

The TUCKALEECHIE GARDEN CLUB GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of the Tuckaleechee Garden Club July 2026 | Edition No. 2



President's Note: Welcome to July!

Greetings, gardeners! July has arrived in full force, and I hope you've all made it through the heatwave with your plants—and your spirits—intact. Thanks to the steady summer rain, our gardens are flourishing, and the Heritage Kitchen Garden in Townsend is looking especially vibrant.

If you haven't stopped by recently, the garden beside the Davis Cabin at the Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center is bursting with life. It's one of our club's proudest projects, connecting modern gardeners with the traditions of the 1830s farmstead.

We're also in for a treat this month. Our guest speaker, **Donna Stinnett**, will present "*Birthing a Nation*," a fascinating look at the history represented at the Heritage Center, the role our region played in early America, and how gardening supported families as the nation fought for independence. It's a perfect blend of history and horticulture.

As a reminder of our July meeting details:

Tuesday, July 21st, 10:00 am

Guest speaker: Donna Stinnett, "Birthing a Nation"

Design Theme: 'Life at the Cabin'

Design Type: Still Life Design (HB p 76). Design limits 32" H x 24" W & D

Hostesses: Wanda Taylor & Janie Bitner

Judges for Horticulture & Design: Diane Rohtert & Linda Morton

Example of Still Life Floral Design:

Still Life Design (NGC HB p 76)

Chapter 7

- O. **Still Life Design** – a traditional or creative non-abstract grouping of functional and realistic objects and plant material with a theme.
1. Objects are more dominant and more important to the theme than plant material.
 2. Plant material may or may not represent a floral design.



It's blueberry season, and I hope you're all enjoying it as much as I am — whether in pies, muffins, or simply by picking those sweet berries right off the bush. Blueberries are not only delicious, but they're also beautiful shrubs, which is why I've chosen them as July's **Ornamental Plant of the Month**.

To help streamline the business portion of next week's meeting, you'll find the **agenda**, **Treasurer's Report**, **June Meeting Minutes**, and a **draft of proposed bylaw changes** attached. We will vote on the bylaw revisions at the meeting.

Please remember to bring your **TGC Yearbook**, as we'll be updating and replacing several pages at the meeting.

And a special announcement — Theresa Schehr will demonstrate our **new TGC Website** at the meeting. I hope you've had a chance to explore it at [Tuckaleechee Garden Club](#). The members-only portal (password: **TGC@1983**) now houses our yearbook, past minutes, budget documents, monthly treasurer's reports, volunteer and administrative hours forms, expense forms, and Design & Horticulture class materials. A heartfelt thank-you to **Theresa Schehr**, chair of our Communications Committee, for building and launching this wonderful resource and making it so easy to use.

Finally, I invite you to enjoy a delightful new PBS series, *Follow the Blooms* — “a series that's making flowers famous.” Season One is now airing nationwide. You can watch online at [PBS Follow the Blooms](#) or check your local listings.

We have a wonderful meeting planned for next week, and I look forward to seeing everyone. Bring a friend — July is a wonderful month to share our love of gardening.



Sue Hanmilton
TGC President



Upcoming Events & Meetings

Mark your calendars! We have some fun important gatherings lined up:

- July 21st, Tuesday, 9:00-9:45 before the meeting. Faithscape Workday at TUMC.
- July 22nd, Wednesday, 8:00-10:00. Heritage Kitchen Garden Workday at GSM Heritage Center.
- July 23rd, Thursday, 9:00-10:00. Kidscape Workday at Camp Wesley Woods.
- July 30th, Thursday, 10:00-11:30. Make flower arrangements for Townsend Alumni Reunion at Diane Rohtert's home.
- August 18th, Tuesday, 10:00. TGC Monthly Meeting at Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church. The program will be: “How to Choose, Plan, & Care for Dogwoods” with Dr. Mark Windham, retired UT professor of plant pathology as our guest speaker. After the program, a potluck luncheon will be served. Guests are welcome to attend the meeting.



July's Gardening Checklist

The summer garden is pretty much our reward for all the hard work from March through June. During these lazy warm days, the perennial and annual gardens are strutting their colors and the harvest of the first tomatoes and cucumbers means BLT's, thick juicy sandwiches and robust salads...hmm. Following are some tips for your July gardening calendar:

- **Cutflowers:** This is a great month to watch for cutflowers to enjoy inside your home as well as those to dry for everlastings. Hydrangeas make excellent fresh and dried cut flowers.
- **Deadheading:** Continue to deadhead (remove dead flowers) your annuals and perennials to encourage profuse blooming.
- **Bulb Catalogs:** Start perusing bulb catalogs and get your order in soon to ensure you get your selections.
- **Hard Prune:** Tall, fall-flowering perennials such as swamp sunflower, joe-pye weed, iron weed, mums, and asters can be cut back by one-third to one-half by the end of July to reduce their ultimate height and prevent them from lodging (falling over).
- **Watering:** July typically will be the driest month yet so keep watering as needed and especially watch plants in containers.
- **Sunflowers:** You can still direct-seed sunflowers. Stagger their planting by every week or two through July, and you will have flowers until frost.
- **Harvest Veggies Regularly:** This keeps plants productive. Harvest vegetables at their peak of maturity for maximum nutrition and quality.
- **Cover Fruit Trees:** It may be necessary to cover fruit trees with netting to protect fruit from the birds.
- **Prune Blackberries and Raspberries:** These berries need to be pruned after their harvest is ended. Remove the dying, fruiting canes and tip back the vigorous, new growth two or three times to form a dense hedge for greater fruit production.
- **Prep for the Fall Garden:** That's right! It may seem odd to start a fall garden in the summertime, but you need to get plants started in time for harvests before the first freeze. Late July or early August set out broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower transplants. Also sow seeds of lettuce, collards, kale, and spinach.

🍅 This Month's Garden Scoop: Tomatoes by Debbie Dickie

What to do with all the tomatoes coming in now?? Your neighbors are hiding from you when they see you drive up with a bag, so you've had to resort to leaving them in the mailbox and hightailing it out of there! Here's a delicious solution:



Summer Spaghetti Recipe

4-6 servings

6 cups diced homegrown tomatoes

3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 large red onion, diced small

1/2 large sweet pepper, diced small

1/4-1/2 cup minced fresh basil

2-4 TBS minced fresh oregano

Salt & pepper

1/2 cup sliced olives, optional

Large drizzle of good quality olive oil

10-12 oz uncooked spaghetti

Freshly grated parmesan cheese

Add everything together in large bowl except olive oil, parmesan cheese and spaghetti. Stir well.

Add a large drizzle of good olive oil to taste.

Let sit at room temperature for 60 min to marinate.

Cook spaghetti according to directions and spoon room temp sauce over hot spaghetti.

Top with freshly grated parmesan cheese.

Serve with grilled Italian sausage and garlic bread.

Perfect for a hot summer day when tomatoes are running rampant

Member Spotlight & Photo of the Month



Garden members Jolene Martin (L) and Anna Gaultney (R) are pictured helping with the landscape.

One of our newest community service projects is 'Faithscape,' the landscape beds in front of the Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church, the church where we have our garden club meetings. Diane Rohtert heads up this project and has had the vision for transforming the church's landscape into one which is vibrant, lush, and full of color. Note the dramatic difference in the church's landscape from just a year ago! There is no doubt that gardeners are behind the church's new landscape!



Before (above) and after photos of the new Faithscape landscape beds!





Cades Cove Picnic Area Community Service Project. Jerry and Wanda Faulkner oversee this project. Last month TGC members weeded the native plant beds in the Cades Cove Picnic Area. Park visitors are taking note of the labelled native plants in the beds, and the Park Service is appreciative of the work.

No additional work is currently scheduled. We will probably schedule a workday in late fall just to clean up.

Garden Tip of the Month: Don't Forget Some Cutflowers!

by Kris Jedlicki



Flowers are beautiful for everyone to enjoy in the garden, but don't forget to cut a few and bring inside. Fresh blooms in your home let you enjoy their beauty up close and encourages many flowering plants to produce even more blooms.

To get the most out of your flowers, recut them underwater in your kitchen or utility sink. This forces any air bubbles out of the stem which may have happened when you cut the stems and they cause stems to quickly wilt and collapse...even in water. Also, cut your stems at a 45-degree angle which exposes more surface area to absorb water. If you don't have any commercial floral preservative on hand, adding 2 tablespoons of sugar and 2 tablespoons of apple cider vinegar will naturally feed your flowers while also suppressing bad microbes. Change the water in your vase every 2-3 days and add fresh floral preservative.



Basil, Basil, Basil - the perfect summertime herb!

by Sue Hamilton and Diane Rohtert

Growing basil provides a constant supply of fresh, flavorful supply for cooking, acts as an excellent companion plant in the garden, and is simple and rewarding to grow. It thrives both indoors on a sunny windowsill and outdoors, offering aesthetic greenery, fragrant foliage, and harvests that last for months.

Culinary and Health Benefits

- **Premium Flavor:** Growing your own ensures you have access to fresh, vibrant leaves that taste far superior to dried or store-bought versions. It is a staple for pestos, salads, pastas, and pizza.
- **Nutritional Value:** Basil is rich in antioxidants, Vitamins A, K, and C, and contains eugenol, which offers anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Versatile Varieties:** Beyond sweet basil, you can grow lemon basil for drinks, Thai basil for stir-fries, or purple basil for visual flair. Many other selections exist which can all be fun to grow and experiment with.

Garden Benefits

- **Companion Planting:** Basil is famous for pairing well with tomatoes and peppers. Its strong aroma can help deter pests, while some gardeners believe it even improves the flavor of neighboring tomatoes.
- **Pollinator Magnet:** If you allow some of your basil to bolt (flower), the tiny blooms are incredibly attractive to bees and other beneficial pollinators.

Ease of Growth

- **Beginner-Friendly:** Basil requires very little maintenance besides adequate sunlight, regular watering, and well-drained soil.
- **Continuous Harvests:** Harvesting by pinching or pruning the top stems not only gives you fresh leaves to use, but actually forces the plant to grow bushier and yield more.

Here is a recipe for a summertime Caprese Salad:



Ripe Heirloom Tomatoes from your garden

Fresh Mozzarella cheese

Fresh Italian Basil from your garden

Dressing: 1 tablespoon of Olive oil, 2 tablespoons of Balsamic vinegar, 1 tablespoon of honey, 2 tablespoons of sliced Italian basil, a pinch of salt and a pinch of pepper. Mix well.

Laying slices of tomatoes (about 1/4 inches), tucking in slices of mozzarella (similar size), and a leave of Italian basil between tomatoes on serving plate.

Pour dressing evenly just before serving.



Weed Warfare: by Diane Rohtert

July is the month of WEEDS! While you are weeding, watch for some heat-loving flower seedlings like pineapple sages, rudbeckia, coneflower, and perennial sunflowers. It's a great time to thin them, transplant them or put them in pots with potting soil. They will continue to grow and flower for you when most of flowers die down with heat.



Shrub of the Month: Blueberry by Sue Hamilton



I love blueberries, but I also love the blueberry plant itself as a beautiful shrub for our landscapes. They really are the ultimate "edible ornamentals," offering incredible four-season beauty while producing abundant berries. They provide spring bell-shaped blossoms, lush summer foliage, fiery autumn leaves, and wintery red twigs, seamlessly blending food production with high-end landscape design. Many new, compact, and self-pollinating varieties are on the market, expanding the use of blueberries as ornamental plants in our landscapes. Check out this [UT Blueberry Publication](#) for the best

selections for our region and tips for growing success. Here is why you should add these hardworking shrubs to your landscape:

- **Four Seasons of Interest:** Spring brings cascades of white and pink bell-shaped flowers. In summer, the glossy green leaves are heavy with plump, vibrant berries. Fall transforms the bush with stunning fiery red, orange, and gold foliage. In winter, the bare, red-tinged twiggy branches provide showy, architectural structure to your garden.
- **Versatile Design Potential:** Shrubs like the 'Sunshine Blue' (a dwarf variety) or 'Bountiful Blue' can be planted as refined privacy hedges, used as foundational shrubs near a patio, or mixed directly into perennial beds.
- **Eco-Friendly & Wildlife-Friendly:** The spring blooms are magnet for native bees and pollinators. Shrubs also serve as crucial host plants for butterfly caterpillars, while the dense branch structure provides excellent nesting sites for local birds.
- **Companion Planting:** Because they thrive in highly acidic, well-draining soil, blueberries pair beautifully with classic landscape favorites like azaleas, rhododendrons, hydrangeas, and camellias.

To make blueberries thrive in your landscape, ensure you plant them in a sunny location with rich, acidic soil (pH 4.5 – 5.5) and mulch generously to lock in moisture. For the best fruit production, experts recommend planting at least two different varieties close together for cross-pollination.



The 'Pink Lemonade' variety pictured here is a new dwarf and self-pollinating selection with striking pink berries. Delicious berries but also so beautiful in the landscape!

Connect With Us!

Be sure to check out our new website at <https://www.tuckaleecheegardenclub.com> or find us on Facebook and Instagram

Next Meeting: Jul 21, 2026 10:00 AM at Tuckaleechee United Methodist Church.