

# The Thymes

MARCH 2025

“In the wind of windy March the catkins\* drop down,  
Curly, caterpillar-like, curious green and brown.  
With concurrence of nest-building birds and leaf buds by the way,  
We begin to think of flowers and life and nuts some day.”

- Christina Georgina Rosetti, from “A Year’s Windfalls” 1866 -

\*Catkins are cylindrical clusters of flowers that hang from trees in the winter and spring, also known as aments. Male catkins fall off after releasing pollen. Female catkins collect pollen and then release seeds. The word “catkin” comes from the Dutch word katteken, which means “little cat”. The word “ament” comes from the Latin word for “strap” or “string”. Trees with catkins: Willow, Birch, Oak & Hazel.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

Dear Cumberland County  
Master Gardeners,

As we welcome March, the promise of spring is just around the corner! The longer days (Daylight Saving Time starts March 9<sup>th</sup>) and hopefully warming temperatures will get us out into our gardens and working on our community projects. This is the perfect time to start planning, planting, and sharing our knowledge with others, and remember, when you do, even if it’s just talking to a neighbor about gardening, this counts towards your volunteer hours.

Our monthly meeting will be packed with great information on having a home greenhouse, with a presentation by our own Renee Lloyd. We’ll discuss updates on our community projects, Plateau Discovery Garden 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

plans, and of course the April Flower, Lawn & Garden Festival. There are plenty of volunteer opportunities, and activities for learning, meeting others and fun. If you haven’t already signed up for spring events, now is the time! Your dedication and expertise have a tremendous impact, and I encourage everyone to find a way to get involved. Let’s also remember the importance of educating and inspiring others about the joys and benefits of gardening.

I want to personally thank each of you for your hard work and enthusiasm. Your passion for gardening and community service truly makes Cumberland County a greener and more beautiful place.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting and out in the gardens!



Happy Gardening,

*Margo*



## Gardener's To-Do List for March

From the *Gardening Almanac for The Plateau*, created by the CCMG association in memory of Betty Bush/2017. Copies are available for \$10.00 at the UT Extension office and the Plateau Garden office.

- **Lawns** – Use a quality fertilizer on your established cool season lawn, such as 16-4-8. Mid-March through mid-April is the best time to put down a crabgrass pre-emergent herbicide. Use “selective” weed control for unsightly broadleaf weeds when temperature rise above 60 degrees.
- **Ornamental Grasses** – Monkey Grass (Liriope) needs to be cut back every year to prevent anthracnose. Cut back to 2” height with scissors, shears, string trimmers or even a lawn mower set to highest height. Cutting them to the ground may destroy the plants’ growing point.
- **Evergreens** – Watch for spider mite activity. This cool-season mite overwinters on host plants and will begin hatching soon. Often, the yellowing of needles is the first sign of a problem.
- **Perennials** – Divide and transplant clumping perennials such as Daylily and Hosta., and fertilize established ones as soon as new growth appears.
- **Annuals** – Summer bloomers can be started indoors. Seeds that were started indoors last month will probably be ready to be transplanted into their finishing containers and given diluted fertilizer.
- **Bulbs** – Plant tender bulbs and tubers; Gladiolas, Lilies, and Dahlias, etc. Additional plantings every two weeks until mid-June will ensure a continuous source of blooms.
- **Berries** – Remove straw mulch from strawberries at the first sign of growth. You can still plant strawberries, blueberries, currants, loganberries, grapes, and fruit trees.



Remember to send your articles for next month's newsletter to Jan Pitzer at [jprp1990@gmail.com](mailto:jprp1990@gmail.com)

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

## Plants that Brighten Winter's Gloom

by Kristi DuBois

Photos by Shalena Durkot, Garden Coordinator at UT Plateau Discovery Gardens

Amidst the dull grey browns of our slumbering winter forest, flashes of living green catch the eye. These green tones are conifer trees- hemlock, white pine, eastern red cedar- and broadleaf evergreen shrubs like mountain laurel, rhododendron and American holly. Lower in the canopy, sandy copper leaves still hang onto the limbs of small American beeches.

Like our native forests, our yards don't have to be drab in the winter. There are many plants that we can find in our local nurseries to add color and interest to our otherwise dormant gardens and yards.

"So many underutilized plants are on the market today that have interesting bark, great winter leaf color, and tantalizing textures. Not only do many of these beauties look good in the winter; they look good in the spring and summer too!" That is the message of Jason Reeves, ornamental horticulturalist at the University of Tennessee (UT) Gardens in Jackson, who recently presented "Color Me Happy: Plants that Brighten Winter's Gloom" for the Garden Gallivants and other gardening aficionados.

Both Reeves and Shalena Durkot, garden coordinator at the UT Plateau Discovery Gardens in Crossville, work with UT and Master Gardeners to educate the public about beautiful plants for the home garden, including winter ornamentals.

"I love snow-covered conifers," says Durkot, who recommends 'Fat Albert' dwarf blue spruce with its silvery blue needles and symmetrical Christmas tree shape.

Reeves suggests many varieties of conifers for winter green. Neat, globular shrubs he enjoys include 'Vintage Gold' false cypress, a mounded dwarf shrub with feathery bright cold foliage, and 'Globosa Nana' Japanese cedar, a dome-shaped, blue-green shrub with needles soft enough for wreathes.

For more wide spreading shrubs with arching branches, Reeves suggests Chinese junipers like 'Angelica Blue', which changes to plum in the winter, and 'Saybrook Gold', which shifts to bronze.

For vertical interest, he recommends arborvitae like 'Degroot's Spire', a tall green spear that takes on a purplish tinge in the winter, and 'Amber Gold', a columnar lime green shrub with gold to copper tips.

We all know and love the giant southern magnolia that stand outside of historical buildings and stay shiny green and copper throughout the winter. But there are many other smaller broadleaf evergreens that we can incorporate in our gardens.

'Rainbow' leucothoe, with its red stems and glossy variegated leaves "is a native evergreen that has year-round color and interest," says Durkot. "'Florida Sunshine' illicium is a nice broadleaf evergreen with bright golden foliage in the winter."

Certain evergreen succulents can also add unique structure and color to a winter garden. "We have 'Angelina' sedum planted in our perennial garden at Plateau Discovery Gardens," says Durkot. "It puts on a pretty red hue in the winter."



Reeves likes succulents that invoke the desert such as ‘Whale’s Tongue’ agave, a huge rosette of thick, blue gray leaves, and ‘Color Guard’ Yucca filamentosa, which resembles a yellow-green bayonet.



Surprisingly, there are plants that flower in the cold of winter. Although the Plateau lost many of its winter-blooming camelia in the flash freeze of December 2022, the hardier helleborus, or winter roses, survived. Their unexpected late winter blooms come in many shades of white, pink, and red.

“Even plants that go dormant can have winter appeal,” says Durkot.

Witch hazel, a native upright shrub or small tree, stands as a leafless silhouette in the winter but with clusters of showy, ribbon-like flowers. The native Hamamelis Virginiana has bright yellow flowers while hybrids like ‘Fire Charm’ can have vibrant orange-red and copper orange flowers.

Winterberry, a native holly, also loses its leaves in the winter but can have brilliant berries if the female plants have a male pollinator. The Plateau Discovery Gardens has ‘Berry Heavy’ with red berries and ‘Berry Heavy Gold’ standing near the male pollinator ‘Mr. Poppins.’



Leafless shrubs like red twig dogwood can have stems that are showy in the winter. Cornus amomum ‘Cayenne’ is a disease-free native silky dogwood with brilliant red stems, says Reeves.

Deciduous trees can have intriguing trunks and branch structure. A serene lone oak with outstretched arms never ceases to impress, especially when topped with glistening ice or freshly fallen snow. Both Durkot and Reeves love the contorted fig in the winter with its twisted branches and yellow tassel catkins.

“I always like to leave grasses for winter interest, and birds can use them for nesting material,” says Durkot. Native grasses like switchgrass and little bluestem add sound, movement, and flashes of yellow and gold to a winter garden.

“I will also leave as many perennials as I can for winter interest,” she adds. “Some that look attractive in the winter (unless the wind or storms get them) are coneflowers, ironweed, wild bergamot, bronze fennel, and hydrangeas, all with spent bloom heads.”

“And if all else fails, you can always paint dead trees,” Reeves concludes jokingly.

For more gardening tips, come to the Cumberland County Master Gardeners’ free classes in the Plateau Discovery Gardens outside of Crossville or attend one of their popular events like the Flower, Lawn, and Garden Festival, scheduled for April 25 and 26 this year at the Cumberland County Community Complex. Visit [ccmga.org](http://ccmga.org) regularly for updated information.



## Snowbirds

By Sue Parch

We feed birds year-round and we have a faithful group that come regularly to our feeders but during this winter's snows we've had a bonanza. Wherever they sheltered during the snow, when it stops *all* the birds come out at once. A dozen chickadees, least 2 pairs of tufted titmice and cardinals, juncos, a flock of goldfinch, several kinds of woodpeckers, sparrows, mourning doves, the upside down nuthatches...all fluttering in and away, squabbling, hopping around making trails of little sticklike footprints in the snow.

There's a tiny Carolina wren all fluffed up so she looks like a brown puff with a tail. The grouchy nuthatch spreads his wings and tail as he pecks at others who might want to share his spot. There's a downy woodpecker on one side of the



suet and a titmouse on the other but they both fly away when the much bigger red breasted woodpecker shows up. Some birds grab a seed then fly off but the bright cardinal just sits there munching away. The goldfinches come and go in group flutters. The ground feeding doves and juncos search for spillage in the snow tho some juncos give up and join the fight for space on the feeders. Hmmm, there's a purple finch and what kind of sparrow is that?

Surprisingly, we rarely see a bluejay but even more surprising was the first ever appearance of a robin at our feeder. No grosbeaks or indigo buntings so far this year. A first for me, tho my husband says it's happened before, there was a mass exodus of everybody as a hawk swooped in. No casualties apparently as the hawk sat on a limb looking around; unfortunately screened by hemlock so we couldn't get a good look for identification.

On the subject of birds, a friend loaned me "The Bird Chronicles" by Amy Tan. She writes about watching, feeding and drawing the birds that come to her deck. Although her birds are west coast, many are variations of those familiar to us and the observed behaviors are insightful. The drawings are absolutely beautiful. I highly recommend it tho I could do without the occasional social and political comments.

*"The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size."*

Gertrude S. Wistner



**CHEEKWOOD ESTATE & GARDENS**  
**NASHVILLE**  
(in March 2022)



## Favorite Plants??

By Carol Lorenc

Lee asked me "what's your favorite plant?" He had been helping me dig out some overgrown shrubs and asked about the other flowers, shrubs, trees in the yard. Hmm... hadn't really thought about that before. They are all my favorites (well, maybe not the invasive goji berries that we were digging out). Blueberries, poppies, columbine, and sycamore trees might be my top four.

Well, I've always had blueberries -- they are a beautiful 4-season shrub with flowers in spring, berries in the summer, colorful leaves in the fall, and graceful branches in winter. My Dad helped to plant my first bushes and LOVED the berries.



Friend Diana gave me a packet of seeds she collected from columbine on her farm. I put them in a half barrel in front of the barn 8 years ago and now they self-seeded all over my property -- and the COLORS are amazing from a rich white to blues and pinks, including some double flowers. I've added some native columbine which is multiplying equally well.



At the Western Region MG Conference a few years ago, we visited Dixon Gallery & Gardens and were given seed packets of their signature pink poppies. The flowers are a gorgeous pink on blue-green stalks. While annuals in our zone, they self-seed in about any clear spot so their sunny pink flowers were all over my yard in early summer making me smile at their 'ingenuity' in locations!



I've never met a tree I didn't like but sycamores are really special. I first noticed them in a stark, cold winter along a river bank -- their tall trunks with camouflage-looking bark and long branches looked like 'dancers' appealing to the gods for an early spring. We planted six before we even moved here and in 15 years they have become magnificent shade trees along the creek edge.

Commonalities among the four? They are all beautiful but there is also an emotional connection to each: a special memory of a person, event or place that makes blueberries, columbine, poppies and sycamores my favorites. *Have you given thought to your favorite plants? And why??*



# Kitchen Ghosts

By Laura Reister

I first heard the term Kitchen Ghosts when on a recent Sunday afternoon I listened to *THE SPLENDID TABLE*, a show about food, hosted by Francis Lam on Public Radio. A guest of the show, award-winning author Crystal Wilkinson, talked about her new memoir, *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*, honoring her maternal ancestors, which she calls her Kitchen Ghosts. She talked about feeling them deeply while cooking and realizing their presence in her life. When I heard that, I immediately understood. For me it describes that connection with the memories of my grandmother with whom I spent much time in the kitchen when I was a child. My paternal grandmother, Lina Sutter, was a great cook. Nowadays when I



experiment with food, I often think of my grandmother. She grew up in the Canton of Glarus in Switzerland. My Kitchen Ghost is not only a connection to memories of my grandmother, but a connection to an herb used heavily in the canton where my grandmother grew up: Blue Fenugreek, *Trigonella caerulea*. A passion for products from this herb has been in my soul since childhood. It must be in my genes. Zigerchrut is one of the Swiss names for it. References to *Trigonella caerulea* seem to first appear around 300 AD in records of monasteries in Georgia (the country) and Armenia. There it is known as Utskho Suneli. It is a key ingredient in the famous Georgian spice mix Khmeli Suneli.

Blue Fenugreek tastes and smells much like ordinary fenugreek, just milder and sweeter. Unlike regular Fenugreek, (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) it is adapted to grow in colder climates where the growing season is shorter. Historical Records from Switzerland show that this herb was cultivated in monastery gardens in Glarus and used in a particular cheese recipe around 800 AD. The cheese itself, called Ziger, is actually a byproduct of the manufacture of hard cheeses. The addition of Blue Fenugreek and the unique ageing process became what is now known as Glarner Schabziger. It was trademarked in 1463 when the citizens of Glarus approved a law that required all Schabziger manufacturers to produce it according to quality specifications and to mark it with a stamp of origin. *GLARNER SCHABZIGER* became the first branded article in Switzerland, if not in the world!

Maybe early Christians brought Blue Fenugreek from Georgia and Armenia to Switzerland? I have yet to find reliable information on that topic. At this moment, I do have a generous supply of powdered blue fenugreek as well as some of the Schabziger at hand. To make pronouncing it in English possible, the cheese is named Sap Sago in the American market. The herb itself compliments many foods. I enjoy it mixed with ricotta.



*Continued on next page...*

I believe I have located a source for seeds in the US. I would like to grow this herb here in Crossville. I picture a meadow of bright green foliage with blue flowers.

Figure 1 Blue Fenugreek in bloom. Source: Biolib.cz. Figure 2 Copyright K. Lauber - Flora Helvetica/Haupt Verlag



1.

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2.

# Upcoming Events



**It's Time  
to pay  
Your  
Membership  
Dues**

Pay by check at  
the next meeting,  
or mail to: CCMG  
PO Box 483,  
Crossville, TN  
38557



## MARCH

**4** 9:00-12:00 2025 MG INTERN CLASS - at the COUNTRY STORE  
TOPIC: SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE & HERBACEOUS PLANTS  
Every one welcome! EARN CEU & Volunteer hours.

**4** 1:00-3:00 MEMBERSHIP MEETING - at the COUNTRY STORE  
SPEAKER: CCMG Renee Lloyd- "Greenhouses"  
Renee has many years of growing in her own greenhouse, and lot's of great information to share.  
(Meal TBD)

**11** 9:00-12:00 2025 MG INTERN CLASS - at the COUNTRY STORE  
TOPIC: WOODY ORNAMENTALS & TREES  
Every one welcome! EARN CEU & Volunteer hours.

**18** 1:00-2:30 BOARD MEETING - at the COUNTRY STORE  
Every one welcome! EARN Volunteer hours.

**29** Vegetable Gardening 101  
Mar 29, 2025, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM  
Crossville, 320 Experiment Station Rd, Crossville, TN 38571,  
USA

## APRIL

**1** Monthly MG Meeting  
Apr 01, 2025, 12:30 PM – 3:00 PM  
Crossville, 1398 Livingston Rd, Crossville, TN 38571

**1** Extension Master Gardener Intern Training  
Apr 01, 2025, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM  
Crossville, 1398 Livingston Rd, Crossville, TN 3857

**3** Home Grown Blackberries  
Apr 03, 2025, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
Crossville, 320 Experiment Station Rd, Crossville, TN 38571,  
USA

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL CALENDAR OF  
EVENTS](#)

If the above link to Full Calendar of Events does not work, Full Calendar of Events can be found at  
<https://www.ccmga.org/calendar>

# Extension Master Gardener Intern Training 2025



## Schedule

*January 28th*

*Local Training Kickoff- Meet the Cumberland County Master Gardeners*

*Weekly Schedule:* Live teaching from 9-10:30 central, via zoom webinar. Two 45 minute lectures with a 1:30 hour local lab /tour following.

*Feb. 4th - Introduction to TEMG and TN climates and geography- EMG Workgroup (Chaps 1,2)*

*Feb. 11th- Stewardship in TN- Andrea Ludwig and Emily Richards (Chapter 4)*

*Feb. 18th- Soils and soil management- Gregg Upchurch and Melody Rose (Chapters 5,6)*

*Feb. 25th- Botany and Propagation- Natalie Bumgarner and Lucas Holman (Chapter 3)*

*Mar. 4th- Sustainable landscape design and herbaceous plants- Mike Ross and Celeste Scott (Chapters 7,9)*

*Mar. 11th- Woody ornamentals and trees- Taylor Reeder and Lee Rumble (Chapter 8)*

*Mar. 18th- Turfgrass and weed management- Becky Bowling and Mitchell Mote (Chapter 10)*

*Mar. 25th- Entomology and integrated pest management- Seth Whitehouse and Chris Cooper (Chapter 13)*

*Apr. 1st- Plant pathology- Celeste Scott and Justin Stefanski (Chapter 14)*

*Apr. 8th- Vegetables- Amy Dunlap and Melody Rose (Chapter 11)*

*Apr. 15th- Fruits- Gregg Upchurch and Dave Lockwood (Chapter 12)*

*Apr. 22nd- Supporting pollinators and great plants for pollinators- Jennifer Tsuruda and Taylor Reeder (Chapter 16)*

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

# *Save the date*

**APRIL 25 & 26 2025**

Cumberland County Master Gardeners



Marketplace-Food-Music-Demos  
Cumberland County Community Complex  
Crossville, Tennessee