

Application Code: _____
(For committee use only)

**Tennessee Master Gardener Search for Excellence
2011 Application**

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 30, 2011

NAME OF MG GROUP: Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners

COUNTY: Bledsoe & Sequatchie

MASTER GARDENER CONTACT:

NAME John P. Formby

EMAIL atinjohn@msn.com

MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR/EXTENSION STAFF:

NAME Sheldon D. Barker

TITLE Director & Extension Agent, Sequatchie County

EMAIL sdbarker@utk.edu

PHONE 423-949-2611

CATEGORY---MUST SELECT AND SUBMIT IN ONLY ONE CATEGORY

- Youth
- Demonstration Garden
- Workshop or Presentation
- Community Service
- Innovative Project
- Research
- Special Needs Audience

COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PROJECT: April 20, 2010

LIST THE NAMES OF MASTER GARDENERS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT. Do not include their roles or any other individuals in this listing. *(Place the cursor in the box to type a name.)*

• Linda Barker	• Nita Formby	• Norm Murduck
• Alice Bickford	• John Formby	• Arthur Slack
• Laura Blackmon	• Carol Holland	• Pamela Ryle
• Arthur Buchman	• Linda Johnson	• Peggy Uhey
• James Fawcett	• Robert Kenville	• Ann Wheeler
• Sammye Finley	• Kenneth Lee	• Bob Wilson

If you are using Word, place your cursor in the boxes and click twice. If using PDF, place your cursor in the box and begin typing.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT (include name, location, target audience, goals, and partnerships)

Bledsoe County Nursing Home Project

The goals of the project are to provide opportunities for therapeutic gardening experiences for patients and residents at the Bledsoe County Nursing Home and Bledsoe-Erlanger Hospital located at 107 Wheelertown Avenue, Pikeville, Tennessee. The project serves elderly nursing home residents, younger patients in need of physical therapy as well as staff and visitors who enjoy gardening.

Partnering with Sell's Building Supply, Sapp's Greenhouse and the Sequatchie Valley Electric Co-operative (*SVECares*) Master Gardeners constructed raised and elevated gardening beds in the spring 2010. Sell's donated valuable treated timbers and lumber, Sapp's provided transplants and *SVECares* funded two small grants that supplied essential financial resources.

Fifty percent of the Nursing Home residents are wheelchair bound. To make the gardening beds accessible *SVMGs* mixed and poured 18 inches of concrete along 96 feet of an existing 4 foot wide wheelchair path. Four 2'x12'x12" deep elevated beds were built (96 sq. ft) and filled with a soil mixture recommended by Iowa State University Extension. The beds were first planted in June 2010. Eight large 20 inch wide and 20" deep planters with trellises were added for growing tomatoes and other deep rooted plants. In spring of 2011 five 2'x2'x12" deep planting boxes were constructed along an existing and nearby chain length fence and used for growing cucumbers, pole beans and other vining crops.

SVMGs did all of the construction work and have done most of the planting and fertilizing. Residents and patients weed, harvest, do some planting and the Nursing Home staff waters as needed. Plants have been growing continuously since June 2010 – vegetables in the spring, summer and fall and onions, pansies and ornamental cabbage in the winter.

DESCRIBE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT.

The idea for the project originated with physical therapist, Travis Smith, who is under contract to the Nursing Home and Bledsoe-Erlanger Hospital to provide therapeutic services to residents and patients. Mr. Smith knew that gardening could provide beneficial effects for those in need of physical therapy and his conversations with elderly patients suggested that many had fond recollections of gardening. This led him to approach James C. Rains, Bledsoe County Extension Agent, seeking advice on how to build and plant raised bed gardens at the Nursing Home. Agent Rains shared the idea with Sequatchie Valley Master Gardeners in March 2010 at which point project planning began.

A small coordinating committee was appointed under the presiding SVMG Vice President and a plan was devised. The committee included SVMG's retired from a variety of backgrounds including a University Professor, City/County Manager, Agricultural Engineer, Building Contractor and IRS Agent. Online research revealed a number of caveats and excellent suggestions for designing and implementing the project. *Therapeutic Gardening: Creating Raised Bed Planters* (<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/RG111.pdf>) proved to be particularly useful in the early stages of the project. In consultation with the Nursing Home Director and her staff, plans in the Iowa State University Extension (*ISUE*) brochure were adapted to the local site and a preliminary project budget was prepared and approved. The budget included four large patio umbrellas to be attached to each 2'x12' foot raised and elevated bed as well as eight large (20"x20") patio planters. Grant proposals were written and other sources of funds were secured.

Construction began in May and was completed in early June 2010. The soil mixture recommended by *ISUE* was adapted by adding worm castings and mushroom compost to the recipe. Summer vegetables and flowers were planted in mid June 2010. Beginning in the fall of 2010 a four season garden plan was implemented. The original planning and coordinating committee continues to provide leadership and oversight to the project.

HOW HAS THE PROJECT BEEN FUNDED AND HOW HAVE THOSE FUNDS BEEN SPENT?

To date \$1644.08 in revenues have been received to support the project and \$1640.61 has been invested in the project.

Revenues have been received from several sources. Two small grants by *SVECares* (a community outreach program of the Sequatchie Valley Electric Cooperative) totaling \$934.72 provided the bulk (82%) of the cash contributions. The SVMG Association contributed \$200.00. Sell's Building and Supply donated lumber with a market value of \$239.36, Sapp's Greenhouse provided plants worth \$70.00 and individual Master Gardeners gave plants, seeds, fertilizer and mulch valued at \$200.00. Major expenditures included concrete, building materials and supplies (\$865.70), patio umbrellas and planting pots (\$384.80), planting medium, transplants and a soil test (\$390.11).

The Bledsoe County Nursing Home has agreed to provide up to \$255.00 in continuing yearly support of the project to purchase seed, transplants and fertilizer, but to date it has not been necessary to call upon this support.

DESCRIBE THE OUTCOMES OF THIS PROJECT. HOW HAS IT AUGMENTED LEARNING, INCREASED KNOWLEDGE OR CHANGED PRACTICES TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE? INCLUDE THE METHODS YOU USED TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF THE PROJECT. (These impacts could be economical, educational, environmental, health or community based. SFE projects should be developed to reach the most people possible from the target audience. Impact numbers are not significant if the target audience does not learn or utilize the information. Make sure that you ask participants how this information helped them and record this as an impact. For example, evaluation questions that ask, "How do you plan to use this information?" or "Can you share specific information that you learned today?"

The project has advanced learning by nursing home residents, staff and SVMG's alike, and done so in several distinct ways. In addition, the skills and gardening practices of a number of master gardeners have been improved as a result of working on the project. Finally and most importantly, there is evidence that the project succeeded in enhancing the lives of some nursing home residents. Each of these outcomes is briefly discussed below.

Learning - To encourage interest in the project and facilitate learning, a survey was designed and administered to non-bed ridden nursing home residents. Key staff personnel who would be involved in monitoring and watering the gardens were also interviewed. The format of the interviews was open ended and conversational in style, but included a list of specific questions to be talked about during the interview. To educate residents and staff about raised bed gardening, soil quality and pH two single page handouts, "*Things You Need To Know About Raised Bed Gardens*" and "*Things You Need to Know About Soil Quality and pH Levels*" were shared with residents and staff and explained during the extended interviews. Master Gardeners learned from residents when they asked about past gardening experiences and how residents coped with pests and disease in growing their own gardens. Learning also occurred during the construction phase of the project, which was led by a retired master carpenter. Finally, learning occurred when physical therapist Travis Smith presented an educational program titled "Therapeutic Benefits of Gardening in an Aging Population" at a regularly scheduled SVMG meeting.

Skill Enhancement and Changes in Gardening Practices – SVMG's toiling in the construction and soil preparation stage of the project not only learned, they enhanced their skills, with one remarking "I don't know how to quantify this, but in the category of "Who learned What", I learned a tremendous amount about this specialized type of raised bed construction and I greatly improved my construction skills in the process." Several have now constructed their own raised and elevated beds and the soil recipe used in the project has been widely shared and used by certified SVMG's and Interns alike.

Quality of Life – Two residents, Ray Songer and Willie Aikens, now deceased, were featured in the Nursing Home Newsletter of August 2010 with photos of them in wheelchairs working in the garden. It was reported that their regular visits to the gardens in the summer of 2010 were highly anticipated and the highlight of their day. SVMGs are pleased to have contributed to enhancing the quality of their lives toward the end.