. The next thing you need to know is that you should think of sap as you would about milk. We had plenty of cows in Texas so I do know about milk. It lasts longer if you keep it cold. The colder the better. Frozen is ideal. If you have the opportunity to snowbank your sap, do it.

Here is a HUGE tip that no one ever seems to mention. If you can hard freeze a bucket of sap, only the water freezes. The sugar doesn't freeze. Freeze the buckets over night. The next day, pour off the liquid which greatly condenses the sap. Throw away the ice. This cuts down on cooking time in a

big way. Sometimes the weather will work in your favor and you will have some nice snow to snowbank your sap buckets and perhaps a nice natural hard freeze at night. Remember to get out there early and pour off the condensed sap. Then get that fire going. Use a pan with the most surface area possible. Add a little sap at a time as it cooks down. You want to keep it boiling as much as possible. As it gets more condensed it will start getting darker and start looking more and more like syrup. Use math. You know how much sap you collected, right. So you should have a fair idea as to how much syrup you are going to end up with. As you get closer to that amount you will want to take it indoors to "finish it off". Depending on how things go with the fire, timing etc., there will be some debris in your sap. It can't be helped. This is a good time to strain it. Straining is easier and safer when it is not hot and with less volume. I use cheesecloth in a large colander over a large pot. Do whatever works for you. A little bit of sludge in the bottom of the jars of syrup will settle and then you can just leave it in the bottom of the jar when you use the syrup.

This is a fun and rewarding project. My family loves maple syrup and almost everyone I know loves maple syrup. It makes a wonderful gift if you can bear to part with any of your hard earned earthly treasure. Happy Tapping!



# RCMGA Host Valentines Day Potting Party at Kids' Gardening Club at Stokes-Brown Library

By JoAnn Slate

A flurry of excitement started as youngsters began entering the Springfield children's library on February 14. Colorful posters on library doors invited participants to come and learn to pot plants; although the actual activity did not include planting in old garden boots as per the posters' illustration, plenty of potting soil was available for the blue and green pots.

A classroom poster board listed an agenda for the day's class; some students were so eager to begin that they immediately chose a pot and also a favorite plant from available choices. Some asked shortly if they could pot two plants; the answer was "maybe" though enough students appeared that only a few could do more than one.

After noting materials needed, the children, ages 3 to 13, learned to fill the bottom halves of their pots with foam "peanuts" to avoid using unnecessary amounts of potting soil. A dampened coffee filter topped the peanuts, and then the fun started for real; taking turns, they stirred enough water into bowls of potting soil to create the best dampened texture. Many preferred to use their hands to produce a good mix before removing plants from their tiny pots and placing them into the prepared larger pots.

Beaming about their finished products, they admired each other's results. When asked if they would like to give their pots some holiday sparkle, they hastily agreed; a hidden basket of water piks with red carnations and curly bows appeared from under a counter, finishing their creations.

Appreciation for their help goes to Master Gardeners Karen Ribble, Ann Rausch, and Lynn Cantrell, and to Rose Wooten, Children's Librarian. All are adept and adaptable, jumping into the activity without any directions needed; when doing a presentation, call on these members for expert assistance.



Pictures by Lynn Cantrell

## Class at Diann's Greenhouse May Be Held in June

RCMGA members have expressed interest in having another class this year at Diann's Greenhouse about herbs. We are trying to schedule a "Cooking with Herbs" class in June; we will visit with Diann's herbs (greenhouse and garden), discuss use of herbs in cooking, and create some dishes using fresh herbs. The cost of the class is

\$35 per person. We need at least 6 people (RCMGA members and/or guests) to schedule the class. *Please note the possible dates for the class:* June 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 12, 16, 19, 24, 26, 30. (Any Monday, one Thursday, four Friday's, two Saturdays)

If you are interested in attending this class, email [lcsqts@hughes](mailto:lcsqts@hughes).

net or reply to the message from the [robertsoncountymastergardeners@yahoo.com](mailto:robertsoncountymastergardeners@yahoo.com) by Friday, February 24th. Specify at least one date and one alternative date. We must have at least 6 people (RCMGA members and/or their guests) to schedule the class and must get on Diann's schedule by the end of February.

## RCMGA Survey 2017 Summary

This year the Master Gardeners participated in their first survey. We wanted to do the survey to gain insight and receive input from all our Master Gardeners on how to improve our Association. Here is a quick summary of some of the questions. We will talk more about the survey at this month's meeting.

Most folks who completed the survey are active members who attend meetings and participate in projects and events. The majority of our members enjoy reading the *Leaflet* and are willing to participate in writing some articles. On how to recruit new members, advertising on social media and word of mouth were two popular suggestions. Adding a FAQ section to our website and FB page was suggested to increase member participation in projects. Everyone who completed the survey wants to continue to receive RCMGA emails regarding meetings, projects etc. Members seem to enjoy all of our field trips and suggested going to South Central Growers and trips to members' gardens.

These were just a few responses from the multiple choice section of the survey. We will discuss some individual suggestions at the meeting. This was our first survey so naturally there's room for improvement. Our goal is to always have continuous improvement; we want your input, with or without a survey. Let's GROW together!



## Nashville Lawn and Garden Show Scheduled March 2-5

Many of us RCMGA members look forward each year to the Nashville Lawn & Garden Show which is at the Nashville Fairgrounds, Thursday, March 2nd—Sunday March 5th. Adult 1 day general admission is \$13.65; parking at the Fairgrounds is \$5. This year the theme is "Plant a Forest: Gardening for the Future". In addition to seeing the garden displays and chatting with horticultural society representatives, you will enjoy shopping for a variety of plants, bulbs, garden tools and garden art. Use this opportunity to find new sources of plants and of garden information.

Our favorite part of the Show is lecture series. This year you can learn about:

- **Using Endangered Plants in Your Backyard** by Mike Berkley, GroWild Inc.
- **Think Outside the Hive**, which covers solitary bees which are incredible pollinators
- **Three Public Rose Gardens** in Nashville by Ron Daniels, rosarian from Hendersonville
- **Subsoil** by Jeff Popen, the Barefoot Farmer, Biodynamic Farm
- **The Edible Landscape**, by Todd Breyer
- **A Gardener's Guide to Reducing Environmental Impact**, by Amy Dismukes

And there is much, much more including presentations by Davidson County Master Gardeners throughout the Show. Go to [www.nashvillelawnandgardenshow.com](http://www.nashvillelawnandgardenshow.com) for complete details and to plan your day(s) at the Show. Don't forget to report Continuing Education Hours at the Tennessee Master Gardeners web site for the lectures and presentations.

Photo Left: Mona Hitch, Jeanne Protsman, Donel Hinely and Karen Ribble at Mona's Urban Farm Salad-in-a-Jar party.

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## Upcoming Events

Mar 10 8am	Doris Milling Tree Give Away	Springfield
Feb 23 7pm	RCMGA Mtg. Pgm. Lasagna Gardening - Trina Fulton	UT Extension Office, Springfield
Mar 4	Nashville Weed Wrangle	www.weedwrangle nashville.org
Mar 23	RCMGA Mtg. Pgm. Invasive Insect Pests of TN Trees - Steve Powell	UT Extension Office, Springfield
April 27	RCMGA Mtg. Pgm. Member Plant Swap	UT Extension Office, Springfield
May 13	RCMGA Plant Sale	UT Extension Office, Springfield
May 20	Urban Gardening Fes- tival	Ellington Ag Center
May 25	RCMGA Mtg. Pgm. Aeroponics at TN Ur- ban Farm - Mona Hitch	UT Extension Office, Springfield