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Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods

ISSUE 1

June, 2011

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Welcome to TYN!

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Dear Ruth Anne,

Gardening Tip #1

Pay special attention to plants you've just put in the ground, and make sure to water them adequately.

Summer heat can wreak havoc on plants that aren't established yet. Monitor soil moisture every day until the plants take off and start to grow.

Welcome to the first *Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods* (TYN) newsletter! As Co-Directors of TYN, it gives us great pleasure to introduce to you this monthly publication, and for those who are new to TYN, let us also briefly introduce it as well. TYN is a University of Tennessee-led program that is being developed to assist the Tennessee homeowner in creating an environmentally healthy home and neighborhood landscape that provides the curb appeal so many of us desire. TYN continues to evolve and expand in many new and exciting ways, from the development of new workshops to the installation of demonstration sites across the state.

Another way we are evolving is reaching out to more of you through this newsletter! Our goal is to chock it full each month with practical information that you can put into action. We will also be including stories to serve as inspiration and motivation. For example, in this issue we are kicking off a series of articles by a fabulous Tennessee Master Gardener, Joy Stewart. Not only has Joy

Plant Spotlight

Coreopsis pubescens



Coreopsis pubescens

This happy native plant blooms prolifically from late spring through fall. Commonly called 'tickseed', it tolerates all types of soils, and can even endure drought. *Coreopsis* takes full sun, attracts butterflies, and re-seeds itself each year. Cut it back after it quits flowering and you'll get another round of blooms. What's not to love?!

This plant can be seen at the new TYN Low Impact Development Demonstration Area, adjacent to the UT Gardens.

Gardening Tip #2

The higher you cut your lawn the deeper the roots will grow which will help your grass survive dry spells. For turf-type fescues and bluegrass set your mowing height to 2.5 to 3 inches.

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*Newsletter*

taken on the mission of landscaping her suburban yard in all native plants, she has also created a diverse ecosystem, from wildflower meadows to rain gardens. She will share nuggets of wisdom with you, as she has with us, on what she has learned along the way, and show photos of her yard that make you want to lace up your work boots and get in the garden.

TYN is based on nine principles, ranging from effectively managing your soils to watering efficiently. As with gardening in general, many of the strategies that put these principles into action are seasonal. So, to help you to know what to do and when, we'll provide landscaping tips during the months when you are most likely to apply them! To help you with terminology that may be new to you, we will provide a glossary. Terms used each month will then be placed into a glossary on our Website that will grow in volume over time.

Lastly, we welcome your feedback! Let us know which articles were helpful and what topics you'd like to see us cover. Share your thoughts through our TYN Facebook page or you can always reach us via e-mail. Growing, evolving, learning, and listening are just a few ways we like to describe TYN as we strive to build a program that can help Tennesseans preserve and protect the beauty and abundance of our state's natural resources.

Happy landscaping!

Ruth Anne & Andrea



**Joy Stewart**  
**Master Gardener**

## Meet Our Go-To Gardener

Since I will have the honor of writing a series of articles for the TYN newsletter I thought I would start out by introducing myself to you. My name is Joy, and my husband and I moved to Bristol, TN in 2006 after I retired from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, where I was a budget analyst for about 10 years.

We chose Tennessee because I wanted to garden in a warm climate where I could actually order some of those gorgeous plants I saw in the flower catalogs each spring and also because of Tennessee's beautiful and diverse topography. I did cringe a bit when we bought a house with about a .8 acre yard of mowed lawn, because I am a bit of a compulsive

## Glossary

### Restoration

/ˌres-tə-ˈrā-shən/

An effort to renew or rehabilitate an area which was previously developed to its original ecological integrity.

### Native [Plant]

/'nāt-iv/

A plant indigenous to a particular geographic region prior to human disturbance.

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Gardening Tip #3

Deadhead spent flowers on your perennials to stimulate growth and to help them bloom a second time!

Stay Tuned!

We're working on some exciting projects right now! Next month's newsletter will feature an exclusive on our new rain garden at the official TYN Low Impact Development Demonstration Area!

Keep up-to-date with TYN! Read our monthly newsletters, visit the website, and

[Find us on Facebook](#) 

gardener and I had been hoping that my retirement would be restful.

I would describe my background and experiences as kind of a hodgepodge-a little from here and a little from there. A love of gardening runs in my family through several generations, but my particular passion is for native plants and for landscaping, with a love and respect for our land and water. I do not have a formal scientific background. Most of what I have learned I have picked up from a host of diverse experiences-reading, experimenting, asking the experts for advice, volunteering with different environmental groups, my colleagues at work, my parents, and a few graduate courses in landscape architecture.

We all garden for a variety of reasons - the fun of experimenting with new plants, the feel of the sun when working outside, and the fun of digging in the dirt, just to name a few. It is difficult to distill all that down to one vision or priority, but if I were to choose what inspires me most, it is my love and respect for nature and my concern for the amount of damage we humans have done to our environment. I can't visit a national or state park every day, but I can create a little pocket of nature at my own home that helps protect Tennessee's water and that brings an abundance of birds, butterflies and insects right into my own yard.

That said, as soon as we moved into our new house in Bristol we decided that at least half of that mowed lawn had to go! We set off with determination and high hopes, a master plan on a giant sheet of tracing paper, a good supply of lawn herbicide, stacks of seed catalogs, and lots of reading about Tennessee native plants. My husband is not a gardener and cannot identify many plants, but he hates mowing, loves color and will try just about anything. He refers to himself as my "labor pool" (which is an understatement) as he dug over 75 holes in hard clay to plant trees and shrubs and was actively involved in every piece of woodland, wildflower meadow, streambed, rain garden, rain barrel and pond that we installed.

Gardening Tip #4

Prevent blossom-end rot on your tomatoes by providing deep and regular watering with drip irrigation or a soaker hose. Conserve a little water by mulching your vegetables to help the surrounding soil retain moisture. 'Celebrity', 'Goliath', and 'Mountain Pride' are three tomato varieties that are resistant to blossom-end rot.



View of Joy's Pond & Wildflower Meadow

To borrow a somewhat technical term, what we have tried to do in our yard is an "experiential restoration" of Tennessee native plant communities. For most of us, the yard surrounding our home is much too small an area to be called a true woodland or wildflower meadow, but we can create small areas that give a person a feeling or a little taste of what the real thing looks like. It won't be a full-sized plant community with all the proper plant species in the proper proportions that a scientific restoration would have, but it can still function in some of the same ways by creating natural beauty that enriches one's life, slowing stormwater runoff, and attracting wildlife.

I am excited about the opportunity to share with you what my husband and I have learned along the way (both our successes and failures) and also about future possibilities to learn from you. In upcoming articles I will be sharing techniques for installing wildflower meadows and woodland areas, how to make your own seed mix designed for your yard, successful planting tips, and planting errors to avoid. We have an exceptional state and I can't think of anything more fun than gardening and protecting Tennessee's natural resources at the same time.





**Stuart hard at work
in the rain garden**

Q&A with the A.B.

Stuart Bartholomaus sits on the TYN Advisory Board, and is an exemplary graduate of the TYN program. We asked Stuart a few questions about his own yard to get his secret recipe for a Tennessee Yard Done Right:

Q: How have you used the nine TYN principles in your yard?

A: My wife and I have made a number of changes to our yard and gardens that follow the nine TYN principles. We mulch our trees and perennials to retain soil moisture and control weeds. When I cut the grass I use the tallest setting on the lawn mower, and I leave the grass clippings on the lawn to make use of the nitrogen. I compost my neighbor's grass clippings and the scraps from ornamental grasses when I cut them back. I only fertilize twice a year, and I always make sure that the fertilizer stays on the grass. When I find insects on the plants I just pick them off, instead of using pesticides. We built a rain garden in a natural depression in our yard and that helps filter the stormwater entering the Clinch River, near our home. We've planted butterfly bushes and holly trees to attract butterflies and cardinals to our yard, plus when I trim trees and shrubs I leave the branches piled in a corner of the yard for animals to use to build shelter. Honestly, though, I focus most on water conservation.

Q: What have you done at your home to conserve water?

A: I've learned a lot about water since I first started! I made my first rain barrel out of a garbage can! Now I've got three rain barrels that are all connected. I use the water from the rain barrels on my container garden and to fill up the birdbath, and my wife uses it to water her indoor plants. I redirected the other downspouts from my roof to the lawn and rose garden so that they don't need to be watered. I turned a natural depression in my yard into a rain garden so all of the water that would end up there anyway is now being put to good use, and it's filtered before it's absorbed into the ground.

Q: How do you go about watering your yard and gardens?

A: Watering? I try not to! I use a rain gauge to monitor how much rain has fallen. The perennials only get one inch of water a week; once they're established, the plants can handle the heat without needing so much water. I take a risk. I water only when necessary. I made it through all of last year without watering.

Q: What have you learned about your yard through the years?

A: When I first moved here I didn't even know what kind of grass I had! I've become much more observant over time. I try not to be over-conscious about the weeds in my lawn. In fact, I have a good crop of clover and quack grass that I fertilize! Instead, I'm more conscious of insects, water, and weeds in my garden.

Q: Is there a strategy you've implemented in your yard and gardens that you've had success with?

A: Fertilizing at the right time in the spring and fall so that the rain helps out the plants. That and my rule of one inch of water during the growing season. I've got it down to a science: 1inch of water on 1 square foot of ground = .625 gallons. I mostly just let nature do its thing, but I try to help it when I can, if there is a drought or need for food.

Q: What's your best advice for beginner gardeners?

A: Start small! Take a small area and learn about it. What your grass is doing, perennials vs. annuals ... if you follow the nine TYN principles and start small you'll get a good feel for it. My wife and I started with a blank sheet of paper and some old trees!

Q: Where do you go for gardening advice?

A: Well I'm a Master Gardener and I volunteer at UT Gardens, so I'm surrounded by friends who know all about it. Occasionally I use the Internet. I used to subscribe to a magazine about gardening in Tennessee, but the trouble with that is that there are so many different regions and growing seasons and soils that the magazine doesn't necessarily apply to where you are. I like to go to my county Extension agent - the Extension office is great because there are always different informative articles and sheets I can pick up and read. I also follow the local newspaper and look for articles written by professionals in my area; there's usually an article a week.

Q: And lastly, do you have a secret for a great yard and garden?

A: Patience, hard work, and just enjoy it.

Night Gardening: A Summer Delight!

By: Beth Babbit, UT Extension Urban Horticulture Specialist & State Master Gardener Coordinator



In Tennessee our gardening season is all year round with the exception of a lull in the winter, which affords us time to flip through seed catalogs and wait for cole crops (e.g., broccoli, cabbage) to ripen. But as a gardener, I also slow down and feel burnout as the summer heat takes over. The dog days shorten our time in the garden, and we have to remember to take care of ourselves as well as we do our plants, keeping them watered and mulched to protect them from sun and heat. It's true: as gardeners we should take care to avoid working in the heat of the day to reduce heat stroke and dehydration and to protect our skin and eyes from detrimental UVA/UVB rays. Many of us find that we have a few more tolerable hours after work to play in the garden, and one might say that twilight and night gardening accommodates today's busy lifestyle.

If gardening at night, choose a space where you feel comfortable and safe like a patio, porch or deck. This space will probably be small and should be for your personal satisfaction. It may not be visible to passersby so create a garden that you will enjoy. Consider incorporating fragrances, light colors, and white flowers. Dark colors will disappear at dusk.

Think of this garden as experiential; play with what aesthetically works for you. Structures can add vertical height for climbing plants, focal points, color (or lack of color when using white), and definition to a space. As plants are added to these spaces, the structures and walls of the garden will take form.

There are so many outstanding night plants that truly shine in the moonlight. They bloom in the evening, and most have white or very light-colored blooms; they are commonly named "moonflowers." *Datura* is a small shrub which has a light lemony fragrance and opens its 5-inch trumpet-shaped blooms in the late afternoon, closing them as the sun heats up the day. Also fragrant is the angel's trumpet, or *Brugmansia*. It grows taller than *Datura*, has trumpet-shaped pendulous flowers, and is available in yellow, white, light pink or peach. The most commonly known moonflower is the morning glory (*Ipomea alba*). Morning glories are very invasive vines that are difficult to eradicate and control. This plant is not recommended for a low maintenance or TYN landscape. Four o'clocks is another trumpet flower; it can reseed itself, but is not considered invasive and may naturalize a contained space. Four o'clocks are named so because they begin opening their yellow, white, orange, or pink flowers in the late afternoon.

Consider plants that add texture and white foliage to night gardens, like the silver foliage of lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*) or *Artemisia* x 'Powis Castle'. The texture of ornamental grasses like variegated sweet flag (*Acorus gramineus* variegatus 'Ogon'), which tolerates wet soils, or Sliver Dragon liriopse, which tolerates drought conditions, can make a striking addition to your garden and provide interest in the evening landscape.

Mostly, the key to night-garden design is a diversity of plants and materials, which creates a pleasant backdrop for relaxing at the end of the day. This should be an enjoyable space where you can soak up bits of nature that others often miss, like pollinating moths, listening to tree frogs and insects calling to each other in the trees, and our summertime favorite -- fireflies.

See ya' next month!

Thanks so much for reading! Check back in with us next month for details on our new projects and more tips on achieving the ideal home garden landscape!

Until then, follow us on Facebook! 

Keep in Touch!

Ruth Anne Hanahan & Dr. Andrea Ludwig

TYN Statewide Co-Directors

Tennessee Water Resources Research Center

University of Tennessee

311 Conference Center

Knoxville, TN 37996

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Ruth Anne Hanahan | Tennessee Yards & Neighborhoods | Water Resources Center | 600 Henley Street, Suite 311 | Knoxville | TN | 37996-4134