

THYMES

CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

March 17, 2022

Green: a color that grows on us.



President: Jewell Wilhoite

Let's start at the beginning, a very nice place to start.

An Earth Song by Langston Hughes, 1925

It's an earth song,--

And I've been waiting long for an earth song.

It's a spring song,--

And I've been waiting long for a spring song.

Strong as the shoots of a new plant

Strong as the bursting of new buds

Strong as the coming of the first child from its mother's womb.

It's an earth song,

A body song,

A spring song,

I have been waiting long for this spring song.

I couldn't have said it better. Thanks to Dick Kaleba for sharing. [Luck of the Irish](#) for everyone.

Bells are ringing and birds are singing, thanks to Rhoda and 10 other creative master gardener painters in the Gardens. They took down 8 bluebird houses, repaired as necessary and gave each a decorative fresh coat of paint. They also refreshed one sign and one mailbox.



Irresistible!

Another notable accomplishment and a first for location, weather, and inside community outreach was the annual Arbor Day tree giveaway. I counted at least 18 master gardeners volunteering at the event located at the fairgrounds. Could have been more.

Recognize these smiling faces—Shalena Durkot and Ernie Wood, Linda Ferris and Louise Grilley with TN Smart Yards sign.



Thanks to Robin Piacine for capturing the action inside.

Mark your calendars: Our May 3rd (not April) general meeting will take place at the Plateau Gardens in the classroom. The election site for primaries has caused this change. Write it down.

Vice President: Rhoda Hiller

Fred Mullen will prepare us for growing the best tomatoes. If you've been keeping track, you know that Fred is in demand as a master gardener instructor. He and Sid Morgan can pack them in—102 signed up for their class on vegetables in the Gardens. Fred also draws a big crowd on his own.

We further owe Fred much gratitude for planting and maintaining tomato and pepper seedlings for the FLAG Show. How many years does this make, Fred? He was on hand a few days ago to oversee the transplanting of hundreds of those seedlings. Thank you, Fred, and we'll be taking notes.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Sue Partch: Animal Encounters--Louie

During most of my 50's, my husband and I were caretakers for 700+ acres of wooded acres on a Vermont hilltop. The living quarters was an old A frame hunting camp building to which 3 large garage bays were added with a spacious apartment above them. There was an interior stairway between the two parts. We lived in the A-frame section which, oddly, had its kitchen upstairs. Off the upstairs bedroom was a small balcony.

During the summer we would sleep with the balcony door and the kitchen door to the shared interior stairway open for a bit of cooling cross breeze. One night my husband noticed a shape flying past the end of the bed. It began to happen regularly. We decided it was a bat sleeping somewhere in the building during the day and going out to feed each night through the conveniently-open balcony door. My husband named it Louie (which he had to explain to me), but baseball enthusiasts might figure out on their own.

We all co-existed fine with only an occasional late-night-startled passing in the hallway until we had a new refrigerator delivered. As the delivery men struggled up the steep narrow interior stairway with their heavy awkward load, one of them bumped a picture hanging on the wall. I rushed to take it down, and as I did out flew Louie. We'd found his *bedroom*.

The top delivery man almost lost the fridge as he shrank back declaring he was scared of bats. Louie disappeared. And I had a good laugh because the picture he was sleeping behind was of a great horned owl, a bat predator.

Vicki May & Carol Lorenc

Vicki:

We have a new adventure in seed starting....fellow master gardener Carol Lorenc found an interesting project that uses loofah (I'll let her share that). She shared seeds with me and we're both on a mission to grow them.

The seeds are thick shelled, so I scarified and soaked them before poking them into the potting mix. I plan to plant them in straw bales in an area in my yard, as their vines can reach 30 feet and would take over my garden. Wish us luck!

Carol:

This is what I'd add to Vicki's Loofah seed starting tips. I don't have any photos but copied the photo below from Clemson U. if you'd like a visual.

LOOFAH or LUFFA (*L. aegyptiaca*) is a Chinese vegetable grown to eat (like a squash, but only when young & small--need to pick diligently since they can grow an inch per day) or for sponges (those nice ones in specialty bath shops).

I was introduced to them while volunteering at the Yankeetown, FL Festival. One of the other Master Gardeners had grown them for the sponges and brought a few sponges for display--kids loved them; great conversation "hook" for adults; and he even packaged seeds as a giveaway. One 30' vine produced over 100 squashes!

Processing a squash to sponge is a long, laborious process involving soaking, peeling, bleaching, drying, etc., so stay tuned if Vicki and I come up with a hundred or so each. My interest is to try some as a vegetable (raw & cooked) but mainly for sponge--maybe a MG *bath shop* booth at 2023 FLAG Show?! Homemade bath scrubs with homegrown herbs, sponges, calendula creams?? We need more luck that the seeds sprout & grow.

Also at the Yankeetown Festival, a lovely lady came up to the booth, saw the sponges, and, honestly, almost swooned. She explained that she is originally from Honduras, growing up on a farm. The loofah sponges reminded her of the dolls that her parents made for her and her sisters: her father processed them and painted on faces while mother made long dresses--very happy memories.

Luffa sponges are ready to harvest when the skin feels loose and brittle around the hardened fibers inside. To process the sponges, peel the skin off, shake the seeds loose.

Amy Dabbs, ©2018 Clemson Extension

Rosie Drechnik: Meet Our Members, March, 2022

Jewell Wilhoite

Jewell and her husband Joe moved to Fairfield Glade from Indiana in 2003. They lived in Kentucky prior to that. Jewell and Joe were high school sweethearts in Muncie, IN, and married after college in 1967. They have a daughter who lives in Kentucky and one grandson. No pets.

Jewell retired from a career as a trainer/teacher, working in many different areas. Along with classroom training and development of training materials, she also wrote technical manuals. No wonder she is such a great Newsletter writer!

Jewell has been involved in gardening since the 90's and transferred to the Cumberland County Master Gardeners in 2010. She stated she was invited by a friend who spoke about the club and the Plateau gardens. Her favorite part of continued training has always been biology and how plants grow. Jewell is the current President of CCMG and has been involved in many areas, including the spring Flower and Garden Show, teaching classes on plant propagation and seed saving to the community, as well as, holding office in previous years. She volunteers in various capacities when there is a need and is the editor/writer of the monthly newsletter for CCMG.

One of the things Jewell likes about CCMG is the willingness of members to share knowledge with each other. There is almost no subject that is outside the experience and know how of club members, and they are always willing to help out a fellow gardener. As far as what she would like to see in the future for CCMG, she stated a great FLAG show this year, more recorded volunteer hours, and more community outreach with CCMG being recognized as a valuable resource.

When asked about her favorite type of gardening, she stated she prefers to put her energy into perennials and shrubs. She enjoys growing plants from seeds and states *it is always a joy to see the first seedlings emerge*. Then, the challenge is providing the care to make sure healthy plants make it into the yard. What type of site does the plant need? Will it survive on the plateau amid the wildlife? Trial and error play a big role in growing any plant successfully.

Jewell has had and currently has many hobbies. She has done needle work and seasonal crafts thanks to volunteers who were associates and teachers over the years. She was part of a ceramics class for some time and is a seamstress of sorts. She makes an apron every year and stores it away as a future legacy for her family. She is currently an avid reader and has belonged to the same book club for more than 10 years. Historical fiction and life-based mystery are favorites.

When asked if there was anything else she wanted to share about herself, Jewell stated she is actually a native Tennessean, having lived near Maryville until her teens when her family moved to Indiana. She stated she still feels those roots that formed her identity and her values.

REMEMBER TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER FOR FLAG

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 5 at 5:30---Country Store