

The Thymes ☀

The Cumberland County Master Gardener's Monthly Newsletter

AUGUST 2026

AUGUST

By Lizette Woodworth Reese
American poet. Teacher. (1856-1936)

No wind, no bird. The river flames like brass.
On either side, smitten as with a spell
Of silence, brood the fields. In the deep grass,
Edging the dusty roads, lie as they fell
Handfuls of shriveled leaves from tree and bush.
But 'long the orchard fence and at the gate,
Thrusting their saffron torches through the hush,
Wild lilies blaze, and bees hum soon and late.
Rust-colored the tall straggling briar, not one
Rose left. The spider sets its loom up there
Close to the roots and spins out in the sun
A silken web from twig to twig. The air
Is full of hot rank scents. Upon the hill
Drifts the noon's single cloud, white, glaring, still.

This poem is in the public domain.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

A Message from the President, Margo Carroll

CCMG Membership Meeting Agenda for Tuesday, August 4, 2026

Meeting place: PDG classroom
Time: 12:30 -1:00 pm fellowship
1:00 pm meeting
Agenda:

- Secretary report - Sharon McKinney
- Treasurer report - Lisa Lee Briggs
- Speakers: Shalena and Hannah, UT Intern reporting on the UT Gardens
- Introducing Dereck Corbin, Interim Manager of the grounds at PDG
- Drone picture show for everyone to see.
- SMART Yards - how many of us are compliant and registered??



Happy Gardening! *Margo*



A Message from the Editors

Your submittals are vital to this newsletter. Thanks to all contributors, past, present and future – we appreciate you!

Jan Pitzer jprp1990@gmail.com

Laura Riester riesterl@me.com

This Publication is not responsible for errors and omissions.

A Butterfly born in my Garden

By Laura Riester

A friend once gifted me a division of bronze fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* 'Purpureum'). I had admired its wispy, feathery foliage growing in her garden and was delighted to add it to my own. It settled in beautifully, its airy texture complemented my flower beds.

At the same time, I was growing dill, which faithfully reseeded itself each year. There was always more than enough to share with friends and neighbors. My garden was a haven for butterflies, and I soon noticed that certain caterpillars had a particular fondness for the bronze fennel and also the dill. They fed with astonishing enthusiasm, as though there were no tomorrow.



One day, I discovered a caterpillar attached to a piece of siding on my house. Soon thereafter in the same spot there was a bright green chrysalis. I had missed the remarkable moment when "my" caterpillar had

transformed itself, but this short time-lapse video I found on the web beautifully captures that extraordinary process:



<https://www.tiktok.com/@jodybugsme/video/7125650968187997486>

The chrysalis remained undisturbed for days, and I checked on it whenever I passed by. Then, one morning, I was fortunate enough to witness a black swallowtail butterfly that had just emerged. It stayed beside the empty chrysalis for several hours, preparing for its first flight. During that time, it slowly expanded and pumped fluid into its crumpled wings until they reached their full size and strength. Only when they had hardened sufficiently did it finally lift off and disappear into the garden.



Dirt Pile Saga - Part IV

By Sue Partch

The raised garden didn't happen at Thanksgiving for I forget why but the promise was moved to Christmas vacation provided the weather allowed. The weather allowed but the garden didn't get built until the afternoon of my son's last day. I thought it wasn't going to happen again but with all his other responsibilities dealt with he went out and started working. I joined him. He cut railroad ties for crosspieces, I dug to level the ground, he levered the railroad ties into place, I wedged rocks and tamped down dirt and we finished just as it was getting dark. One raised bed framing built. The other's single wall is up against the dirt pile and would have to wait until dirt is moved anyway.

I decided on no gravel in the bottom mostly because of time and expense. I did decide to line the bottom with mesh to deter my resident moles/voles. I got 1/4" wire mesh and 6 ml black plastic as a sides liner. I rolled out the plastic and ran it around the sides with a 2-3 inch flap at the bottom and then laid the mesh so the edges covered the plastic flap. I did toss in some small rocks. Remembering a Carol Burdett comment about her gardening I added enough rotting wood pieces to cover the bottom.

And then I moved dirt. On decent days in Feb thru April I threw shovelfuls of dirt into the bed since filling up my power wagon and dumping it into the finished frame proved unworkable. I took the dirt from near the wall of the second bed so that when my son comes in the summer where the other bed goes will be cleared. Slight timeout to fix a glitch in my liner, poor planning at corners required some patching. More interruptions due to 2 weeks in Florida and 3 weeks being sick thanks to a tick and a bird. But finally, FINALLY, in May it's ready for planting. And then it rained....and rained....and rained.

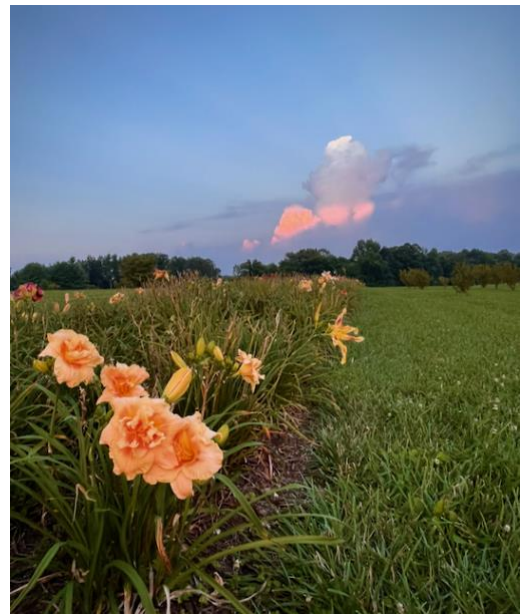


Observations at the end of a day at the “Daylily Plot” at the PDG



Some daylilies seem as though they should apologize for their existence, while others, even after hours beneath a relentless summer sun or a drenching

rain, still carry blooms of remarkable beauty. That endurance, together with the balance of scape to foliage, the plant's clumping habit, and its overall



garden presence is the true measure of a daylily. These are the qualities that determine which cultivars deserve a place in our gardens.



Photos by Laura Riester

A Tennessee Volunteer

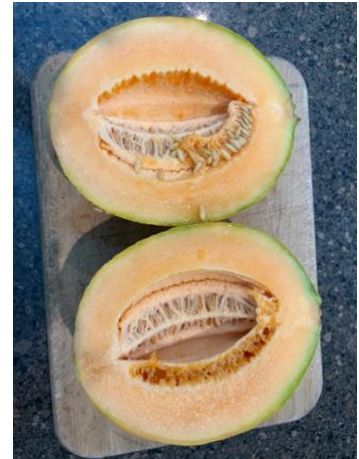
Photos by Jan Pitzer

In a garden, human volunteers are rightly lauded and applauded, but there is often less enthusiasm for plant volunteers. They may be eyed suspiciously as potential hosts for unwanted pests and/or harbingers of a dreadful disease. Nonetheless, when a healthy-looking, warm-season annual sprouted out of a compost clump in one of my large planters, it was deemed garden-worthy.



Clearly, the yellow-flowered, trailing mystery vine was a member of the *Cucurbitaceae* family. This conclusion evoked visions of the Great Pumpkin. Please don't be a zucchini! Soon, it's rounding shape revealed a "true melon" in-the-making, of the species *Cucumis melo*, a cantaloupe.

Somehow, the remnants of a delicious cantaloupe purchased some time back at the Crossville Garden Center made it through serendipitous composting efforts. If the proof is in the pudding, then Wednesday was judgement day and OMG! Hands down, *Melo* is the best thing to come out of the 2026 garden thus far. Her seeds will grace some 2027 crops, too. Go Vols!



Fall Gardeners' Festival

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

Visit the UT Plateau AgResearch and Education Center for a day planned just for the gardener. Enjoy educational workshops, exhibits, Ask-the-Expert, wagon tours of the entire facility, and garden vendors.

Food will be available for purchase.

Tent presentations include:

- Butterflies and How to Attract Them to Your Garden
- Bloom After Bloom: The Art of Seasonal Succession
- Herbs: Creative Culinary Companions
- Bog Gardening with Pitcher Plants
- Beekeeping: To Bee or Not To Bee
- Gardening with Conifers
- Home Hydroponics
- Garden Pest Control
- Social Media and Gardening Trends
- Tennessee Lawns and Their Alternatives
- Fruit Tree Pruning Concepts and Practices
- Managing Disease in Home Fruit and Vegetables
- TN Naturescapes: Crafting a Biodiverse Landscape
- Defects and Dysfunction in Trees: When to Call an Arborist
- Feeding the Veggies that Feed Us: Water and Nutrients in the Garden

plateau.tennessee.edu