



The Garden Thyme Podcast-*Getting Down and Dirty in the Garden*

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Background

In the last five years, Extension has felt the growing pains of a post-COVID world. Our educational programming has moved drastically from in-person classes to Zoom lecture series via smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Podcasts have become a proven tool for educators to disseminate information. They offer flexibility to our listeners, engage audiences, and promote valuable educational knowledge sharing in an easily digestible format. The 2024 Podcast Consumer Report (CITE) cited that “67% of the 12+ population has listened to a podcast (192 million people).” In 2025, the number of listeners is expected to reach 584 million people. With 4.42 million podcasts available worldwide, people can truly choose their own adventure (Podcast Index, 2025). The intersection of technology and extension education is vital to extending the mission of extension programs and reaching diverse audiences.

Methods

University of Maryland Extension Educators, R. Rhodes, M. Boley, and E. Zobel produce the Garden Thyme Podcast using several programs and equipment. Episodes are recorded and edited using Audacity (<https://www.audacityteam.org>). Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, episodes have been recorded virtually, using either Zoom recordings or Riverside online studio (<https://riverside.fm/>). The audio files are then edited in Audacity. Episodes are housed on Buzzsprout.com and are available for download on iTunes, Spotify, Google Podcast (discontinued in 2024), Podcast Addict, Overcast, Stitcher, and on the podcast Buzzsprout website (www.buzzsprout.com/687509). The podcast is advertised on the Garden Thyme facebook page (URL or @GardenThymePodcast) and the Maryland Grows Blog (<https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/>). In 2023, *The Garden Thyme Podcast* launched a survey using Qualtrics to solicit user impact.

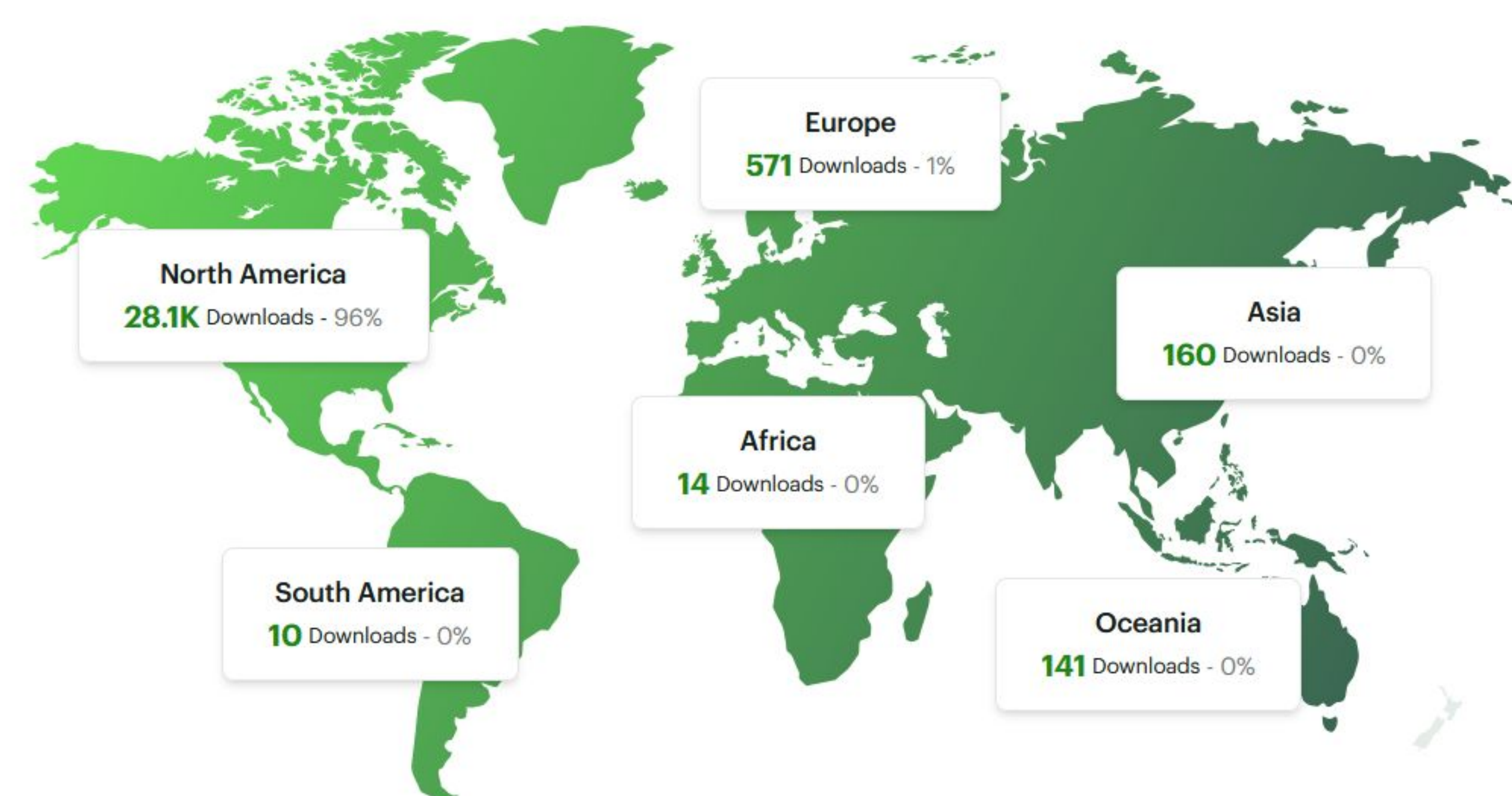


Figure 1: Map illustrating total worldwide downloads since October 2019

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Results

There have been 59 episodes published since October 2019. As of January 1st, 2025: 28,700 downloads with over 2,640 minutes of content shared. The survey has a total of 104 respondents.

User Stats:

- 75% of listens are on mobile devices (iPhones and Androids)
- 96% of listeners are from the United States; the remaining 4% include downloads from Asia, Oceania, Europe, Africa, and South America.

Survey Response:

- 96.6% increased their gardening knowledge
- 94.7% felt more confident about their ability to garden sustainably
- 94.7% have a better understanding about how they are connected to the environment and how their actions impacted the environment
- 55.4% saved money from using the knowledge gained

Listeners engaged in these behaviors because of the podcast:

- 71% made changes to the landscape or garden
- 75% reduced fertilizer usage
- 94% reduced their pesticide usage
- 65% increased pollinator and wildlife habitat
- 66% increased the number of native plants in the landscape
- 47.7% have reduced lawn or turfgrass
- 56% have removed or controlled an invasive pest or plant
- 57.7% planted a vegetable garden
- 62% have tried growing a new variety of vegetable or edible plant
- 39% have performed a soil test
- 73% increased their use of UME or Extension-based resources to answer garden related questions

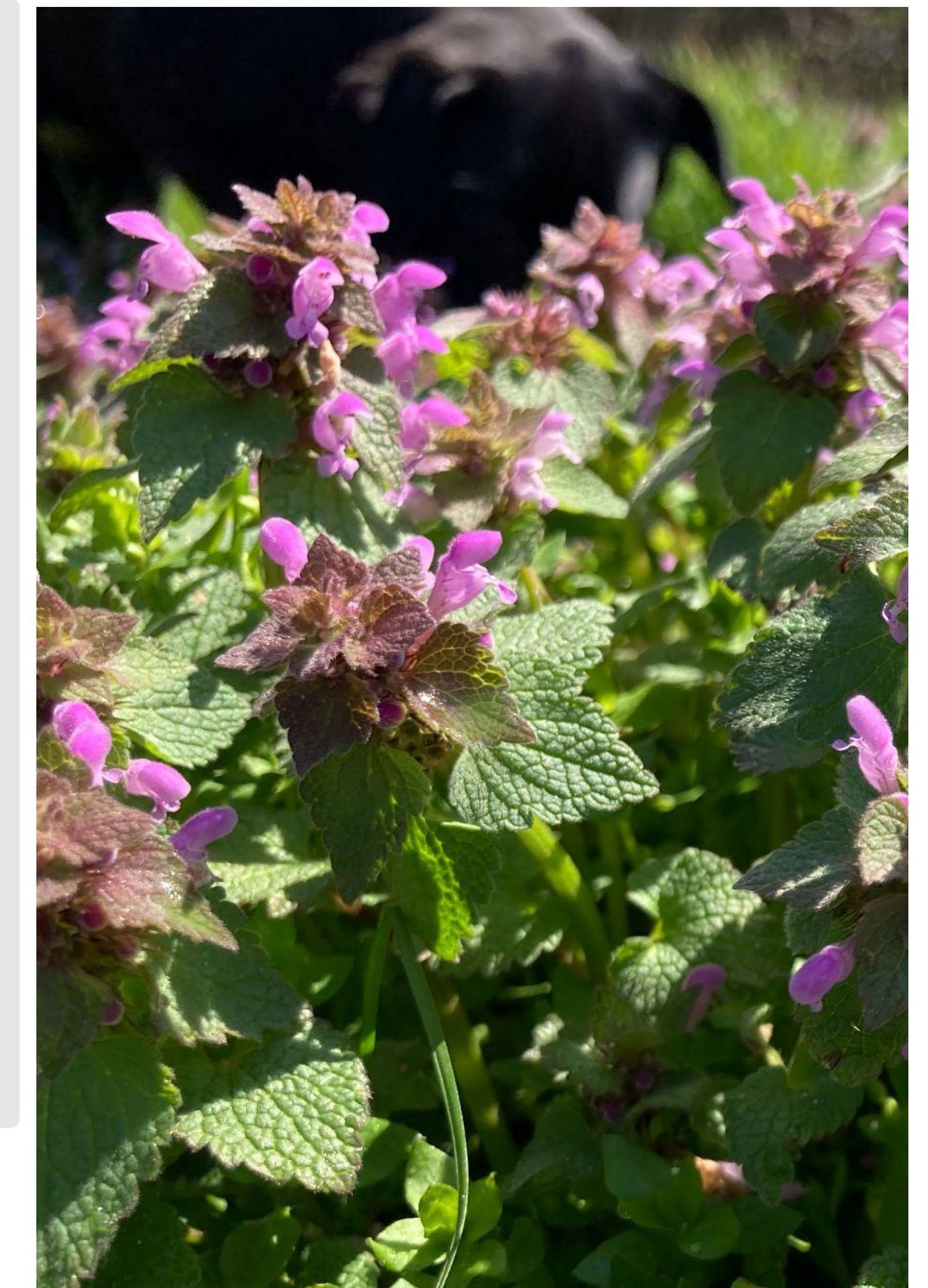


Figure 2: *The Garden Thyme Podcast* team (from left to right); R. Rhodes, E. Zobel, and M. Boley.

Figure 3: Top 5 Most Downloaded episodes:

- Winter Garden Chores & Holiday Tree Tips
- Spring Weeds
- Shade Gardening
- On the Go: Orchids at Longwood Gardens
- Fruit Trees & Small Fruits

Right: *Spring Weeds* has a total of 1,075 downloads; purple deadnettle (*Lamium* spp) pictured right. Credit: R.J. Rhodes.



Outputs

There have been 59 episodes published since October 2019. Topics covered in 2024 include; non-bee pollinators, mosquitoes, bird and turkey habitat, mushrooms, toxic plants, and plant purchasing habits. Guest speakers occasionally cover special topics, such as growing small fruits, fertilizers and amendments, non-bee pollinators, and growing mushrooms commercially. Each month’s episode also includes short segments on native plants, insects, and timely garden tips. *The Garden Thyme Podcast* maintains an active Facebook page with 293 followers. It is routinely featured on the Maryland Grows Blog as part of the University of Maryland Extension Home and Garden Information Center, with a total of >1,850 people reached.

References

- Edison Research. (2024, May 12). *The Podcast Consumer Report 2024*. <https://www.edisonresearch.com/the-podcast-consumer-2024-by-edison-research/>
- Podcast Index. (2025, Feb 25). *How Many Podcasts Are There?*. <https://www.demandsage.com/podcast-statistics/>

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to The Maryland Grows Blog for the University of Maryland Extension, The University of Maryland Extension, The Home and Garden Information Center for the University of Maryland Extension, and all of our special guests.