

The Thymes

MAY 2025

Little brings the May breeze
Beside pure scent of flowers,
While all things wax and nothing wanes
In lengthening daylight hours.
Across the hyacinth beds
The wind lags warm and sweet,
Across the hawthorn tops,
Across the blades of wheat.

- Christina Georgina Rosetti, from "A Year's Windfalls" 1866 -

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

Dear Master Gardeners,

What a wonderful spring we are having! I hope this letter finds you all well and enjoying the beauty of the season. I want to take a moment to reflect on the amazing success of our annual Flower, Lawn, and Garden Festival. This year's event was wonderful. Everywhere I looked, I saw smiling faces, colorful blooms, and a shared love of gardening that truly highlighted the spirit of our group.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. From setting up booths to guiding visitors, answering questions, and helping vendors, your energy and enthusiasm made the event run seamlessly. Every person's effort – whether big or small – played a crucial role in making the festival such a standout success. I am deeply grateful for your commitment and the pride you show in our organization. It's moments like these that remind me how fortunate we are to be part of such a talented and generous group.

As we move further into May, let's carry forward the momentum and excitement we built during the festival. There are many more opportunities ahead to share our knowledge, grow together, and continue making a positive impact in our community. Thank you again for all you do – it's an honor to serve alongside you. Happy Gardening!

Warmly,

Margo



IMPORTANT!

The May membership meeting will be Tuesday, May 6th at the Plateau Discovery Garden inside the Classroom at 1:00 PM. This will be a celebration of our 2025 Interns Graduation & Members Hour Award pins for their contributions in 2024. The business segment will be very brief. Cake and drinks will be served. See you there!

Gardener's To-Do List for May

- Hahaha – EVERYTHING! Weed, plant, sow, snip, weed, water, mow, inspect, feed, clip, weed, pinch, pull, dig, weed! Remember to relax & enjoy the fruits of your labor. Tomorrow, repeat!



Photo from Greg Recht.: Chicks in an Easter Wreath

Adopt-a-Spot (A Testimonial)

by Jan Pitzer/Photo Credit: Vicki May

As a Tennessee MG who transferred from another county's smaller, younger demonstration garden, I was stunned by the enormity and maturity of Cumberland County's Plateau Discovery Garden. Now, three years later, the PDG's sweeping views, seasonal changes and cultivar diversity reliably provide a combination of serenity, escapade and delight every time I arrive at Experiment Station Road. Even the driveway's moniker delivers an anticipatory sense of adventure ahead!



When Vicki May enthusiastically pitched Adopt-a-Spot as an opportunity to provide PDG help communally, I jumped into the Herb Garden Team with both feet and two bad knees. Although I'm more an herb novice than expert (I sporadically cook, but always love to eat), herbs sounded like a match made in heaven.

Janet Coe, who most recently tended the Herb Garden solo, has been a welcoming team leader and a patient educator to Barbara Blackford and me. Indeed, our laboring is vastly enriched through hearing more about our adopted plot's plants and their

particular needs, the adjacent gardens, general PDG needs-of-the-day, etc. When we meet in our "outdoor living room" to toil, our conversations are as varied as the plants surrounding us. Last week's topics ranged from 90-years-young singer Frankie Valli's still-amazing performances to Jamaican Mannish Soup, replete with a goat's jaw at the bottom of the cup. Apologies for not getting that recipe to share with you.

As time moves through our garden's sundial, friendships grow alongside the herbs. There's a sense of shared accomplishment and we gain deeper knowledge about the plants. It's fun to learn beyond classes, in real-time.



I encourage every CCMG member to consider an Adopt-a-Spot team and Vicki sends heartfelt thanks to each volunteer for joining this important effort to maintain and grow the PDG...**And thank you, Vicki!**



Sign-ups, vacancies through 4/11/25 are included on the following page. Ditto contact info.

From: Vicki May

Here are the new garden care teams as of 4/11/25:

- #1 Rain garden: Julia Wood, Kathy Gerhardt, Pat Kessler, Joy Danley
- #3 Herb garden: Janet Coe, Jan Pitzer, Barbara Blackford
- #6 KinderGarden: Sue Maruska, Kathy Limp, Chris Doster, Alicia Krieger
- #7 Home on the Plateau: structures and rain barrel: Dave Armbrust; grounds: Leslie Mullican
- #8 Raised Beds: Linda Schaffer, Karen Wyatt, Rita Rice
- #9 Mixed Screen Demonstration: Denny ("Bear") and Julie Lesko, Linda Glenn
- #10 Compost Demonstration: Don Molen
- #13 Dragonfly Habitat (Class of 2025 project team): Carla Lund, Cindy LeClaire, Patricia Dominguez, Peggy Mullett, Kathy Towles, Michelle Cole-Williams, Renee Lloyd, Lisa Lee Brigs, and Margo Carroll, Vicki May
- #15 Daylily beds:
 - ROWS 1-112 Tammy Randolph, Margo Carroll, Deni Martin, Diana Hallcox
 - ROWS 113-226 Peggy Mullett, Kathy Towles, Cindy LeClaire, Connie Bowman, SK Smallwood
 - ROWS 227-339 Laura Riester, Don Molen, Debra Brown
 - ROWS 340-449 Sue Partch, Renee Lloyd, Leslie Mooney
 - ORIGINAL PLOT: Sue Partch
- #17 Tree and Shrub Garden: Melissa Rueff
- #18 Bulb Garden: Diana Hallcox
- #19 Foodscaping: Denise Cooper, Ginger Brindley
- #20 TN Smart Yards Demonstration: Sharon McKinney
- #21 Butterfly Garden: Kristi Dubois, Chris Doster, Natalie Stopyak, Connie Bowman, Diana Hallcox
- #22 Hardy Hibiscus Research Trial: Shalena Durkot, Denny and Julie Lesko
- #23 Rose Garden: Debbie Banfield, Melissa Rueff
- #26 Water Feature: Greg Recht and Class of 2025 project team
- #27 Mary's Trial: Julie Lesko, Cydney Shockley
- #30 Four Seasons Sensory Garden: Patricia Briney
- #31 Native Plants of Tennessee: Patricia Dominguez, Connie Bowman (Bill Morgan, advisor)

We still need care teams for the following Adopt-a-Spots: #0 American Bed by the entrance flagpole, #16 Shade Garden, #24 Hydrangea Research Trial, #25 Moss Display, #28 Perennial, #29 Celebration of Life. Please send an email to: vickiandwayne@yahoo.com to sign up.

“The Merry Month of May...”

Is a phrase commonly used to describe the month of May, often associated with springtime and the joy of new beginnings. The phrase originates from a poem by Thomas Dekker, an Elizabethan dramatist and pamphleteer. It is also used to refer to a novel by James Jones, which was set during the 1968 student revolutions in Paris, France.

In some cultures, May is considered a month dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

One of the oldest of all English traditional festivals is May Morning, which is of pagan origin & is celebrated at dawn every year on the first of May.

IT'S OFFICIALLY SPRING

By Sue Partch

According to the calendar, spring arrives on March 21 but most of us have something else that signals that spring is really here. For some it's the appearance of daffodils or redbud blossoms; for others it's the end of wearing long sleeves or the start of daylight savings time, For me, it's hearing the peeper frogs.

As a kid on a Vermont chicken farm there were progressive signs of spring. First was the arrival of cases of cheeping baby chicks. Soon after that Mom took us to the upper end of the cow pasture to find hepaticas and gay wings. But the day when Dad would come in from the barn at dusk and say "The peepers are out" and we'd all go out to listen, that was the day it was really spring.

In New Jersey as a teen spring started with masses of forsythia along our roadside fence line. That was followed by blooming magnolias and crab apples in the side yard. Then the peepers would start and they were really loud because they were in the swampy end of the pond in the front of the house. One year Dad caught one for us to prove what a tiny frog (only 1 inch) was making all that racket.

Married and living in Connecticut with young kids in our first house, it was bluets in the swampy backyard that I looked for first. One year I found a patch of gay wings in the bordering field to remind me of Vermont. The week of spring break from teaching gave me a chance to take a breather so I could look around and notice greening grass and flowering trees. Here it was my daughter who would call our attention to the peepers because her bedroom was nearest the swampy bit.

Back in Vermont on the hilltop was where I first became aware of the spring pastels of the budding trees. My signs of spring flowers here were hepaticas, one treasured Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and the bright yellow cowslips in the brook. It was surely spring when Mr. Bluebird would appear to check out all the bird houses and officially spring when the peepers started in the swampy places near the driveway corner. They were loud enough that my husband would phone his mom so she could hear them, too.

The move to Tennessee brought me to a place with no flowers tho over the years I have discovered a few wild ones like tiny iris and yellow violets in the spring. So I imported my own from Vermont: hepaticas, white trillium, myrtle, lily of the valley, dog tooth violet..... and they slowly took root and spread. I also brought and scavenged lots of daffodils so that now my spring here starts with daffodils all over my yard. When I first came I was delighted to hear peepers from my neighbor's small pond; they were faint but there enough to tell me spring was really here.

For the past couple years I haven't heard those peepers. I have listened when still there at dusk hoping for peepers in the PDG ponds. I have heard some kind of frogs but individual callings not the group singing of the chorus peeper frog. However, driving home mid-March this year with the windows cracked a bit because it was warm, I caught a familiar sound. I stopped (stupidly) in the middle of the road and put the window all the way down. Yup, peepers and LOTS of them, making the wonderful noise that means to me it's "officially spring". I smiled all the way home.



The Plateau Discovery Garden Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

By Kristie Dubois/Photo credit Erin Fletcher

As seen in The Crossville Chronicle (edited)

When visitors come to the Crossville area, they usually hike at Cumberland Mountain State Park or a nearby trail, play golf on one of the many scenic golf courses, or catch a show at the renowned Cumberland County Playhouse. Many visitors don't know that Crossville hosts a hidden gem- one of Tennessee's State Botanical Gardens, a showcase of ornamental plants that grow well on the Plateau. This State Botanical Garden is called the Plateau Discovery Gardens, and it is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

Located on 70 N, about 6 miles outside of Crossville, the Plateau Discovery Gardens is a 3-acre demonstration garden nestled inside the University of Tennessee Plateau AgResearch and Education Center. It is a beautiful and inspiring sight in any season and open free to the public every day of the year.

The Gardens were established in 2005 when Director of facilities Walt Hitch reached out to local Agricultural Agent Gregg Upchurch to see if Cumberland County Master Gardeners would be interested in planting a demonstration garden. His only stipulation was that the group do a good job keeping it up. "After all, that's practically in my front yard," he said.



The Master Gardeners kept that promise, so much so that in 2013, the state legislature declared the Plateau Discovery Gardens, along with two other University of Tennessee Gardens in Knoxville and Jackson, as the State Botanical Gardens of Tennessee.

A visit to the Plateau Discovery Gardens reveals why this honor was justified. Over the last 20 years, successive classes of volunteer Master Gardeners have added and maintained themed plots to the garden: in 2005 trees and shrubs, the foundation of the gardens; in 2006 the sun perennial garden; in 2012 the native plants of Tennessee garden; in 2014 the herb garden and human sundial; in 2015 the four-season sensory garden. The list goes on.

The University of Tennessee has also added its stamp on the Plateau Discovery Gardens with useful but beautiful test trials of thousands of multicolored daylilies, long-blooming hardy hibiscus and hydrangea, disease-resistant roses, and graceful redbud trees. After the trials conclude, the plants are lovingly maintained by Shalena Durkot, the garden coordinator since 2019, volunteer Master Gardeners, and the summer horticultural student interns that Master Gardeners sponsor.



While each garden plot garners interest, a few are of particular note. The Celebration of Life conifer site was named a reference garden by the American Conifer Society in 2017. With its pollinator-friendly flowers and butterfly larvae host plants, the butterfly garden is now a Monarch Waystation. The rain garden beside the parking area of the Plateau Discovery Gardens demonstrates how native plants can absorb and clean stormwater waste.

A huge source of pride for the Plateau Discovery Gardens is the KinderGarden, established in 2015 by a small group of inspiring Master Gardener volunteers as an interactive and engaging space for children ages 3 to 7. The KinderGarden features sensory plants, a wooden fort, musical instruments and performance deck, a learning cottage, water play and digging area, and more. A demonstration beehive was recently added. The space is a certified Nature Explore Outdoor Classroom and is heavily used by homeschool kindergartener groups.

The newest garden area, built in 2024 with the design of Master Gardener Vicki May, is the Dragonfly Habitat. This garden teaches about the environmental importance of dragonflies and their water habitat.

With its garden deck and bridge, bubbling water feature, and Home on the Plateau structure, the Plateau Discovery Gardens also demonstrate how hardscaping can be a beautiful and integral part of landscape design.

The University of Tennessee building and the covered outdoor pavilion offer comfortable spaces for free classes and events throughout the year.



The 2025 Classes in the Garden run from February to November, and this year include classes by Master Gardeners and other invited guests on diverse topics ranging from frog calls and pollinating insects to native plants and vegetable gardens.

Two popular events at the Plateau Discovery Gardens are the huge May 3 plant sale in the pavilion (come early!) and the Fall Gardeners' Festival, a free educational event on August 26 with garden-related presentations, educational displays, and garden vendors.

Thanks to the University of Tennessee and the Cumberland County Master Gardeners, what was once a patchwork of grass and old-fashioned forsythia bushes is now a thriving Cumberland Plateau demonstration garden and educational venue called the Plateau Discovery Gardens.



Smiling Faces at the Flower Lawn & Garden Show

CCMG Committees Teams Positions : 2025

Ask a Master Gardener Desk	Debbie Ward
Bulb Sales Spring & Fall	Linda Ferris, Carolyn Jozwiak
Classes at the Garden	Julia Wood
Community Outreach	Connie Farley
Crossville Planting Projects	Carolyn Jozwiak
Decorating	
E-Mail Coordinator	Alan Baker
Fall Gardeners Festival	Leslie Mullican
Flower, Lawn & Garden Festival	Leslie Mullican, Margo Carroll
Garden Teas	Sue Partch
Hospitality	Ron & Rosie Drechnik Andrea & Tony Capannola
Intern Class Hosting & Welcome Team	Rita Reali, Julie Lesko / Greg Recht, Barbara Blackford, Carla Lund
KinderGarden	Sue Maruska
Membership Contact list	Alan Baker
Merchandise / Publications, Membership clothing	SK Smallwood & Margo Carroll
Newsletter	Jan Pitzer
PDG Spring Plant Sale	Leslie Mullican
PDG Coordinator Director	Vicki May
PDG Umbrella Committee Representative	Mike Barron
Plant Growing & Propagation	
Plateau Discovery Garden UT Membership	Erin Fletcher
Publicity	Kristi Dubois, Erin Fletcher
Rain Barrel Program	
Facebook - Members Group	Alan Baker
Facebook - Public Page	Erin Fletcher
Instagram - Public Page	
YouTube - Public Page	
Search For Excellence	
Speakers Bureau	Carol Burdett
Website	Kelsey Whitefield, Alan Baker

corrections 1/5/2025

Remember to send your items of interest before the end of this month to Jan Pitzer at jprp190@gmail.com

Without your valuable input, this newsletter can't deliver the spirit of our vibrant membership.