Short Rows

The eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is a native songbird that are common in Tennessee yards year around. They typically begin to find nesting sites in February, and respond well to nesting boxes. But there are several things to keep in mind when preparing a bluebird house.

Bluebirds utilize herbaceous openings, savannas, pastures, parks, backyards, edges of hayfields and cropfields, and other early successional communities well-interspersed with trees and shrubs, for perching, foraging and nesting (where cavities are available). Large open areas without interspersion of hedgerows, fencerows, and scattered trees may not receive as much use by bluebirds as those areas with more structural diversity.

Nesting structures should be approximately 5 feet high with an entrance hole of 1½ inches in diameter; nest boxes should be placed no closer than 80 yards apart to limit territorial fighting among males. The size of the box and entrance hole are important to discourage starlings, also the placement, the height of the box and distance between boxes are important. To learn more visit:

- Tennessee Watchable Wildlife
- All About Birds
- Nest box plans from TWRA
  [http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/woodworkingforwildlifedetails.cfm?uid=12062515130843260#1](http://www.tnwatchablewildlife.org/woodworkingforwildlifedetails.cfm?uid=12062515130843260#1)
- Improving Your Backyard Wildlife Habitat
  [https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1633.pdf](https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1633.pdf)
Dates for 2018

- **Sequatchie County Library Work Day** January 15, 2018 9:30 AM
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting** February 3, 2018, 9:00 AM, Dunlap
- **March Spring Workshop** – Tree Fruits as topic March 2018
- **2018 Tennessee Extension Master Gardener State Conference** April 5-6-7, 2018 Montgomery Bell State Park. More information to come as sessions and events are scheduled
- **2018 Spring Flower and Garden Show** Cumberland County Master Gardeners April 27-28, 2018 Crossville, TN "Creative Containers ... Thinking Outside of the Box" [http://www.ccmga.org/FGS_2018.html](http://www.ccmga.org/FGS_2018.html)
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting** April 28, 2018, 9:00 AM, Pikeville moved to avoid Valley Fest
- **Valley Fest** May 5-6, 2018, Dunlap TN
- **Steak and Potatoes Field Day** – August 7, 2018, 8:00AM Crossville
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting and Tomato Tasting** August 11, 2018, 9:00 AM – meeting 10:00 AM, Tasting Pikeville (moved to avoid Yard Sale)
- **10th Annual Fall Gardeners' Festival** August 28th, 2018 UT Gardens Crossville, Plateau Research & Education Center
- **SVMG Quarterly Meeting** November 3, 2018, 9:00 AM Dunlap

2018 All Bugs Good and Bad Webinar Series

- **February 2, 2018** Title *Feral Hogs, Ecology, and Control*
  Presented by Norm Haley, Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- **March 2, 2018** Title *Misidentified Pests in the Landscape*
  Presented by Dr. Erfan Vafaie, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **April 6, 2018** Title *Argentine Ants and Others*
  Presented by Dr. Eric Benson, Clemson University
- **May 4, 2018** Title *Everything You Must Know About Fleas*
  Presented by TBA
- **June 1, 2018** Title *Attracting Pollinators to Our Yards*
  Presented by Elizabeth "Wizzie" Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **August 3, 2018** Title *Bees, Wasps, and Hornets, Oh My!*
  Presented by TBA
- **September 7, 2018** Title *Winterizing Your Home to Keep Out Pests*
  Presented by Janet Hurley, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **October 5, 2018** Title *Structural Misidentified Pests*
  Presented by Molly Keck, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
- **November 2, 2018** Title *Lice, Scabies, and Mites*
  Presented by Dr. Nancy Hinkle, University of Georgia
- **December 1, 2018** Title *Pantry Pests*
  Presented by Dr. Dan Suiter, Extension Entomologist, UGA Extension

2017 Hours Total

As of January 3, 2018

*474.85 hours reported valued at $11,462.88*
UT AgResearch Announces 2018 Field Day Schedule

New Events for Beef Cattle Producers and Horse Owners on Schedule

University of Tennessee AgResearch has released the 2018 field day schedule, which includes 13 field days and four special events. Field days are held at the 10 AgResearch and Education Centers located throughout the state. These events offer farmers, ranchers, gardeners, foresters and the general public a chance to see research findings, learn from university and industry experts and network with peers.

The 2018 schedule features several new events, including a Beef Heifer Development School to be held in March at the Tennessee Beef Heifer Development Center in Lewisburg, and a trio of Horse Management Field Days – one for each region of the state.

2018 also marks the return of the biennial Milan No-Till Field Day. This event is always held on the fourth Thursday in July of even-numbered years.

More information about each field day will be posted closer to the scheduled time at the UT Institute of Agriculture “News and Announcements” site. You can also visit each AgResearch Center’s homepage or call their main office for details. Center addresses and phone numbers can be found at agresearch.tennessee.edu.

The complete schedule is as follows:

Field Days
- Beef Heifer Development School - March 22, Beef Heifer Development Center (Lewisburg)
- Tennessee Healthy Hardwoods - May 19, Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center - Highland Rim Forest (Tullahoma)
- Fruits of the Backyard - June 19, Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center (Spring Hill)
- Tobacco, Beef & More - June 21, Highland Rim AgResearch and Education Center (Springfield)
- Summer Celebration - July 12, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center (Jackson)
- Milan No-Till - July 26, AgResearch and Education Center at Milan
- Steak and Potatoes - August 7, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center (Crossville)
- Turf and Ornamental - August 30, East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center - Plant Sciences Unit (Knoxville)
- Cotton Tour - September 5, West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center (Jackson)
- Horse Management - September 13, UTIA Campus (Knoxville)
- Horse Management - September 20, Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center (Spring Hill)
- Horse Management - September 27, Ames Plantation (Grand Junction)
- Northeast Tennessee Beef Expo - October 11, AgResearch and Education Center at Greeneville

Special Events
- UT Gardens Green Industry - June 26, UT Gardens, Knoxville
- UT Arboretum Butterfly Festival - August 4, Forest Resources AgResearch and Education Center - UT Arboretum (Oak Ridge)
- Fall Gardeners Festival - August 28, Plateau AgResearch and Education Center (Crossville)
- Fall Folklore Jamboree - October 20, AgResearch and Education Center at Milan

Through its mission of research, teaching and extension, the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture touches lives and provides Real. Life. Solutions. ag.tennessee.edu.
February Garden Tips

It has been cold maybe too cold to do any real work in the garden and yard. But these freezing snowy days is a good time to spend indoors planning your summer garden. Peruse books, magazines, and catalogs for ideas and inspiration. Additional information is also available in publications of the University of Tennessee Extension, listed on the Web at https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Pages/default.aspx

February through April is the ideal time to apply a combination of slow-release fertilizer and pre-emergent herbicide to control crabgrass in your lawn. Apply this combination before dandelions reach the puffball stage.

Want to start your garden from scratch? February is a good time to start various annuals and vegetables from seed. This can be fun and it’s a great way to introduce youngsters (and the young at heart) to gardening. Seed starter kits are available in a variety of styles. Just follow the seed packet or seed catalog instructions on timing and method. A resource for you to use is Backyard Vegetables: The Tennessee Vegetable Garden - Garden Planning, Plant Preparation and Planting W 346-B

February is a good time to fertilize trees, shrubs and evergreens. It also is a good time to prune or shape evergreens.

February is the month for pruning. Make sure pruning tools are sharpened and cleaned in preparation for next month. Publications on pruning that might be helpful:

- Berries: Pruning Blueberries
- Grape Growing in Tennessee
- Pruning and Training Caneberries (Blackberries and Raspberries)
- Fruits & Nuts: Pruning Neglected Fruit Trees
- Best Management Practices for Pruning Landscape Trees, Shrubs and Ground Covers PB 1619

Consider soil testing if you have not done so in the last three years or so. You can find resources at https://ag.tennessee.edu/spp/Pages/Lawn-and-Gardens.aspx, remember there are new forms to use. https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB1061.pdf.

If conditions allow, you may prepare soil for early seeded cool-season crops. Make sure to allow plenty of time for cover crops to decompose as this process is slower under cooler conditions. https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-G.pdf

More information can be found at https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W436.pdf
January 2018 Plant of the Month: Parney cotoneaster

This Graceful Evergreen Adds Winter Interest to Your Landscape

Submitted by Richard Gibson, Assistant Horticulturist with the UT Gardens, Jackson

As Dr. Michael Dirr notes, most species are susceptible to excessive heat, heavy wet soils, lace bug, mites and fireblight, which contribute to their relatively short life in the landscape. With that being said, *C. lacteus* is truly the exception to the rule – it is virtually pest free.

Parney cotoneaster was introduced to the U.S. in 1930 from western China. Growing to between 6-ft and 8-ft tall and wide in 10 years, its habit is somewhat upright and spreading, with graceful arching branches. This evergreen produces 2-in. to 3-in. clusters of small white flowers in mid May to early June. The flowers give way to beautiful bright red berries that remain on the plant through winter, making this cotoneaster a showstopper. The dark green, deer-resistant foliage provides the perfect backdrop and contrast to the berries. This cotoneaster grows well in full sun to part shade and, while it is very drought tolerant, it performs best in moist, well-drained soils. The specimen at the UT Gardens, Jackson, flourishes beautifully with virtually no care along the parking lot curb near the gazebo. *C. lacteus* works well in groupings or as a mass planting and is a wonderful addition to any mixed shrub border where additional winter interest is desired.

For a plant that is resistant to drought, diseases and insects as well as very low maintenance, tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions, and interesting in winter, parney cotoneaster is surprisingly underused.

I encourage you to visit the UT Gardens in Jackson or Knoxville to admire parney cotoneaster at their peak at a time when many plants are taking a rest. Public gardens as well as private landscapes offer plenty of winter beauties like parney cotoneaster that can inspire you to add winter interest to your own landscape.

The UT Gardens includes plant collections located in Knoxville, Jackson and Crossville. Designated as the official botanical garden for the State of Tennessee, the collections are part of the UT Institute of Agriculture. The Gardens’ mission is to foster appreciation, education and stewardship of plants through garden displays, educational programs and research trials. The Gardens are open during all seasons and free to the public. For more information, see the Gardens website: [ag.tennessee.edu/utg](http://ag.tennessee.edu/utg).
Caring for indoor plants during the winter

By Jason Reeves, research horticulturist and curator, UT Gardens, Jackson

If you’re a gardening enthusiast like me, you have a garden of houseplants inside to take care of during the winter months. Here are some tips to take care of your indoor plants.

Regularly rotate houseplants growing near a window to keep them from leaning toward the light source. If needed, pinch back new growth to promote bushy plants. Keep an eye out for insect outbreaks and quarantine-infested plants until the pest is under control. Wipe dust off large leaf plants like dumbcane (*Dieffenbachia*) and rubber plant (*Ficus elastica*) or place in the bathtub and give them a shower.

Don’t forget to water your succulents. Just because they like it on the dry side doesn’t mean they don’t need water. The lack of humidly in your home during the winter months can dry them out more than you think.

For added color and fragrance during the bleak days of January and February, check out your local garden center for leftover paperwhite and amaryllis bulbs that are likely to be on sale. Look for bulbs that are firm and have not sprouted. To keep your paperwhites from flopping over add alcohol to the water. For details on this unusual cultural technique, check out this website from Cornell: [http://www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/bulb/pickling_your_paperwhites.pdf](http://www.hort.cornell.edu/miller/bulb/pickling_your_paperwhites.pdf).