



## **President's Corner**

The January Italian dinner meeting was molto buono! We really had a good time and the food was outstanding. Thanks to everyone who participated, cooked and decorated.

At the meeting, we decided on some major projects for this year. This is a rundown of what we have to look forward to.

### **Tomato Taste Trial**

We decided to participate with the UT/TSU Extension in the performance of a tomato test trial that will compare six varieties of tomatoes grown three different ways. The taste tests will be held partly at the Fair. The tomato trial will also be the theme for our exhibits during the year.

The three tomato growing methods are in hay bales, in native soils and in raised beds. We will be growing nearly 300 plants. We will also be growing tomatoes in containers to take to our exhibits. A significant amount of preparation time will be needed to prepare the hay bales, which takes almost two weeks, to plow and amend the native soil, and to add compost and top off the existing raised beds. Our plan is not to wear out a small number of dedicated volunteers in this process, but instead, to have each volunteer work only once every ten days for perhaps three hours. This work will involve checking soil moisture and checking for insects, other pests and disease. Thomas will do the actual spraying.

If you would like to be a T-Vol (tomato volunteer), please contact either me, Thomas, Kelly or Pennie! We will be preparing a detailed schedule and calendar showing exactly when each T-Vol is scheduled. The calendar will be on the Master Gardener website.

### **Exhibits and Booths**

Because of the success we had at the Pumpkinfest booth last fall, we also decided to increase the number of exhibits that we do this year. We plan to be at the Strawberry Festival, Celebrate the Earth, Farm City Day, the Rhea County Fair and Pumpkinfest. At each exhibit, we will be preparing posters and bringing container grown plants to explain the different methods of tomato horticulture as well as bringing something to capture the attention of budding gardeners.

### **Master Gardener Building**

This year, we will be getting the gable ends closed and getting the soffits, fascia board and inside bathrooms completed. We will also add gutters which will be part of our rain water collection system. We will have more details and a sign-up sheet at the next Master Gardener meeting on February 18.

### **Service Projects**

We will be continuing our existing projects like the Rhea Medical Center courtyard and the Spring City Depot. We will also be planting crepe myrtles and constructing picnic tables at the fairgrounds. This should be a really enjoyable year with a lot of satisfying and fun projects. I am very thankful for all the Master Gardeners, interns, officers and Extension staff and the good work you are doing.

*John*

John Kueck  
Master Gardener Association President

## February Master Gardener Meeting

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Our next meeting will be held on **February 18 at 7:00 p.m.** at the **Ag Center in Evensville**. This meeting is being held in conjunction with the Master Gardener class on Building a Raised Bed. If you would like to attend the class, please arrive at 5:30 p.m. If you only plan to come for the business session, please arrive at 6:45 p.m. **We will have a short business meeting at 7:00 p.m. and do Child Protection Training.**

## January Master Gardener Meeting Minutes

The Rhea County Master Gardener Association meeting was called to order by President John Kueck. Introductions of those present were made with the names and the year of the class they attended. Several new interns were introduced. The meeting started with a potluck dinner that included current Master Gardeners and the new Class of 2016. The theme was Italian and the food was great! Those in attendance were Larry (V) & Peggy (V) Harrison, Pennie & Jim Hendrick, John & Louise Kueck, Larry Bryant, Ruth & Scott (V) Silvia, Bill (V) & Debbie (V) Ward, Bruce (V) & Dianne (V) Pfeiffer, Ed (V) & Helen (V) Morris, Karen Winters, Kris (V) & Judy Bancroft, Janet Collier, Paulette Bitner, Faith Young (V), Caren (V) & Bill Ruffner, Diane Bolt, Sheila & Sam Ray, Eddie & Patsy Starring, Linda (V) & John (V) Blevins, Jerry Lamb and Thomas Greenlee.

The minutes from the last meeting in November were approved. Dianne Pfeiffer moved to accept and Debbie Ward seconded. The motion carried.

There were no changes in the treasury, so no report was given. However DUES are DUE and can be paid to Diane Bolt in the amount of \$12 by current Master Gardeners. There is no cost to interns.

This year we have an opportunity to be involved in a tomato growing program with UT and the University of Wisconsin and six other Tennessee Master Gardener groups. Thomas, Jerry, John and Pennie gave information about the project. We will be growing tomatoes in a taste test trial that will involve six varieties and three methods of growing the tomatoes. We will use our raised beds, straw bales and native soil for growing and then do blind taste tests of the tomatoes to rate them on flavor. Data can be gathered with the public at such functions as the Rhea County Fair and Celebrate the Earth. We may even host a field day in Rhea County for other Master Gardener clubs to see our growing area and participate in the data gathering with taste testing. A score sheet will be devised for this purpose. John Kueck called for volunteers to help with the program. Volunteers will be on a 10 day rotating schedule to check the plants for moisture, pests, weeds, etc. those willing to help this summer were asked to put a V by their name on the sign in sheet.

Larry Bryant reported on the 30 x 60 foot building that the Master Gardeners are constructing as a dedicated Master Gardener training facility which will include a classroom. The building was started this past year. Currently it is a pole structure with the roof, a bathroom, shed and concrete floor. Funding is being provided at round \$5,000 a year and this next year the goal is to get the gable ends closed, the soffits, fascia board, inside bathrooms and gutters (which will collect rain water for the gardens) completed. The time frame is to have this done by the end of June as time and money permits. The next Master Gardener meeting will have a sign-up sheet for those who can work on this project.

Jerry Lamb provided a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the Rhea County Master Gardeners. The program was established by Jerry in Rhea County in August 2001 with the first class. Since then, eleven classes have been completed and 157 people have participated. A list of the past presidents was given.

Master Gardener activities have included the opportunity to attend field trips, Master Gardener Association meetings and Train the Trainer sessions. Several service projects have been

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undertaken over the years. These include working at the Ag Center to develop it by building the first structure, planting crepe myrtles, constructing picnic tables, developing a community garden (and giving the produce to our local food banks), and now building the dedicated Master Gardener building. Other projects focus on education of young people with Celebrate the Earth, Farm City Day and assisting the 4-H program. Master Gardeners have also had opportunities in our community to educate others through our project at the Rhea Medical Center courtyard and the Spring City depot.

The Master Gardeners have had community outreach programs such as “Ask the Gardeners” at Lowe’s, Pumpkinfest, Walmart and the Rhea County Fair. Information about the Master Gardener program is always provided at these events.

To sum up the Rhea County Master Gardener program, Jerry said the education, service and fellowship in the group is valuable. Around 90% of the participants are not native to Rhea County and have been able to meet others and provide a service to our community.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Linda Blevins invited all to come to the Four Square Garden Club meeting on Tuesday, February 2 at 6:30 p.m. at Paint the Town on the corner of Market and Main Street in Dayton. The program is the “Great American Bird Count”. Dianne Pfeiffer also announced the District III TN Federation of Garden Clubs upcoming “Day of Gardening” on February 27 in Chattanooga. Contact her for more information.

With there being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

*Faith*

Faith Young

Master Gardener Association Secretary



Little Italy night

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