

THYMES

CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

February, 2022



President: Jewell Wilhoite

The big heart day has passed and some of us still have chocolate tempting in the box. We can now turn our attention to creating décor, assembling silent auction items, checking the attic for tag sale treasures, and passing along *Save the Date* cards or word-of-mouth invitations for our FLAG show. It may seem early, but calendars fill up quickly, and we want all our friends to visit on the two BIG days, April 22nd and 23rd.

Mike Barron and his multi-talented committee chairs continue to fine tune every aspect of the Show. Many master gardeners have already signed up with Patti Smith to volunteer. If you haven't done so, please give her a call: 850-319-7752. Or, catch Patti at the March 1st meeting. Also, don't forget to bring your silent auction and/or tag sale items to the meeting. Think about what you would buy in a gift shop, or what you would take home from a yard sale. Those are the distinctions.

Getting back to those calendars, we have two projects quickly approaching: Arbor Day and Downtown in Bloom. At the last meeting, Sid Morgan spoke about the tree giveaway on March 4th, with volunteers

needed by 8:15. This year, we have lucked out with a *first ever* cover over our heads—the barn, located in back of the Community Complex (Fairgrounds). Adding to that event will be an informational table inside one of the buildings (again a first) where a couple of master gardeners can greet people and hand out promotional materials. Who wants to be an inside person?

Downtown in Bloom will happen April 1st from 4 to around 8:30. However, the planning committee via Heather Mullinix (Chronicle/Glade Sun) needs a commitment by the first week of March. We will need a lead volunteer to plan, organize and communicate with Heather. In the past, we have helped children pot up a small plant. So, locating and obtaining plants will also be necessary. Please step up if you want to do this.

Also, thank you to a couple of master gardeners who have already expressed an interest in these two events.

Moving on to our upcoming March 1st meeting: Guess who's coming to dinner? As it turns out, Sheila McNeely, Eastern Region Volunteer Representative for the Tennessee Extension Master Gardeners, will be joining us. She is becoming acquainted with all the master gardener organizations and will give us a brief introduction to herself and her role. Let's make her feel welcome—as we always do.

Rosie and Ron haven't mentioned anything about *green* in food preparation or attire, but if you're feeling your Irish, let it shine.

We hope to see everyone around 5 pm on March 1st at the Country Store or on zoom. We're still on a countdown to spring and the FLAG show!

Vice President: Rhoda Hiller



I hope everyone is staying warm and enjoying the pictures in the seed catalogues and planning projects for spring in your yards. I took a couple pictures of the daffodils blooming in my neighbor's yard the other day. Her plants bloom early but never this early. It is refreshing to see a pop of color when I walk my dog.

We are excited about the Classes in the Garden this year. I will be teaching a couple of classes. As Gregg says, if you want to learn more about something, teach it. So, if any of you would like to teach a new skill that others might find interesting, take a chance and teach it.

I want to add my welcome to our new interns. We were all at this same point at one time. Without the encouragement of the seasoned MG's, I might not have continued. We all want to assist wherever possible.

Treasurer: Alan Baker

Website: Please remember that our CCMG calendar is available via the website...to make it easier to find I have added a green link button at the top of the home page. By the time that you read this, there will be a full list of the 2022 "Classes at the Garden" available via a link on the home page. To keep up with what is going on with the FLAG show, there is also a link on the home page...bigger letters and in green.

Dues: A friendly reminder that dues are "due" by the March 1st membership meeting. We currently have 40 paid members. If you are attending, you can pay at the meeting. If not, please send your check to Alan Baker, 524 Tabor Loop, Crossville, 38571. Past members who have not paid by then will be dropped from the directory and the email list.

Membership Directory: A new membership directory will be sent to all paid members after the March membership meeting. On that list will be the new password to the Members Only section of our website that will be effective when the list is sent. After that, the directory will be kept up to date and posted in the Members Only section.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Animal Encounters: Sue Partch

Last year's articles were serious and educational. Going in a completely different direction this year, I'm going to write about wild animal encounters I've had. Most will be from when I lived on a wonderful hilltop in the woods in Vermont, but to start I have one from here in Crossville, 10 miles south actually, but also in the woods.

My sisters were visiting, and my daughter and granddaughter came to see them. We were playing a game while talking around my all-purpose table. It was a warm summer night, and I had doors open, including the door to the cellar (basement for you non-New Englanders).

One of my sisters suddenly said, *Oh, look!*

We looked ... at a young opossum standing on the top cellar step. It was wary but not especially frightened to have 5 humans staring at it. Even though we oohed and aahed at how cute it was and moved to get a closer look and then to take pictures, it held its ground.

What to do with it? I didn't want it to get further into the house, even if it might sprint to an open door as an exit. Finally, I got my broom and shooed at it with that. It reacted by baring its teeth. More aggressive broom shooing got it backed down the steps a bit and then it disappeared into the cellar ceiling duct work. Not exactly where I wanted it, but better than in the house.

So, now, how to get it out of the cellar? And come to think of it, how did it get there in the first place? I remembered I'd had the outside cellar door open during the day. Apparently the *guest* wandered in at that time. So, when I shut that door, it was trapped inside. It might have been lured upstairs by food smells or, perhaps, by looking for another exit.

Back to getting it out. With the opossum hiding in the duct works, I *bravely* ventured down the stairs--with my broom for protection--and opened the outside cellar door. It was left open all night--the upstairs one into the house firmly shut--in hopes the opossum would, eventually, go out and nothing else would venture in. It worked.

I don't usually do Facebook, but my daughter set up a facepage for me in case I changed my mind. The picture on that page is of our young opossum visitor.

Staghorn Ferns: Carol Lorenc

Years ago, I was awed by the HUGE (about 10' diameter) staghorn fern mounted over a doorway in one of the Buffalo Botanical Gardens greenhouses--stunning--immediately transported me to a German hunting lodge in the mountains. Isn't it amazing the power of plants to spark our imaginations?! So, when I saw a whole line of baskets with those ferns at a roadside stand in Cedar Key, FL in January, the van came to a screeching halt. I was mesmerized and bought two. THEN, I found information (summarized below) from Wisconsin Extension which would be useful for winter back in TN!

Staghorn ferns are a group of about 18 species of epiphytic ferns native primarily to Africa, Australia and Southeast Asia, whose fronds supposedly resemble the forked antlers of male deer or elk. The names *staghorn fern* and *elkhorn fern* are often used interchangeably.

Platycerium bifurcatum is the species easiest to grow. Native to rainforests of Java, New Guinea and southeastern Australia, it does best with year-round temperatures above 40°F, so it can be grown here as a house plant that can be moved outdoors during the summer. Staghorn fern makes a great ornamental adornment for a wall indoors or seasonally outdoors in the Midwest.

As big as 3 feet across at maturity, the plant grows from short rhizomes that produce two types of fronds. Sterile (non-reproductive) basal fronds and fertile (reproductive) foliar fronds, which most people would consider the leaves, grow up from the base. Each 18-inch frond branches into two or three segments a number of times along its length. Spores grow on the underside tips of the fertile fronds. Each plant is really a collection of many offsets (called suckers or pups) crammed together and will continue to grow new plantlets as the rhizomes expand and produce new sterile fronds.

As epiphytes, staghorn ferns do not grow in soil, but attach to trees when growing in nature and can be grown in containers indoors. Typically, they are grown mounted on wooden boards or bark slabs, in wire

baskets, or on other supports in a growing medium, such as sphagnum or peat moss. The fern is secured to the support by monofilament fishing line, wire, plastic mesh or other materials wrapped over/through the dead, brown, shield-shaped basal fronds (not over the soft, green fronds or they will be badly damaged). Once new basal fronds emerge, they will hide the fastening material.

Good air circulation, bright indirect light, warm temperatures, moderate humidity and consistent moisture assure good growth. Be sure to soak the basal fronds and the medium when dry. However, Staghorn ferns rot easily if overwatered. Rainwater is best. Established plants can withstand fairly long periods without water. They can tolerate more direct sunlight when humidity and temperatures are high but also require more water when in direct light.

Read more at <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/staghorn-fern-platycerium-bifurcatum>

The photo shows the ferns in my bathroom. I soak them, periodically, in a bucket of rainwater and run the humidifier on cold days when the heat runs constantly.



Meet our Members, February 2022

Interviews: Rosie Drechnik

Janet Russell

Janet and her husband Bob Lucas moved to Crossville in 2020 from Wilmington, North Carolina. She grew up not far from here in McMinnville. She retired from a career as an Environmental Inspector, having been trained in biology. She and Bob have one daughter, Jordan. They have 2 cats.

Janet became a Certified Master Gardener in 2021 and was in the most recent CCMG class. When asked what her favorite part of the training was, she stated she has a *spot in my heart for pollinators*. One of the things she likes best about CCMG is that there are so many opportunities to learn and serve.

Even though Janet is new to the organization, she has already been involved in several areas of service. She has helped with Vicki's bird wreaths project and has volunteered to help with vendor support for the FLAG show.

Janet enjoys all types of gardening and is learning to adapt and modify her gardening efforts to fit the unique environment of the plateau. She has already built a cold frame and is growing some cold crop vegetables. She does not consider herself an expert in any area of gardening. Janet and her husband purchased a 3-acre property on Pidgeon Ridge Road, which she stated had been neglected, but they are up to the challenge of restoring and beautifying the land.

When asked if there was anything she wanted to share, Janet stated she graduated from Berea College in Kentucky.

Susan Maruska

Susan and her husband of 46 years, David, moved to Fairfield Glade in 2019. They relocated from central New Jersey which she describes as farmland. She retired from a career in nursing during which she worked as an RN in the prison system, labor and delivery, newborn nursery, and dialysis. She most likely worked in other areas not covered during the interview.

Susan and David have a son who is in the Air Force, currently living in Spain. Their daughter lives in Philadelphia and is an artist. They have one granddaughter (her son's child) who is also artistic and loves horses.

Susan is a Certified Master Gardener and one of our most recent new graduates, having enrolled in the 2021 intern class. When asked about her favorite part of the intern training, she stated she liked learning about perennials. Unfortunately, due to Covid, her class only met in person once. Despite that, Susan jumped in and began helping with the bird wreath project which Vicki May heads up, and she also volunteered at the Apple Fest Master Gardener booth. Further, she spent time out at the Plateau Gardens weeding. Susan has followed her training interests with perennial gardening. She also grows veggies in containers.

Susan was one of the participants in Sid's hikes which she thoroughly enjoyed. She does not consider herself an expert in any area of gardening and was privileged to grow up on a 100-acre farm with a mom who was an avid gardener.

When asked if she had any interesting facts to share, she stated they raised sheep on a 1 ½ acre land parcel in New Jersey. They learned to shear the sheep, spin the wool into yarn and knit the wool into various items. Her artistic daughter especially enjoyed this process.

She also informed me that the oldest rodeo in the Country is in the state of New Jersey. Who knew?!

FLAG: Mike Barron

Demonstrations:

At the FLAG show, in addition to the major speakers, several short presentations will occur during each day. At vendor booths and a designated demo site, 10-minute demonstrations on practical topics related to TN Smart Yards or featured products will be given.

We are looking for Master Gardener volunteers to give some of these demos. No formal presentation skills required, just a willingness to show interested people how something works. Here are just some of many possibilities:

- There will be rain barrels as part of the *decorations*; could you explain the positioning, parts and purpose?
- Could you share how you provide food and water for birds; what kind of food and feeder attracts what kinds of birds?
- Do you grow native plants--why? how? where in your yard? Where did you get them?
- If you make your own compost and/or mulch, could you tell what you use for containers, ingredients, quantities you use and on what plants and when?

Probably, every one of us has a gardening practice that could be shared. Please consider offering your knowledge to others by presenting it as a demo at the FLAG show. Contact **Sue Partch** to volunteer for this part of the FLAG show.

A SINCERE THANK YOU TO ALL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS AND DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT THE
CCMGA WEBSITE

<http://www.ccmga.org>