

TNP VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

MAUREEN MAY

OWL'S HILL CHAPTER, 2024-25

CERTIFIED TENNESSEE NATURALIST + 200 HOUR MILESTONE

NATIVE GARDENING

PORTLAND POCKET PARK

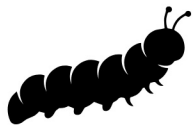


get to know...

SECOND SUNDAY GARDENERS



Created and maintains several unique gardens at Portland Park, a small pocket park near Hillsboro Village, which was once rather neglected and is now thriving with native plants and pollinators.



Current gardens and projects:

- Pollinator Patch
- Food Forest
- Soft Landing
- Fallen Trees Garden
- Urban Herb Share

FOCUS

Removing exotic species in favor of native plants that support our ecosystem and wildlife, reducing lawns, and organic food growing.



TRANSFORMING THE PARK

We have expanded the area considerably and **added 80+ native species of trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and ground covers.** We are now in our fourth summer there and so much has been done.



INVASIVES REMOVED

- Honeysuckle
- Rose of Sharon
- Mimosa
- Privet
- English ivy
- Tree of Heaven
- Vinca minor

NATIVE SPECIES ADDED

- Tulip poplar
- Red oak
- Bald cypress
- Elderberry
- Juneberry
- Native plum
- Beautyberry
- Persimmon
- Pawpaws
- Hazelnut
- Witchhazel
- Spicebush
- St. John's Wort
- Goldenrods
- Asters
- Mistflower
- Green-and-gold
- Passionflower
- Little Joe Pye Weed
- Kintzley's Ghost honeysuckle vine

HOW IT STARTED

Second Sunday Gardeners began in 2018 as my reaction to the yards in our Belmont Hillsboro Neighborhood being reduced to postage stamp size, stuck between a huge mansion and an additional two-car garage/apartment.

I wanted to connect with people who cared about the yards we still have left.

In 2022 we were asked by our local neighborhood association to put in an 1,800 square foot pollinator garden at the rather neglected piece of land known as Portland Pocket Park. With the help of Tennessee Environmental Council, the "Pollinator Patch" was installed in February 2023. That was just the beginning!

We got busy on the "Food Forest" area later that year, followed by two "Soft Landings" under a shingle oak and a silver maple, along with a "Fallen Trees Garden" furnished with fallen tree structures rescued from the Ice Storm Fern debris and well-behaved native plants. We also created an Urban Herb Share: 30 culinary herbs that surround the Pollinator Patch which has expanded that garden to over 2,000 square feet. This serves a dual purpose by bringing people in to gather herbs and look at the pollinator garden and by providing nectar or pollen for pollinators.

We have educational signage for all of the gardens, as we want Portland Park to set an example of eco-landscaping in our yards and other community and private spaces.

MY PASSION

I keep coming back to the park because I guess I am in love. I think of this once neglected piece of land almost all the time, and it often keeps me awake at night. I read a lot about biodiversity loss, climate change, native ecosystems, etc. and **I could not stop doing this work even if I wanted to, as I am trying in my own small way to help.**

There are so many moments that happen to remind me why it all matters. People are starting to hang out at the park. I saw a man sitting on a stump playing guitar in the Soft Landing. I relished going to the library with my granddaughter where we checked out *Nature's Best Hope (Young Readers' Edition)* by Douglas Tallamy, and three days later when we were at Portland Park together she tells me all about it. I cherished taking my youngest grandson and a friend around the Pollinator Patch at the Summer Solstice Party in June, as they picked herbs to make a wreath.

What started out as a search for other like-minded people who care about our world has become so much more, and I cannot express my gratitude for this opportunity.

THE IMPACT OF TNP

The Tennessee Naturalist Program classes were wonderful; I broadened my knowledge and experience so much thanks to TNP. I use the knowledge I gained in my volunteer work, most specifically the native plants and trees, but also the knowledge about invertebrates and birds which helps in our work at Portland Park and in planning our meetings for Second Sunday Gardeners. I also met wonderful people through the program, and **I hope that more Tennessee Naturalists will work with us at Portland Park.**



VOLUNTEER IMPACT

This project has taught me that we have wonderful members of SSG who truly care and give their time to make this world better. It has helped me become a better leader, and it has taught me to seek knowledge from others rather than try to do everything myself.

It has replaced loss with purpose; I can no longer hear without my CI and hearing aid, but I still have passion for something that is so important. I can tend towards reclusive behavior due to my hearing loss, but I have found so many common interests among so many different people and organizations. I feel much more connected than in the past. My favorite part is connecting with others who share this interest in saving our wildlife and the world we all live in.

Our neighborhood supports us and I see some of the things we do in our own yards and at Portland Park being replicated. Additionally, Stroll magazine asked SSG to do a monthly article; it started out at only 300 words and now they give us two full pages. Each month we feature wonderful guest writers from various environmental and native plant organizations, getting the message out there to folks who would not otherwise see it.