



# Master Gardeners Hear it ...though the Grapevine

UT Extension The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

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## President's Letter

## MASTER GARDENERS OF HAMILTON COUNTY

When I think of winter I think of a slower pace, of staying out of the cold and snuggling by the fire with a blanket and a cup of hot chocolate. I thought once the leaves dropped and the flowers faded I could relax for a few months, but...noooo, not at my house. Mike has us bundled up and outside, cutting back, trimming, moving plants, adding flower beds and hardscape. We are also putting in a pond. Unfortunately, we are still trying to find that perfect spot. A decision will have to be made soon, because David, from Ponds and Plants will

be digging a hole somewhere in our yard in 2 less than two weeks. Luckily, winter has given me the opportunity to see the yard from a different perspective. There are fewer distractions in the garden with color and texture temporarily gone. You can really see the "bones" of the yard. Now is the perfect time to re-evaluate the look and flow of the gardens. Make sure plants and hardscape are balanced. Is there too much or not enough? Does it look like a yard sale or is it an empty landscape?

I know that now I will be able to easily see where the pond will fit into our yard. The hard part will be getting Mike to see it, too! So, go take a look outside. Good "bones" means a fantastic looking yard year round. Just don't forget the hot chocolate!

And don't forget about the Master Gardener Christmas Party at Central Baptist Church (ABBA's house), Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm. Bring a side dish or appetizer and a gift for the gift exchange. We always have a great time!

See you there.

Stephanie Payne

## December Christmas Meeting

**The Master Gardener Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at ABBA's house from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm.**

Don't forget – everyone

bring a gift for secret Santa gift exchange (limit \$15). We had a great time last year, so make plans to be there!

Reminder...the Christmas

Party takes the place of the December Membership meeting. If you have any questions, you can also contact Stephanie Payne or Tom Stebbins.

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## Upcoming Events

•The Master Gardener Christmas Party will be held on Thursday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at ABBA's house from 6:30 pm to 10:00 pm.



•The January 2008 Membership meeting has been moved to Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 pm at the North River Civic Center.

Margie Hunter will be speaking on Native Plants (she is very well known and an excellent speaker and author). A \$5.00 donation is asked for, with all proceeds going to the Chattanooga Area Food Bank. It is open to the public. The MGs will have a short meeting at 6:00 pm before the presentation at 6:30 pm, For directions to the North River Civic Center contact Tom Stebbins. Tom will be sending out an e-mail with more information.

•We are forming a 2008 Board Member Nominating committee. Please contact Stephanie Payne with any Master Gardeners you would like to nominate. Please get their permission first. No surprises!

## DECEMBER 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13 6:30pm Christmas Party	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



## JANUARY 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 6:00 Board Meeting	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 6pm, Member- ship Meeting	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## Gardening News:

### Real vs. Fake Trees

If you want a tree for the holiday, the experts at [Grist](#) and [TreeHugger](#) say it's actually better to buy a cut real Christmas tree than an artificial tree.

Why? In a word, plastics. Fake trees are made of [polyvinyl chloride](#) (PVC). Producing this type of plastic creates a lot of pollution, and PVC is [difficult](#) to recycle.

Plus, [lead](#) has been found in PVC. According to a [report](#) (PDF) in the Journal of Environmental Health, lead levels are higher in older artificial trees. You've probably heard about [lead in children's toys](#), so just imagine the kiddos hanging around lead-tainted branches of your fake Christmas tree. Not a merry scene.

[Farmed](#) Christmas trees are ultimately a renewable resource. Growing trees absorb carbon dioxide, and after the holidays, the trees can be recycled into mulch. Check [Earth 911](#) to see where to take your dead tree after the 25th.

What about a live tree? This is often promoted as the ultimate eco-friendly holiday option. Well, it's not that simple. First, you have to live in the right climate to plant a tree after Christmas. If the ground is [frozen](#) outside, you can't do it.

Then, you can only keep a [live tree](#) indoors for a few days, either 4 to 10, depending on the type of tree. You can't have this tree up after Thanksgiving and around until New Year's, or you'll kill it.

Some types of live trees can be kept outside in [containers](#) for a year or two. Others grow fast and must be planted in the ground sooner. Either way, this isn't a long-term solution to your Christmas decorations -- what do you do the following year? Pretty soon, the tree won't fit in the house.



Also, you must carefully consider how much space you have in your yard to plant trees. Remember, these trees may grow up to [60-feet tall](#).

So, the most [practical solution](#) for earth-friendly folks who celebrate Christmas is to look for a locally grown tree. Ask if the farm uses [integrated pest management](#) instead of tons of chemicals.

If you can, find a cut-your-own [Christmas tree farm](#). It's good family fun too.



## Tom's Tidbits for December 2007 Outstanding Master Gardener Year for 2007!

The Master Gardeners of Hamilton County just keep marching on. They are doing some great things in the Chattanooga Area.

The County Fair project this year was over the top for excellence. The Japanese Garden theme was a perfect choice. Over fifty Master Gardeners participated and it unified the group in so many good directions. I think it introduced many basic concepts to the average gardeners. It showed that a great garden can be created in a small space. The continuing drought will force people to think smaller. Good planning helps unify the hardscape and plants. I personally like the use of rocks. They look great and need very little water.

The Siskin Children's Institute Garden was also very successful again. This is the fourth or fifth year for this tremendous effort. I was only able to help with the Leaf Day project myself. I was the 'Leaf Man' for a day. As the story goes 'Only the wind knows where the leaf man will go'. Other established lesson plans include 'Worm Day', 'Compost Day', 'Pumpkin Day' and several others. I saw many of the same children from year to

year. They still seem excited with the different activities. I hope many other Master Gardeners will sign up for one or more days next year.

We were honored to build a small garden behind the ABBA Church on Hixson Pike. This is a dedication garden for the daughter of one of our Master Gardeners. It is in a nice location for anyone to sit and feel the peace and love that went into this project.

The Beginner/Newcomer class has been going for about fourteen years. It has received regional and National attention as an ideal educational program organized and conducted entirely by Master Gardeners. Our Master Gardeners rally each year to pull together the many details needed for a successful class of about 50 students. Many people sign-up just for the door prizes and great food provided. It is truly a garden welcome wagon for the city.

The Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden was a project created in 2006. It is basically a gift to the City of Chattanooga. It is on the river side between the two TN Aquarium buildings. Tour-

ists can't miss it. I love to show it off to friends and family that visit. It has become one of our prime projects. Workdays commonly bring 15-20 volunteers to maintain it. A trellis was added this year to make it even more spectacular.

Many of our Master Gardeners have developed outstanding partnerships with the Chattanooga Area Food Bank, Reflection Riding Arboretum, The Chattanooga Nature Center, Crabtree Farms and many other non-profits in the area.

Finally, Thank-you to the great leaders and committee members who keep the projects rolling, the newsletters written, the hours tabulated and the social events tasty.

We are constantly looking for ways to 'make a difference' in our great Tennessee county.

What a great year we had in 2007.

Thank-you for your dedication to the Master Gardener program.

Happy Holidays

**For Masterful Gardening  
Tom**

## Gardening News:

### USDA touts 'power trees'

Scientists at the U.S. National Arboretum have spent the last 4 years studying trees that can stand up to the rigors of urban environments. The Power Trees Project identified cultivars that exhibited pest resistance and tolerance for environmental extremes. Trees that made the cut include Ulmus 'Frontier,' Prunus 'Dream Catcher' and Lagerstroemia 'Natchez.'

### More than a billion trees planted in 2007

The United Nations' [Billion Tree campaign](#) met its goal in 2007, the U.N. announced. Ethiopia and Mexico were leaders in the campaign to plant more than 1 billion trees this year, according to a U.N. report. The mass tree planting was inspired by Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai. The effort was spurred by a desire to mitigate effects of pollution and environmental deterioration.

### Development makes solar energy affordable

A method for manufacturing low-cost, [high-efficiency solar panels](#) will be ready for mass production by the end of 2008. The technology was developed by W.S. Sampath, a Colorado State University professor. The panels will be produced at less than \$1 per watt. He developed a continuous, automated manufacturing process for solar panels using glass coating with a cadmium telluride thin film instead of the standard high-cost crystalline silicon. The cost to the consumer may be as low as \$2 per watt, about half the current cost of solar panels. Also, this solar technology isn't tied to a grid.

### Learn about cutting-edge cut flower trends

Just as products in the fashion, home decor and cuisine industries go in and out of style, so do flowers. To help industry members and consumers stay on top of cutting-edge floral trends, California Cut Flower Commission and Flower PR launched an electronic version of the [American Floral Trends Forecast](#) 2008-2009. The forecast offers ideas for combining colors, types of flowers and accent pieces to holistic designs that reflect broader lifestyle trends.



One kind word can warm three winter months.

~Japanese Proverb

### More photos needed for the Newsletter!!

Send Gina Turley, the Newsletter Editor, your favorite picture from your garden and have it featured on the first page of the newsletter. E-mail all pictures to [Leobishop@comcast.net](mailto:Leobishop@comcast.net)

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[http://  
mastergardeners.tennessee.edu/](http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu/)

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**2007-2008**

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Tom Stebbins

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