



Kentucky Extension  
Master Gardener  
Fayette County

# Newsletter

## Winter 2022

Fayette County Master Gardener's  
Association

### *The Prez Sez:*

Dear Master Gardeners,

My husband, Kevin and I are about to move. Not far away, in fact just across Harrodsburg Road to the Village at Rabbit Run. The big change will be our yard. Right now we have almost a half-acre lot full of hydrangeas, astilbe, peonies, roses, hostas and so much more. We will now have no yard. They have restrictions about what we can plant in the mulch areas around our condo, so I figured out a few things that could come with us.

Another change is this is my last letter to everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each Board member. They have all contributed time, many thoughts, and hard work in helping to keep the FCMGA relevant. Also, thanks to everyone reading this for continuing to take part in the activities, social and learning, that the FCMG Board has offered. There will be an annual meeting in January 2023. Details are included in this newsletter. Please try to attend since we will elect new officers, share information about some changes based on your input and socialize.

Thank you to everyone for their support and commitment. I look forward to seeing each of you more often. Before I sign off let me offer you some advice that came from Erma Bombeck that every gardener should know. "Never go to a doctor whose plants have died."



*Happy Holidays,*

*Ann*

### Newsletter Committee

Susan Miller, Chair  
Mary Miller, Co-Chair  
Sharon Bennett

The color of springtime  
is in the flowers, the  
color of winter is in the  
imagination.

Terri Guillemets



### Do You Know?

What is the world's  
oldest fruit?

Look for the answer later  
in the Newsletter.

# Save the Date!

Annual FCMGA  
Meeting

January 22 at 4pm  
Extension Office  
1140 Harry Sykes  
Way



Join us for a wonderful gathering with food, fun, and conversation. More information will be coming out soon, so look for an email!

We'll be electing officers and voting on

Bylaws changes. The revised Bylaws will be distributed to members by email after the next Board meeting on December 14.

## Winter Sowing

by Sharon Bennett



Winter sowing is an easy way to start seeds using mini-greenhouses made from recycled plastic containers. The container protects the seeds from animals and harsh weather while exposure to cold breaks dormancy. Once warmer, longer days arrive the container provides a protected environment for germination and early season growth and hardening off the seedlings.

### ***What to sow***

A wide variety of plants can be winter sown. Perennials and cold-hardy vegetables, herbs and annuals can be sown from late December through February. Coneflowers, milkweeds, rudbeckias, coreopsis, asters, penstemons and monarda all do well when sown in January.

Check the seed packet for terms such as:

- self-sowing
- direct sow outside in fall or early spring
- cold-hardy
- perennial
- requires stratification

Warm weather vegetables and annuals like tomatoes, basil and peppers can be winter sown in March and April, but may require more care once they have germinated.

### ***Prepare the containers***

Clean, translucent one-gallon milk or water jugs are ideal for winter sowing. Make 4-5 slits in the bottom of the jugs. Remove and set aside the caps. Use a utility knife or scissors to cut around the container about 4 inches up from the bottom, leaving a couple of inches uncut just below the handle to form a hinge.

Moisten high-quality potting soil which does not contain moisture beads or fertilizer. Fill the bottom of the jugs with the pre-moistened potting mix to within an inch of the rim.

Plant the seeds at the depth recommended on the seed packet. Don't sow too densely or you will end up with a thick clump of seedlings that are difficult to separate. Since you moistened the mix, you don't have to water after planting.

Close the jugs and seal the cut edge all the way around with a weatherproof tape like duct tape or nylon reinforced tape. Label the containers both above and below the tape. Note the type of seeds planted and the date sown. You can write directly on the containers with permanent garden marker—Sharpie ink will fade and you will not be able to identify your plants.



If you have sown seeds for warmer weather plants, tape the caps to the outside of the jugs to use on colder days once the seeds have germinated.

Now your containers are ready for the great outdoors — even if it's freezing cold and snowing! Place them where they'll get light and rain or snow, but they won't blow away. Avoid the north side of buildings because they might not get enough sun there.

**Forget about the containers until spring.**

In early spring, you'll start to see sprouts in the containers. The seedlings need to be protected from the intense afternoon sun but will thrive in morning sun. As the weather warms up, you can remove the tape and flip back the tops on nice days but close them again at night.



You'll need to ensure the potting mix doesn't dry out by watering gently as needed. Feed the seedlings lightly with half strength fertilizer every other week.



Seedlings for perennials and cold hardy plants will be able to withstand frosts and slightly below-freezing temperatures if you flip the tops of the containers back down in the evening. When night temperatures stay above freezing you can leave them open permanently.

Seedlings of plants that are not cold hardy need special care during cold snaps in the spring. When a frost or light freeze is possible, be sure to flip down the top part of the container, place the saved caps back on and cover the containers with a blanket. This will help them stay warm enough overnight. In case of a very hard freeze, put the containers in a heated, indoor space overnight.

Once the seedlings are several inches tall, you can transplant them into small pots so they can continue growing and getting stronger. Cold hardy plants can go directly into the ground once the soil can be easily worked in the spring. Wait until after the risk of frost or freezing temperatures has passed to plant out warm weather plants.

And now relish the feeling of accomplishment that goes along with your success.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWS**

The Board of Directors met on Sept. 14, 2022, to continue our work on Bylaw revisions. These will be distributed prior to our annual meeting on January 22, 2023. The Board also discussed the possibility of holding a meeting at which members can propose volunteer projects. We will work further on this idea and coordinate with Jamie, but hope to make it easier for people to get their needed volunteer hours. To enter your volunteer hours for 2022, go to <https://fayette.ca.uky.edu/mg>

**Answer to Do You Know? The fig is the world's oldest fruit.**

## Extension Gardens

The Extension Gardens had another successful year. The vegetable garden was headed up by Jake Karnes and met on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The garden produced 800 pounds of produce donated to the Hope Center. All three areas of the Extension Garden are eager for more volunteers. Thanks to Jake for the photos!



The garden has a wide variety of vegetables



Tom Malone examines the grafted tomato, noting its extensive roots



Dave Uckotter inspects the turnips



Faith Fiene (L) and Susan Robertson (R) compare two tomato plants



## Extension Flower Garden by Ric McGee

This year’s Extension flower garden suffered from the lack of an official team leader for much of the season. Fortunately, most of the plants in the three beds (next to the vegetable garden off the parking lot) are perennials, and will hopefully get more constant and organized attention when they begin to reappear in 2023.

From the parking lot edge, past the vegetable garden, the right rear bed of the flower garden features plants for pollinators and has been designated a certified monarch waystation. Although its most visible plants at this writing are two hardy Chicago figs, other plants in the bed include coreopsis, heliopsis, Firetail Mountain Fleeceflower, False sunflower, Flat Top aster, Solar Cascade goldenrod and butterfly bush. The bed is “connected” to a second long perennial bed by a wooden arbor that often supports hyacinth bean vines, but this year, thanks to Jane Peters, served as a form for a climbing zucchini squash plant. The back left bed is home to a fast-spreading Tatarian daisy, Little Joe Pye weed, Culver’s root, hibiscus, Short-toothed Mountain Mint, peonies, phlox, sedum and lobelia.

The front perennial bed includes a large tree that provides some relief from the heat in summer months and shade for a garden bench. At the right side of the bed is a ring of Millennial alliums, sedum and anemone; at the other is a compost bin. In between are more perennials-- among others, hibiscus, monarda, butterfly weed, peonies, sedum and Siberian iris.

Major duties required of volunteers in the flower garden are watering, trimming, thinning, weeding and edging. I encourage both new and old Master Gardeners to consider being a part of this work group, as a little time spent goes a long way. Another benefit is that you’ll be close to parking, restrooms and several always-helpful and very gracious garden experts who work inside the building!



The garden at rest for the winter



## Extension Herb Garden by Susan McDaniel

The herb garden at the Extension was bustling almost every Monday morning during the season as a dedicated group of master gardeners clipped, pruned, weeded and watered (and watered and watered) to keep the herbs growing and looking their best! Thank you to Sharon Curry, Bev Freeman, Marilyn Gall, Kathy Heineman, Vange Lear, Sarah Lee, Nancy Davis, Susan Miller and Pat Petro for all your hard work! See you in the spring!

Flourishing rosemary plant



## Sunflowers

by Susan McDaniel

**I let squirrels plant my sunflowers and here's what happened.**

to have squirrels, chipmunks and other critters devour them at every stage.

We also scatter sunflower seeds to feed ground-feeding birds and, by default, those same ever-resourceful squirrels and chipmunks. Which means each year our yard ... and garden beds ... and pots ... and raised beds... are peppered with golf ball-sized groupings of sunflower sprouts.



I always thought tree and ground squirrels were storing those seeds for winter, and that the sprouting was just unfortunate timing for them. That is, until I decided this year to just let the little varmints plant all my sunflowers for me. And here's what I discovered: If I plant seeds, they dig them up and eat them; if they plant seeds, they leave them alone to sprout. If my seeds sprout or I plant small seedlings, they eat them or – most hurtful – jerk up the small plants and toss them aside roots and all for seemingly no reason; if their seeds sprout, they leave them alone to grow!

If my seeds happen – by some miracle – to make it to 2- to 3-foot-tall plants or if I plant large transplants, they munch down the leaves and nip off any potential flower buds – leaving scraggly half-devoured plants that quickly push out sad, puny flowers (which are also devoured). If THEIR plants get to be that tall, THEY LEAVE THEM ALONE TO GROW TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL! Those little stinkers aren't burying seeds for winter, they're farming sunflowers! And right now they are THOROUGHLY enjoying their bountiful harvest! By ceding sunflower control over to them (with some placement editing from me), I *finally* got my yard full of sunflowers – with no work or stress! And the squirrels, chipmunks, groundhogs, rabbits, bees, and birds got theirs too.

I have never had such a beautiful stand of sunflowers. You can bet we'll be adding variety to the sunflower seeds we scatter next year.

## Garden Tours



After a very successful tour of the Unitarian Universalist Church Garden, the Board is hoping to schedule more garden tours, but we need your ideas. If you'd like to lead a tour or suggest a location, contact Mary Miller at [marykrautt@gmail.com](mailto:marykrautt@gmail.com).