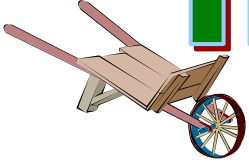


# The Wheelbarrow



[www.saps.us](http://www.saps.us)

Southern Appalachian Plant Society

April 2026

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## How to Successfully Grow Hydrangeas

Kim Whiston

Owner of Rockhouse Gardens

Thursday, April 16 at 7 pm

BrightRidge Auditorium

2600 Boones Creek Rd (Hwy 354), Johnson City

Hydrangeas are one of the most popular and easy-to-grow ornamental garden plants. Learn about the different types of hydrangeas and how to select from the almost endless choices on the market including dwarf varieties and ones that tolerate more sun. Kim will also explain how to grow and care for them.

Kim Whiston has been in the horticulture industry for over 40 years. She grew up around plants and when her first job after high school at the local Kmart landed her in the garden department, she was in heaven. She then worked at a local garden center for 21 years. A believer in the value of continuing education, she took horticulture classes at Walters State Community College as well as classes from UT and other industry colleges. She bought her Rockhouse in 2004 and at first used it as storage for her landscape business. She eventually built a greenhouse and opened up the space for retail customers offering a diverse array of plants. She was the first woman board member and was president of the Tennessee Nursery Landscape Association from 2005 - 2010. She is a member and current treasurer of the East Tennessee Nursery Association.

Although Kim's favorite part of her job is landscape design, her plant and gardening loves include just about everything you could imagine in the horticulture industry - herb gardens, water gardens, perennials, fruits and berries, trees, shrubs, bonsai, orchids and more. These plants are also part of her personal gardens at home. Her love for house plants is evident in the 200 plants scattered throughout her home. Kim says, "I am very blessed because I can make a living doing what I love and have such a passion for."

## Exchange Place Spring Garden Fair

The 40th annual Spring Garden Fair is Saturday, April 25, 10 am – 5 pm and Sunday, April 26, 12 – 5 pm at Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport. The oldest garden fair in the region and a favorite among gardeners, the festival will feature over 60 vendors with thousands of plants for sale - perennials, annuals, trees and shrubs - with the emphasis on natives, herbs and heirlooms (including a wide variety of heirloom tomatoes), along with garden related arts and crafts. Visitors will see heritage breeds of animals and spring activities on a mid-nineteenth century farmstead, as volunteers shear the sheep, spin and weave the wool, churn butter, and shape iron over the forge. Children's activities abound with opportunities to learn gardening skills, weave a basket, do nature crafts, and make flower crowns in celebration of the season. Enjoy food on site or to take home along with live music from local bands. Admission is \$5 for adults and free for children under 12.  
<https://exchangeplacetrn.org/>

Exchange Place welcomes volunteers who would like to assist with the Fair. If you can spare any time that weekend to help with set-up, hospitality, take-down, children's activities, staffing the information table, parking, etc., we would love to have your help. Volunteer time counts as Master Gardener hours. To volunteer or for more info, contact Joy Moore at [jemmoor@gmail.com](mailto:jemmoor@gmail.com) or 423-348-6572.



## Upcoming Events

### April 2

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm at Exchange Place. Herbalist Sharon Nelson will speak on Foraging in the Springtime. Learn about common plants to forage in NE TN and SW VA. You will leave the session confident to immediately apply your knowledge to find these plants and make recipes from what you gather. Bring a herb snack to share if you have time.

### April 10 - 11

Mid Atlantic Garden Faire. Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Abingdon. Friday 9:30 am - 6pm, Saturday 9:30 am - 4pm. Plants, garden art, speakers, workshops, and more. \$7. Under 12 Free. <http://www.gardenfaire.net/>

### April 11

Spectacular Spring Plant Sale. UT Gardens Knoxville, 2518 Jacob Drive. 9 am - 2 pm. Shop from a curated selection of perennial flowers, houseplants, ornamental trees and shrubs. For more info and an inventory list of plants: <https://utgardens.tennessee.edu/locations/knoxville/special-events-knoxville/spring-fall-plant-sales/>

### April 11

Annual East Tennessee Nursery Association Plant Auction. Tetrich Community Center, 1509 W Elk Ave, Elizabethton, TN 37643. 9 am - noon. Auction items include unusual ornamental and native perennials, trees and shrubs. Doors open 8:15 am to view plants/register. 423-895-9133, [kwilso63@utk.edu](mailto:kwilso63@utk.edu).

### April 12

Annual Evelyn McNeill Sims Native Plant Lecture. Native Swagger: Turning Heads with Native Plants with Andrea DeLong-Amaya, Horticulture Educator, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. 5:30 pm. Hybrid - Virtual and In-person attendance options. Free; preregistration required. [https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event\\_page.aspx?ek=0005-0014-50280706b8134f3b955f372b3e4b5ca1](https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0005-0014-50280706b8134f3b955f372b3e4b5ca1)

### April 16

Hybrid Lunchbox Talk: If Not Us, Who? Rebuilding Botanical Capacity for the Southeast with Joey Shaw, Distinguished Service and UC Foundation Professor, UT Chattanooga. 12-1 pm. NC Botanical Garden, Chapel Hill. Virtual and in-person. Free; preregistration required. [https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event\\_page.aspx?ek=0005-0014-5b1e51e6ffa0417abde12ab8dfd8b569](https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0005-0014-5b1e51e6ffa0417abde12ab8dfd8b569)

### April 16

SAPS Meeting. 7 pm. Kim Whitson, owner of Rock House Gardens in Jonesborough. How to Successfully Grow Hydrangeas. BrightRidge Auditorium.

### April 17-April 19

47th Annual Spring Nature Festival. Warriors' Path State Park. Talks and hikes on many nature topics, from geology to wildlife tracking, from night skies to plants and pollinators. Free. [https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event\\_details/warriors-path/#!/?event=47th-annual-spring-nature-festival-wpsp](https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/warriors-path/#!/?event=47th-annual-spring-nature-festival-wpsp)

### April 18

Spring Plant Sale Knoxville Botanical Garden. 9 am - 2pm. Features perennials propagated by the Garden's horticultural

team, as well as plants from local partners and growers. A wonderful variety of native perennials, ornamental shrubs, and herbaceous plants will be available for purchase. <https://www.knoxgarden.org/events/plantsale26>

### April 18

UT Arboretum Society Spring Plant Sale. 8 am - noon. 901 S. Illinois Avenue, Oak Ridge. <https://utarboretum.tennessee.edu/spring-plant-sale/>

### April 18

Spring Edible Plants. 10 am. Asheville Botanical Garden. Short indoor portion to go over basics of plant ID and foraging best practices, then head outside to learn in the field. \$35. <https://ashevillebotanicalgardens.square.site/classes>

### April 21

Native Orchids of Tennessee. 7:30 pm. Zoom presentation by TN Native Plant Society.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88313579500...> Pass code: 155116

### April 23

Wildflowers & Waterfalls - an Earth Day Hiking Adventure. Meet at Warriors Path SP, then drive to Laurel Run Park for a challenging 4+ mile hike up into Bays Mountain Park. Departs PROMPTLY at 1 pm to drive to trailhead. \$5. Pre-registration required. [https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event\\_details/warriors-path/#!/?event=Laurel-Bays-hiking-adventure-26](https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/warriors-path/#!/?event=Laurel-Bays-hiking-adventure-26)

### April 22-25

76th Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage. Great Smoky Mountains National Park. <https://www.wildflowerpilgrimage.org/>

### April 24-26

36th Annual Spring Herb Festival. WNC Agricultural Center. Friday and Saturday 8:30 am - 5 pm, Sunday 10 am - 3 pm. Largest herb festival in the Southeast. Free. 828-301-8968. <https://www.ashevilleherbfestival.org/>

### April 24-26

Spring Roan Mountain Naturalists Rally. Programs, hikes. <https://www.friendsofroanmtn.org/>

### April 25

Gardening Seminar series. Sycamore Shoals State Park, Elizabethton. 9 am to noon. Presenters are Master Gardeners Ben Hunter, Cameron Coates, and David Faller. Free to the public, preregister 423-543-5808

### April 25-26

40th Annual Spring Garden Fair. Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road, Kingsport. Saturday 10 am - 5 pm, Sunday, 12 - 5 pm. \$5. Under 12 free.

### May 7

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm. Exchange Place.

### May 21

SAPS Meeting. 7 pm. Jay Sifford, Landscape designer. Crafting a Dream in the North Carolina Mountains. Kingsport Higher Education Center.

**Ashe Magnolia -  
A Very Special Small Tree**  
Contributed by Hugh Conlon

Ashe magnolia (*Magnolia ashei*) is a small 10-20 feet deciduous tree with enormous flowers and leaves (zone 6-9). Each white flower may measure 6-12 inches across with a purple blotch at the base of 3 inner petal-like tepals. Ashe magnolia blooms in late May and early June here in Tennessee, Virginia and North Carolina. Many of the blooms may be hidden within the large foliage that is almost tropical in appearance.

Among the large leaf magnolias, Ashe magnolia is the shortest - the so-called "runt of the litter". Its deciduous leaves may be 2-3 feet long and up to a foot wide. Leaves are wider near the tip than at the stem, green on the upper surface and whitish beneath. When fully open, the citrus-scented white blossoms are up to 6 inches long with a purple blotch in the center. Ashe magnolia blooms at an early age, usually when only 4-6 feet tall. It may bloom in as little as three years from seed.

Ashe magnolia is an understory tree, growing in day-long dappled sunlight or in morning only sun. Allow Ashe magnolia plenty of room to grow, good light, and humus-rich, moist, well-drained soil. Lightly mulch around the tree to a depth of 2-3 inches annually. During the active growing period, water the tree every 2 or 3 weeks for the year or two it takes to become established.

Ashe Magnolia rarely needs to be fertilized unless grown in a container. Ashe magnolia does not do well in hot and dry conditions. The grand champion tree is 44 feet high in Montgomery County in Pennsylvania. Plant in a sheltered site away from strong winds that can shred the papery leaves and break brittle branches. Prune in late winter or late summer to avoid excessive bleeding of sap. Light annual pruning is usually the rule to maintain the tree's desired framework.

Disease and pest problems are rare if Ashe magnolia is properly sited and maintained. Inspect annually for bacterial leaf spot, spot anthracnose, canker, dieback, butt rot, powdery mildew, anthracnose, fungal spots, weevils, snails, scale insects, thrips, and plant hoppers.

Ashe magnolia is a plant collector's treasure. It can be purchased from an e-mail specialty plant nursery. Request the seed provenance and purchase a mid-Atlantic or mid-South seed source.



**March 16 SAPS Meeting  
Parking at BrightRidge**

Because our meeting is after business hours, we can park in any available parking space including those marked Reserved. However, we have been asked to not block the gate or access to the drive-thru window. These areas must be accessible to employees and customers 24/7.

Use of the auditorium is a benefit we appreciate and we recognize that our presence cannot interfere with the business operations.

## Across the President's Desk

By Earl Hockin

Now that it is officially Spring it is time to move from planning to hands-on care for your yard and garden. Early spring gardening chores involve cleaning up winter debris, surveying damage, and preparing soil for active growth. Key tasks include removing dead foliage, pruning woody plants, cleaning tools, managing early weeds, and testing/amending soil to develop a clean, nutrient-rich environment for new plantings. I recommend soil testing by the University of Tennessee. Soil samples can be submitted to the lab in one of two ways: 1) obtain soil sample boxes, instructions, and forms from the Sullivan County Extension Office (423-574-1919) or from the Agriculture Extension Service in Jonesborough (423-754-1680) or 2) access and download the instructions and forms from the [Soil, Plant and Pest Center](#) website and collect your sample(s) in quart-size zip lock bag(s).

One of the first early spring garden activities should be cleaning up debris, leaves and fallen branches from garden beds and lawn to prevent mold and pests. Over-wintering native bees such as mason and bumble bees use the hollow stems of elderberry, Joe-Pye weed, mountain mint and sumac. When temperatures are consistently over 50°F and the bees no longer need protection from the cold, cut back dormant perennial foliage and ornamental grasses to about 8–12 inches allowing new growth to emerge.

Pull or hoe early spring weeds before they get established while the soil is moist and the roots are not well developed making them easier to remove. Prune trees, shrubs, and roses to remove damaged limbs and branches. Wait to prune spring-blooming shrubs (e.g., forsythia, lilac) until after they flower.

Some gardeners prefer to remove winter mulch and the remnants of last year's crops. I choose to leave this organic material in my raised beds and simply rearrange it to create space to put in vegetable transplants allowing the organic material to continue to de-

cay into the soil. If I have excessive mulch in the bed, I collect it and put it in the compost bin. Enrich your garden soil and lawn with organic fertilizers if possible, but avoid working (tilling) soil when it is too wet in order to avoid the problems of compaction.

Ensure that your garden tools are in the best condition as we enter the gardening season. Clean, sharpen, and disinfect tools. It may be too early to start planting in your containers, but you'll want to be ready to hit the ground running once warmer weather arrives. If you have containers for flowers, herbs and vegetables that you plan to re-use, give them a good scrub with a 10% bleach and soapy water solution. This will kill off any harmful bacteria that might be lingering from last year.

Late March through April is the time to divide or move established summer and fall blooming perennials including hosta, ornamental grasses, black-eyed Susan, aster, bee balm and daylilies, before new growth starts.

As a gardener I have been concerned about the effects of warming due to climate change. This region was classified as zone 6b until 2023 when it was reclassified as zone 7a. Of course the microclimate of your actual location has to be taken into consideration. If your garden is in a low area where cold air accumulates, you may deal with frost and snow later in the early season than is the case for gardens in higher areas. With increasing summer temperatures it is definitely beneficial to think about the heat tolerance of different varieties of garden vegetables. Varieties of tomatoes that do well in warm temperatures include Amy's Sugar Gem, Juliet F1, San Marzano, Big Beef F1, Celebrity F1, Sun Gold, and Juliet. Bell Peppers that do well include California Wonder and Better Belle. Okra, sweet potatoes, and Swiss chard are excellent at withstanding the peak heat of late summer.

### The Extraordinary Caterpillar

The Nature Conservancy is hosting a local screening of the short nature film "The Extraordinary Caterpillar" on May 7 at 7pm at the Abingdon Cinemall. It has some incredible footage and commentary about these small and fascinating insects and their pivotal role in our ecosystem. The run time is about an hour.

The Holston Rivers chapter is a helping partner...and our job is to spread the word!! Please share the attached flyer through your networks! They're asking folks to pre-register to help with a headcount. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tnc-hosted-screening-of-the-extraordinary-caterpillar-tickets-1985834735150?aff=oddtcreator> Please be aware that The Cinemall will charge us \$6 at the door...but the concession stand will be available, and popcorn makes up for a lot!!

ALSO: we are able to have an info table in the lobby that evening. Helping at the table qualifies for volunteer time. If you are interested, please get in touch with Monica: mhoel1985@gmail.com.

## Gallivanting to Ireland

Garden Gallivants has information about another garden trip in early September that may interest some of our members. The tour is a week spent touring Irish gardens in Dublin and Wicklow County and is organized through Brightwater Holidays.

Information on the itinerary is attached to the email. For additional information about the itinerary, etc., you may contact Garden Gallivants by emailing [gardengallivants@gmail.com](mailto:gardengallivants@gmail.com) or calling (865) 801-3512



# Plant Sale



**Saturday May 9, 2026**

**9 am to 1 pm  
(rain or shine)**



at

**Fischman Gallery  
133 N. Commerce St.  
Johnson City, TN**



All plants and seedlings are home-grown  
with tender loving care by members of

**Shady Oaks Garden Club**

[www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org](http://www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org)

