

# THYMES: CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

APRIL, 2021



A

Sun, wind and showers erupt in cherry blossoms

President: Ron Drechnik

Hi everyone,

This has been a very busy month for the Drechnik house. We have been planting a lot of seeds, both from Dr. Natalie's garden trials and Rosie's herbs, flowers and lettuces. We are using our mini greenhouse and, so far, things are looking great. We were at PDG last Sunday watering the tomatoes and peppers and got a sneak peek at the plants for the plant sale, and WOW are they nice. Rosie was trying to find what we ordered and found a lot of them.

Now on to business: From the Umbrella Committee we have the following information

- Internship: we have an intern. Her name is Chloe Jaquish and she is a senior at Tennessee Tech. Her major is Agriculture w/concentration in Horticulture. Her career goals are to work in a plant nursery or botanical garden.
- Classes are going very well with 55-146 enrolled and 20+ at each class.
- Shalena put in for an ACS grant opportunity and just found out the gardens was awarded a \$1000 grant for the proposed conifer project. Great job, Shalena!

Other business:

I looked into the memorial benches and found out that they were discontinued for the summer; but great news, I got a call for the Amish store, and they will be back in September. We can order them

then, provided we have collected enough money to cover the cost. We have received \$150 to date. Hopefully by September, we can purchase at least one.

Great news... we are going live for our June members meeting! We will meet at the outdoor classroom at PDG at 5:30 for social, class at 6:00 and the meeting at 7:00. Carol Burdett will be our speaker. We can have desserts if they are individually wrapped. We will have pop and water and maybe coffee, as well as, whatever individually packaged snacks we can find at the country store's back room. We will have seating set up for social distancing and masks are optional per UT guidelines.

Hope to see you in June. Wishing you all great gardening.

Ron

## Vice President: Linda Ferris

Our speaker for May is UT professor, Dr. Andrea Ludwig, who will speak on rain gardens.

On a more personal note:

I experimented with drying tomato seeds for about a month and then planted them in an egg carton. I'm happy to report I have 5 little plants from 5 little seeds that are all doing well! They're about 3" tall and I'm hoping to transplant to something larger in about a week - provided they



survive on their own for 3 days this week.

My dogwood & red bud are beautiful, and I've had more blossoms on my apple tree than ever before. Tulips & daffodils are done, but Swedish bluebells are spreading more each year. The irises and peonies are coming along. The freeze made my hostas look sad but they will recover. All in all, spring has sprung!

## Rosie Drechnik: New Training Project Proposal

Hey, Master Gardeners,

I've been thinking it would be fun to work with other Master Gardeners on a project which you might want to design or complete. It would be a way of getting together outdoors in a safe environment, would teach some of us less experienced gardeners a thing or two, and be a way of helping a fellow MG. If there is interest shown, I would be willing to organize and head up the endeavors. Please review the attached proposal I presented to the board this month, and let me know what you think.

Thanks.

Proposal for Master Gardeners, April 19, 2021

- Interested members of CCMG submit a request for a garden/yard project
- The board reviews to ensure appropriate
- A project selected (perhaps drawing from a hat-gardening, of course)
- Anyone interested in helping with the project notified of the particulars-date, place, time etc.
- The person /host for the project researches the specifics of the project and presents a small informal talk of what was learned. Or, host finds an expert to speak on the issue
- Project evaluated for possible seasonal repetition of idea

I feel this would be a wonderful way of educating members, promoting camaraderie and good will, and genuinely helping members. None of us are getting any younger! (Ouch!)

Once we have a few projects completed, perhaps we could offer one as a give-away at the FLAG show. The winner would need to provide all the materials. We would simply work alongside the winner and teach as we go. This would expand our outreach to the community.

Many of us learn best not only by hearing and seeing but by DOING!

## Sue Partch: Violets



I like violets. I have lots of them and welcome them as they appear: tiny, inch-high white ones and purple ones, tall pointed-leaf yellow ones (Halberd-leaved), my imported-from-Vermont long-spurred ones, the clump of White Mountain gift-from-a-friend ones and of course, the big cheery purple and/or white ones that grow all over the yard and gardens. However, because they are where they're not wanted and crowding things I do want, they've become weeds.

The options are eliminate, tolerate, move or compromise. As we all know, eliminating violets is a hopeless task. Any herbicide that works on violets pretty much kills everything, and it seems impossible to pull all of them once they get established. Besides, thanks to plentiful seeds and wide seed dispersal, they come back. Moving them is labor intensive, and tolerating them means giving up what they're crowding. I compromise by pulling them from the main body of my gardens, leaving them as a pretty border on the edges and I've given up on my lawn. It's mostly moss, anyway, and the violets are actually a good ground cover. They tolerate semi-shade and moist, poor soil where lots of other things won't grow.

So, since they are here to stay, what are violets good for? They are pretty, edible pollinators, have medicinal uses and, as already mentioned, are a good ground cover--as a plus, deer resistant and they'll grow under black walnut trees. I enjoy them where they bloom, but small bouquets of violets in a low bud vase will last a few days. As a kid, I always gave a ragged bunch as my Mother's Day gift to my mom, and they would still work for moms (and grandmothers) today.

Violets are spring pollinator plants for many bees, and the sole larval host for some types of fritillary butterflies. The seeds are covered with a fatty deposit called elaiosomes that is especially attractive as a food for ants. Mice, turkeys and several other birds and small animals eat the whole seed.

As human food, the leaves and flowers of most violets are edible. Roots and seeds are NOT. Since a few varieties have some mild side effects, I suggest limiting food uses to the common wild one you are trying to get rid of. Violet leaves are rich in vitamins A and C and contain calcium and magnesium. Raw young leaves and flowers can be used in salads, older leaves steamed or boiled alone or with other greens. Leaves and/or flowers are used for making tea, flavoring lemonade or jelly, and as a soup thickener. Coated in sugar or frozen in ice cubes, violet flowers make colorful, unique, edible decorations.

Because violets contain some salicylic acid, a chief ingredient in aspirin, they can be used as a pain reliever, even, sometimes, for cancer. They can be made into a syrup to use for coughs and colds and as a mild child laxative. Natural remedies groups claim violet tincture is good for the lymphatic system and that ground up fresh leaves make a paste poultice that shrinks tumors.

I have always been intrigued by candied violets and will make a point of trying it this spring. The idea of pretty flower ice cubes also appeals to me and I'll toss a few leaves and flowers in a salad one day to see if I like that. Knowing their importance as a pollinator I will be less grouchy about violets being everywhere and will do more transplanting with "ground cover" in mind. Mostly though, I will just continue to enjoy them as they bloom and apologize to them when I pull them out of my flowers and lop them off with the mower because, as I said at the start, I like violets.

Information for this piece came from the following on-line sites: Xerces Society, St Olaf College, Penn State Extension, DIY, Natural and Homespun Seasonal Living and Healthy Green Savvy, in response to my query for "Violet Uses". As always, use caution when using wild products for food or medicine; consulting experts and doctors is recommended.

## **Feathered Friends of the Gardeners**

Alan Baker

Birds...

This year we have had very few birds visit our feeders. We have discovered the cause...a mockingbird has taken up residence and has confiscated our feeders as her own personal property. If a bird dares to land on a feeder, it is immediately attacked by the mockingbird. We have tried setting up another feeder at a distance to attract her away, but now she just guards all of them equally! My wife is now searching for a high performance toy squirt gun.

to me

## Jewell Wilhoite

A young cardinal has built a nest in the Nandina outside our front window. Perhaps she's afraid of the dark and likes that we leave the porch lite on. She is not happy when we open the front door or garage. Even through the freezing cold, she sat on that nest. I hope those eggs survive, because we have now delayed cutting back that overgrown Nandina. It's taking over the driveway. No worries about the berries hanging from it. Smart birds around here don't eat them.

## "Thursday Timely Topics"

Gregg Upchurch is hosting a weekly series of timely gardening topics via Zoom. These are available to the general public and can also earn us CEU hours. We have all the information that you need on our website at <https://www.ccmga.org/2021-classes-in-the-garden> .

You might also want to share that link with your friends.

## 2021 Intern Fundraising

Many, many thanks to those members who donated to this fundraiser for the 2021 Summer Intern at the PDG. This special effort ended on 4/1/21 and we have a total of \$2,400 in that fund. It will be available to Walt Hitch when he is ready and an intern has been selected. We certainly plan on again having a Flower, Lawn and Garden show next year and that we won't have to repeat a fundraiser like this.

An additional thank you to everyone who dropped in to say a few words and *sit a spell*.