

# THE LEAFLET

October 2009

A NEWSLETTER FOR, ABOUT AND BY ROBERTSON COUNTY GARDENERS

## UPCOMING GARDEN EVENTS

Oct. 22—MG Club Meeting @ County Ag.  
Extension Office (7pm)

Nov. 1—Deadline for Recording MG Volunteer  
Hours

Thursday 7:30pm or Sunday 9:30am on NPT Channel 8: "Volunteer Gardener"

Saturday 5-5:30am on WTVF Channel 5: "P. Allen Smith Gardens"

Saturday 7-8am 1430 on WPLN-AM: "You Bet Your Garden"



## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

By Ursula Otto

This is a time of great opportunities for us. At our next meeting we will discuss many ways you can take part in new endeavors.

Teaching is rewarding and passing on the Master Gardener information that you have to young people is a great honor. We have a chance to do just that in the coming year. It has been brought to my attention that several boys and girls from the 4-H Club are very interested in becoming Junior Master Gardeners. The UT Master Gardener website has lots of information on that subject. I will bring the basic information to the next meeting.

The Bird Sanctuary is still an unfinished project. We also need volunteers for the Fundraiser and Garden Walk. For the Springfield Farmers Market project, we have a number of outstanding volunteers.

As a team we have accomplished much in the past two years. I am certain we will excel in every new project. I am available anytime if you have questions. My email address is: [ursulamotto@netzero.com](mailto:ursulamotto@netzero.com).

## ENTER M.G. VOLUNTEER HOURS NOW!

Please complete your entry of service hours by November 1<sup>st</sup>. This will allow time to enter Master Gardener service time into the annual reports that are submitted in December. Volunteer hours can be entered "on-line" through the website, [mastergardener.Tennessee.edu/mg\\_resources](http://mastergardener.Tennessee.edu/mg_resources). Your userid is your mail address; call the county extension office if you have forgotten your password. Alternatively, you can request a "Volunteer Service Report", from the Extension office, complete it, and return it to the Extension office. The Volunteer Service Report also can be printed from the Tennessee Master Gardener Website.

You are encouraged to enter your hours directly on the web site. Suggested site enhancements for Master Gardener's usability and reporting have not yet received attention. However, the following

explanations may alleviate some frustrations with your entries on the "My Volunteer Hours" page:

**Project name:** A drop-down list will appear only if your agent has entered a list. Do enter a project name.

**Date of Service:** The current date automatically appears. You can change it but cannot specify a range of dates, which is the best option for many projects.

## MASTER GARDENER MEETING

Thursday, October 22nd 7pm @ Ag. Ext. Office

Program: Composting with Worms:

The Ultimate Kitchen Scrap Recyclers

By Janice Thompson

## GARDEN WALK NOMINATED IN SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

A team of Robertson County Master Gardeners nominated the Springfield Garden Walk in the Search for Excellence (SFE) program. The SFE recognizes Master Gardener volunteer work and is an International Master Gardener program. Fitting into the Community Service category for SFE recognition, the nomination highlights the community's pride and participant's knowledge garnered at the May 2009 event.

## OBSERVING THE BIRDS



Bird spotters identified over forty species of birds on a sunny, crisp Saturday morning at Travis Price Park earlier this month. Ornithologist Tony Lance, leader of the walk, said that as many as 70 species have been observed at the park during peak migration. Identifying the bird songs, observing their flight patterns, and practicing significant patience, walkers observed four kinds of woodpeckers, four kinds of wrens, vultures, hawks, finches, plovers, and cowbirds to name just a few.

The Springfield park bird walks have ended for this season but are planned again during Spring (April) migration. If you are interested in taking any bird walks, do your homework! Bird watchers, especially novices, benefit from being able to identify bird songs and in taking a familiar bird book on the walks. Many birds, especially active species, are “heard and glimpsed”, not “sighted”; so pictures, even imperfect ones in books, and recognizing their songs are essential to identifying the birds.

Here are a few bird facts we learned on the walk:

- Large birds of prey that we see in Tennessee are vultures, not buzzards. Buzzard is a term for a European bird of prey not found in the U.S. Watch the flight pattern to identify black and turkey vultures: turkey vultures mostly glide but will flap their wings several times as needed. The flight pattern of black vultures is a repetitive “flap, flap, glide”.
- Some Cedar Wax Wings, a sociable, robin-size brown bird with bright red and yellow accents, are year-round residents in Middle-Tennessee. They are not just part of the migrating flocks we observe in early spring that love to consume holly and hawthorn berries.
- Crows or ravens are regarded by many as harbingers of disasters. Residents of Mumbai, India noted a significant increase in the birds flying over the city the day before the terrorist attacks last year. Although we observed several crows in Travis Price Park, we did not judge them to be unusual in numbers.

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## Chartwell My Favorite English Garden

By  
Debbie  
Davidson



Chartwell is situated in the British countryside of Kent and was home to the Churchill family for forty years. Winston Churchill first saw the property in 1921 and fell in love with it, completing the purchase of the 80 acre estate in 1922 for the grand sum of \$10,000. The lovely gardens command unrivalled views over the Weald of Kent and contain lakes, a water garden, Lady Churchill’s rose garden, and the Golden Rose walk that was given to the Churchill’s on the golden wedding anniversary by their children. Viewed from the terrace above is a stunning sight all through the summer and early fall, when the 32 varieties of yellow and golden roses are in flower.

Nearby is the wendy house built for Churchill’s daughter, Mary Soames.

Churchill was an accomplished bricklayer, and many of the walls surrounding the garden are his own handiwork. At his peak, he was said to lay 90 bricks an hour, and spend four hours a day at it, in which he took no small pride. In one wall, he laid a tablet stating, “The greatest part of this wall was built between the years 1925 and 1932 by Winston with his own hands.”

You can also visit Churchill’s studio, filled with dozens of his canvases, mainly landscapes and still life. The studio is arranged so that it seems its master might return at any moment. A Scotch and water set near the easel is a nice touch.

After Churchill’s death the estate was bought by the National Trust, and the gardens have been restored beautifully. It was Lady Churchill’s request that visitors would get the impression that the family was still there. The kitchen garden continues to produce vegetables for the on-site restaurant and the house is filled with flowers from the cutting garden.



*Debbie & Gene  
Davidson at  
Chartwell*

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## COMPOSTS, MULCHES, AND LEAVES!

Composed or mulched leaves provide outstanding organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Unfortunately, they still must be raked or blown from your garden or lawn to prepare the mulch or compost. Leaving a thick layer of leaves can create a condition that leads to the rotting of the grass or perennials beneath. So, begin by gathering the leaves into a pile.

Once the leaves are collected, you can use them as mulch, or compost them before adding to your garden. Regardless, the first step is to chop or shred your leaves. If you do not have a shredder, attach a bagger to your lawn mower before you begin cutting the leaf-strewn area. You may also run the lawn mower through the gathered-leaf pile. Direct the mower’s discharge in one direction so that the shredded leaves are placed in a pile.

Once shredded, you may place them in your garden as mulch immediately; make mulch for your spring garden by breaking them down slightly over winter; or convert the leaves into compost. If you use the

leaves immediately, do not place an excessive layer directly on the crowns of herbaceous perennial flowers. If you are extending the season for root vegetables such as beets or carrots, you may use a heavy layer of shredded leaves to cover them. You should add some slow release nitrogen fertilizer to the garden in the spring as the process of leaf decomposition may rob the soil of nitrogen.

In making mulch for your spring garden, you break down the leaves only slightly over the winter months. Add the shredded leaves to a compost bin in 12-18 inch layers. On top of each layer, add a handful of urea, ammonium nitrate, bone meal, or a layer of grass clippings. Then mix the leaves and nitrogen additive with water; you should wet but not saturate the leaves. Repeat the layers until the bin is full. Cover your mulch bins with tarp or plastic over the winter. Though not imperative, it's a good practice to mix your leaf bins in early spring.

You can compost the shredded leaves alone or with other organic matter. The easiest, though the longest process, is to place the shredded leaves in a wire bin and leave them for about two years, turning them occasionally. Leaves can be used effectively as a component in a compost pile that contains a variety of organic matters that are rich in carbon and nitrogen. Leaves can provide the carbon component of the pile. Good nitrogenous materials include grass clippings, uncooked fruit and vegetable scraps, eggshells, and coffee grounds. Follow compost

guidelines for layering, aerating, and moistening the compost pile. Depending on size, composition, and conditions, the process of producing good compost will take anywhere from three months to one year.

Phyllis Heurman, a Frederick County Master Gardener whose web site was one of the sources for this information, says, "I find reusing organic materials such as leaves for mulch and compost to be one of the most satisfying aspects of my gardening. I hope you will give it a try."

## TAKE THE GERANIUM -WINTERIZATION CHALLENGE

Geraniums are the most forgiving of plants, and keeping them for next season is not difficult. Of course you can move the plants indoors or root stem cuttings over the winter season.

However, many of our grandmothers over-wintered geraniums as bare-root plants. Dig the geraniums up and carefully shake all the soil from their roots. Hang the plants upside down in a cool 45-50 degree dry place. An alternate method is to place 1 or 2 plants in a large paper sack. Once a month during the winter, soak the roots of each plant in water for 1 to 2 hours. Most of the leaves will eventually fall off. In the spring, when all chance of frost has pat, prune or cut back each plant. Remove all shriveled, dead material. Healthy live stems will be firm and solid. After pruning, pot up or plant the geraniums and water in well.

## OCTOBER ROSES



*Jane & Mary Russell heed advice from Rosarina Ron Daniels, speaker at MG Meeting*



*Ron's Honey Dijon Rose*



*A favorite at Chef's*



*Lynn (pink jacket) queries Chef Richard, Summer County Rose Gardener, despite weather conditions*

### CONTACT LIST

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**RCMGA Web Site:** [rcmga.org](http://rcmga.org)