



## President's comments—Starting Plants

By Jim McCracken



Consider starting your own plants from seed. There will be a startup investment cost for a seed-starter heating pad (\$50) and a grow light (\$115). Both of these growing aids

should last many years if you purchase quality products and give good care. I purchased mine in 2012 from A.M. Leonard and have not had the first problem with either of them. Both are used heavily as I normal grow around 5,000 transplants per year.

There are several advantages of starting your own vegetable and flower plants from seed:

1. Much cheaper than buying plants at a big box store or greenhouse.
2. More rewarding when growing your own plants from seed.
3. Better selection of plants you actually want to grow and eat.
4. Succession planting can be used throughout the growing season more successfully. Fall vegetable transplants are impossible to find anywhere.
5. You have the plants when you want them, easier to schedule your planting and harvest times.
6. If I start a seedling, it is impossible for me to destroy or throw it out. I need to sell it, give it away, or stick it in my garden somewhere. It almost feels like a child since I have nurtured it since it sprouted.

Ask some Master Gardener members in our club, any or all of the above reasons are why they begin some of their vegetables from seed. I know for a fact, Doug Benson and Ann Heeley will be proud parents this year of healthy tomato plants they both started from seed.

My plans for the garden are completed and seeds have arrived in the mail. Now for the real joy of gardening, starting my seedlings! The bell peppers were started on February 16. Most have sprouted, but I was a little disappointed at the germination rate. I hope that a few

more plants will break ground in the next couple of days. I start my peppers this early for two reasons. First, they are very slow to germinate and grow. Second, I always prune the top of all varieties of peppers for a bushier plant and a stronger stem. By pruning, I will produce a larger quantity of peppers to harvest. Bell peppers are rich in vitamin C and loaded with antioxidants. The vegetable is mainly water containing carbs of glucose and fructose. This is why ripe colored bell peppers have a sweeter taste than a traditional green one has. One cup of chopped peppers has 146 calories, a food that can be eaten raw or cooked in a variety of dishes.

March 4th was my planting date for all cruciferous (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts). I try to start these early to beat the summer heat, which makes broccoli and cauliflower bolt. Brussels sprouts have a very long growing season (over 100 days) and if a person does not get them out early, you will produce beautiful plants and have no harvest before a freeze kills the plants. That is exactly what happened to me last year in my first attempt of planting them. Also, don't plant these close to your other cabbage family plants, as you will not be able to stop the army of worms that will come. Besides isolation, netting your Brussels sprouts may also aid in the war with cabbageworms. Cruciferous are loaded with vitamins K, A, and C and can reduce the risk of developing cancer. They can be prepared in a number of ways in countless dishes. Cabbage is the main ingredient for our homemade sauerkraut, while broccoli is our favorite to use in our various cooking methods. Another tip is to start seedlings in early June for a fall harvest of broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage. All are cool weather crops so they will do great in the fall time. 🍀

**Memorial Garden Cleanup 12:30-1 p.m.—2:00 p.m.**  
**Next Membership Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.**  
**Both at Extension and on Zoom**

### Officers & Leadership for 2022

President	Jim McCracken
Vice President	Doris Hibner
Secretary	Nancy Russell
Treasurer	Carol Braun
Volunteer Coordinator	Doug Benson
Extension ANR Educator	Matt Schmerge

## Seed Starting Photos

By Jim McCracken



**SEED PLANTED CONTAINERS ON  
SEEDLING HEATING PAD**



**GROW LIGHT WITH PLANTS. SWEET POTATOES  
STARTING AROUND GROW LIGHT**



**PEPPER SEEDLINGS IN CUPS THAT WERE  
STARTED IN MID-FEBRUARY.**

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## Volunteer Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson



I wish the weather would make up its mind – will it stay winter, or will it become spring? I guess we can attribute the yo-yoing to our living in Ohio. And I could certainly do without some of the heavy rains. I shudder every time a flood watch is issued. Sunday night /Monday morning, I was up at 3:30 moving my car to the neighbor's driveway as the water began to cover the road and my yard. Luckily, it stopped about twenty-five feet from the house. At least I now have an excuse to avoid lawn work for a few more days.

Shelby County Master Gardeners are moving ahead. We have a plan to resume our library seminars in April. You can read more about our plans elsewhere in the newsletter. Thanks to Teresa Freisthler, Julie Gilardi, Ann Heeley, and Russ Stewart for developing the plans. We continue to get some “hotline” calls, and Matt and I have been taking care of those. Now that the office is open, we will resume regular hotline activities in May. I hope that many of you will volunteer to come in and help with the calls.

We have some other activities on the horizon. Conelia will be working with the Versailles library staff on a gardening program. She is hoping to have some assistance from one or more of our volunteers from that area. We have been asked to work with Emerson Primary School (K-2) here in Sidney to develop a pollinator garden. They have an attractive site, including a pergola behind their building to develop, and I think there will be good buy-in from the staff. They are asking for any extra plants or seeds that any of us might have to get started. Let me know if you have some.

The Shelby County Fair board has reached out to us for assistance in finding a place to display a two-foot by three-foot black granite marker to honor the late fair secretary, Jerry Schaffner, and others associated with the fair. Our thinking is that the small garden we maintain at the fairgrounds would be an ideal spot, but we will probably need to do some modifications and new plantings. The representative with whom I spoke indicated that

they could provide funding for some new plants, and I suggested the possibility of securing some labor from the sheriff's work crew. I would like some help in working on some design plans. I will have a picture of the marker at the meeting. By the way, because of required sewer work, the fairgrounds is currently a muddy mess.

Speaking of gardens, it will soon be time to do some spring clean up in the Memorial Garden. I did some pruning of the crabapple tree by the walkway, but I still need to get a little more done before the new growth begins. There are lots of leaves to be raked, and the sedums need to be cut back. Look for a work call when the weather is conducive. There is a bare spot near the flag pole that I plan to reseed by the first of the week. I know this isn't the ideal time, but I will keep my fingers crossed. Some of the spring bulbs are beginning break through the surface.

Matt and I continue to try to figure out how to conduct a training program for new volunteers. From time to time, we get a request for information. If you know of someone who is interested, let us know. Some good news from Matt is that a job offer was made and accepted, so a new 4-H educator should begin work in the very near future. This will allow Matt to focus on his primary assignment and also be of additional help to us. We will continue with our plan to have the March 16 and April 20 membership meetings at 2:00 at the Extension office. We will also offer a Zoom connection for those unable to attend in-person.

Finally, thank you to everyone for getting your Hands on Connect (HOC) account set up and completing the recertification process. Now, it's time to start recording your volunteer and continuing education hours. I apologize for the trouble with my presentation at the February meeting. I guess Zoom consumes more battery power than I had anticipated. If you have questions about entering volunteer hours, please don't hesitate to call or email me. I will be happy to walk you through the process. Like VMS, which you all survived, HOC will just take some time to master. Practice and patience will promote proficiency.

Here's hoping to see many of you at our meeting Wednesday afternoon. Since the weather is going to be good on Wednesday, you are invited to help with a garden cleanup before our meeting starting at 12:30 p.m. Bring a rake and favorite pruning tools. 🍀

# The People's Garden March 2022

By Conelia Dixon



The People's Garden is ramping up the planning and preparation of the garden for the 2022 season, our 9<sup>th</sup> year of providing a place for community members to garden and volunteer. Our mission statement is "Planting seeds of change and harvesting hope through community gardening and education".

We (4 coordinators now) work throughout the year, winter included; to talk about what we want to change or do the same. Lately, we have received several requests to talk to various groups in the community of Sidney, and beyond. Monday March 14 is a planned adult class at Versailles library in the evening. We will be helping them get their community garden started for the year and providing information about planting flowers and vegetables to attract pollinators. We worked with Vicky Cordonnier (nutrition coordinator at the Soil and Water office) for a few years at Agape, educating the seniors that came to get their food for the month. We also worked with her to start a garden at The Salvation Army. She is now working at the Versailles Library and still calls on the Master Gardeners to help educate about gardening.

Since this adult class was planned, they have asked if we would like to do a class for children in July and we have agreed to do that. We have also received some interest from the Darke County Master Gardeners to join us in this effort. Thank you, Doug for contacting them. If any of the Shelby County MGs would like to attend or help with or any of our presentations, especially in the way of providing information about the flower/pollinator education, that is encouraged. I see benefit in different counties cooperating to educate the public.



On April 2, The People's Garden will be presenting at Connection Point Church Women's Ministry a program at their workshop. We will be educating about horticultural therapy and garden nutrition, "How to be healthy and blessed." Then on April 7, we will be at the Methodist Dorena Circle at a private home talking about the mission of the community garden at Agape Distribution...how we got started and what we do. The garden is becoming more well-known and is developing into what we originally envisioned. We have worked to get the word out and the newspaper articles are the main way that people say they hear about us. A group at Wilson Hospital contacted us about renting a garden bed and about coming to the garden to teach a small group about gardening and how it can help with weight loss/control. They are scheduled for May to do that. They like it warm, lol.

Something we do that takes a little more planning and effort is to visit other community gardens, getting and giving ideas. We have pretty much stayed in Ohio, but I did check out one in Florida one time when I was there visiting my son. Some of them have barbeques, and some have chickens, but all of them have something in common, benefiting the community.

Well, I must get going for the day, Michelle and I are picking up materials from Menards to convert some more garden beds to metal, as the wooden ones are dilapidated after 8 years. We received funds to do this from the Farm Bureau and Women in Agriculture of Shelby County. We have a workday this Sunday afternoon already. From now on articles and workdays every month. Have fun with your gardens! 🍀



# I Take Great Notes

By Ann Heeley

As secretary for several organizations, I pride myself on taking great notes and translating them into readable minutes. But when it comes time to review many of the Lunch and Learn, Happy Hour, or Woodland Stewards webinars, these detailed notes are often tucked away, never to be seen or read again...even by me. In order to break the mold, I chose—at random—a Woodland Stewards webinar that took place last June: *Weird Things Bugs Do* by Ashley Kulhanek. I realize that while I saw the first wasp of 2022 on my window screen last weekend, many of the bugs described below won't be around for several weeks. Still why not break away from the dreadful, gloomy skies of March and steal a glimpse of what's to come.

Ashley began her webinar by reminding us that 75% of all the animals on earth are insects, and that if insects/bugs did not exist, our world would collapse. (I would argue that we'd be just fine without stink bugs, mosquitoes, EAB, white flies, and many others. But that's an argument for another article.) Without going into all of the insects and other bugs Ashley covered, I found the "weirdness" of these bugs to be especially interesting.



### Eastern Cicada Killer

This large, solitary member of the wasp family is one of the good guys. After paralyzing and dragging a live annual cicada into its underground hatching grounds, Cicada

Killers lay eggs in the body of the cicada. As the eggs hatch, the body of the cicada provides food for the young Killers. Cement blocks and pavers with holes are often used as nesting spots, too.



### Parasitoid Wasps

This family of tiny wasps form another branch of the good guys, feeding on live caterpillars. Their particular favorites are tomato and tobacco hornworms.

If you've ever seen white, oblong eggs on a large, green caterpillar on your tomato plant, you've attracted a parasitoid wasp to its favorite prey. As in the previous

scenario, the hatchlings will dine on the juicy caterpillar as they protect your tomatoes.



### Predatory Midge

Tiny midges are often found in groups, hanging from spider webs and excreting pheromones to attract mates. The larger the group, the stronger the pheromone. Adults live only a

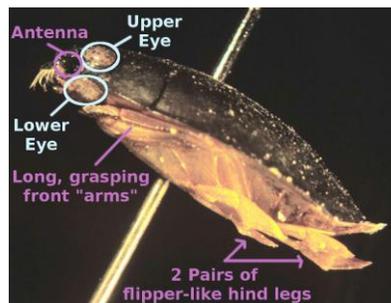
few days to mate and lay up to 250 eggs. After hatching, predatory midge larvae find aphids the tastiest of all prey, and any type of aphid, out of 70 different species, is fair game. Insecticidal soap will kill both adults and larvae.



### Scorpion Fly

Scorpion flies are not really beneficial since they feed mostly on dead insects. But their mating ritual is unusual. Both male and female have

pronounced tails, but males have a scorpion-like barb at the end. Because females may react to male overtures with a fatal bite, males bring a spit wad full of dead insects (often stolen from spider webs) as a gift to tame the females' aggressive instincts. Some males even steal "gifts" from other males if their gifts look more appealing.



### Whirligig Beetle

Whirligigs are aquatic and can trap air in their wings to stay under water. They are often found in groups to appear larger and more ferocious to

predators. Their eyes are divided in half so they can look below and above the water line. When disturbed, they send out a pheromone that smells like pineapple.

Ashley Kulhanek discussed several other insects and bugs with weird habits or appearances, so if interested, check out the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU9-mVJVrQ4>.

or try opening YouTube and search for author's videos.

That way you won't have to rely on my notes. 🍀