

The Thymes

OCTOBER 2025

In strong blast of October
At the equinox,
Stirred up in his hollow bed
Broad ocean rocks;
Plunge the ships on his bosom,
Leaps and plunges the foam,
It's oh! for mothers' sons at sea,
That they were safe at home.

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



Internet photo/Creative Commons

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

Dear Friends,

October brings with it the harvest season—a time to reflect on what has grown and flourished throughout the year. For the Cumberland County Master Gardeners, 2025 has been filled with accomplishments to be proud of, especially celebrating the **20th anniversary of the Plateau Discovery Garden**. What a milestone for our organization and community!

From festivals and workshops to classes in the garden, each event has shown the power of working together. Along the way, we've not only shared knowledge and nurtured plants—

we've also nurtured friendships, strengthened bonds, and created memories that will last for years to come.

The true harvest of our work is the kindness, joy, and beauty we share with others. Thank you for giving your time, energy, and heart to make such a positive difference. Together, we are planting more than gardens—we are planting hope and community.

With gratitude,

Margo

President, Cumberland County Master Gardeners



A MESSAGE FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT, Carla Lund

PDG Advisory Committee development

A new advisory committee was presented to the Umbrella Committee by Margo Carroll and then brought to the CCMG Board meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 16. The purpose of this committee is to develop a plan for day to day garden task management, a yearly month by month calendar of suggested tasks and long range strategic plan for the Plateau Discovery Gardens including how to fund and how to coordinate suggested projects. The long range plan will be a living document that will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. This committee will consist of a dedicated Board member, and 3 or 4 members at large from the CCMG member group. It was decided that the Board member will be the current VP, Carla Lund and the members at large will be Susan

Stoneberg, Julie Lesko, Bear Lesko, and Sharon McKinney.

The committee wants your input and will distribute a questionnaire at the October members' meeting. Members will offer 3 long term (5-20 years) projects that they would like to see as improvements for the PDG. Those items then will be collected, reviewed, and prioritized by the committee. It will be presented to the CCMG Board and the Umbrella Committee as projects requested by the CCMG members.

So, Members, put on your thinking caps! Let's all come together and figure out what we would like to see for the future of our PDG! Our fundraising events have been so successful over the past two years. Let's put all of that to good use!

Apples in Crossville

By Laura Riester



Unlike other parts of Tennessee, the Cumberland Plateau is cool enough to allow cultivation of apples. I never thought that apple trees were not native to the US or Europe until I read that apples, as we know them, likely originated in what is today known as Kazakhstan and were brought to Europe along the trade routes. Europeans then introduced apples to the Americas and other parts of the world. All hybrids seem to have *Malus domestica* as a common ancestor. Apple trees generally are not self-fertile. Native species of crab

apples can serve as pollinator and cross-pollinate apple trees to bear fruit. Native crab apple has genetic similarities to crab apples in other parts of the world. And crab apples are genetically related to apples. Theoretically, a native crab apple could be used to create a tasty hybrid.

Hybridizing for new varieties of apples grown from seed requires patience; it takes 5-15 years to see a first fruit. I am learning that in the USA Albert Etter (1872–1950) succeeded in crossing crab apples to other apples with good results. Most work in the US, was and is done by Universities. It would require a careful search through the parentage of all apples to find which varieties have a native crab apple in their parentage.

Years ago there seems to have been quite a back and forth of importing and exporting plant materials before controls were put in place to prevent the spread of diseases and insects from imported plant material.

Apple growing on the Cumberland Plateau is a hit-and-miss situation largely because of the extreme temperature fluctuations during the bloom season. This calls for special hybrids. In 1961 scientist Jerry B. Hardigee crossed Detroit Red and Lyons in Blacksburg, Virginia. Both varieties had proven to be productive in the Appalachian Mountains. This hybridizing program led to a collaborative project between the USDA Agricultural Research Service and the University of Tennessee. An effort was made to create a new variety of apples that would do well in the Southern Appalachian Mountain region. It appears that the Plateau Experiment Station played an important role in monitoring and studying this apple hybrid under the temperature fluctuations experienced on the Plateau. When the study was completed, the apple was named and registered as Hardy Cumberland.

To date I have not seen or tasted a Hardy Cumberland apple. Maybe someone is growing it? My search goes on.....Crossville's largest apple orchard does not cultivate Hardy Cumberland apples. Their store and orchards are located on Hwy 70 on the way to Crab Orchard: Rowell's Apple House. Rowell's grows and sells about 30 varieties. It opened in 1966 and is family owned. Mr. Rowell, the son of the original owner, was working in the store when I visited. He told me that availability of varieties depends very much on the weather. The store is very clean

and smells nice - ah, the sweet fragrance of fresh apples. Customers can get a view of the orchard from the fence next to the Apple House.

Apples store well and are a versatile fruit. All kinds of tools have been developed core, pare and slice apples. There even is an International Society of Apple Parer Enthusiasts. I only know about that because I had friends in Knoxville who belonged to it. There are millions of ways to eat, cook, bake and preserve apples and there are millions of recipes from countries where apples grow. Although famed as an American Classic, the first record of an apple pie recipe may be one from the kitchen of King Richard II of England dated 1390.



For recipe see
<https://www.tastinghistory.com/recipes/medievalapplepie>.



The September Tea by Sue Partch

Another successful tea on a beautiful day! The cranberry orange tea was held at the PDG pavilion on Saturday, September 13. We had a full house, many returnees and multiple compliments.



The savory menu included the ever-popular cucumber sandwiches, chicken salad croissants, deviled eggs, salami roll-ups and skewers of fruit & cheese. The sweets table featured cranberry orange muffins and scones, an orange torte, iced teacup shaped sugar cookies, cranberry glazed cheesecake, mini brownies and walnut snowball cookies. A variety of teas was offered highlighted by orange and cranberry options. A cranberry orange “mocktail” and water were available for those who wanted something cool.

Following the tea the rest of the program was introduced by committee chair, Sue Partch. Our speaker was Sonia Tremblay of Copper Chicks Soapery & Makery and GOAT Cafe. She spoke about health values of cranberries and making herbal teas. She brought a selection of her products for the guests to try and purchase. Our final offerings were a tour of plants appropriate for herbal teas and/or an opportunity to make an orange scented hand sanitizer. Each guest received a gift bag of orange and cranberry flavored treats as a favor.

Tables were covered with white tablecloths, set with china dishes, glass serving dishes, colorful cloth napkins and a printed program. Guest tables were decorated with a cranberry-colored runner and a wooden tray of differing height glass cylinders filled with orange slices, greenery and cranberries in water each topped by a floating candle. The tea table had an orange pyramid with greenery and several cranberry glass items. A large wreath of dried orange slices with a cranberry drape was hung above a display of dark red and rust chrysanthemums. Vases of orange roses and dark red carnations decorated the sweets, speaker and reception tables. A display of cranberry and orange products and information was placed at the entrance...did you know we have 2 cranberry bogs in Tennessee?

Thanks to tea committee members for their work all year to put on these teas. Ginger Bradley, Connie Farley, Elaine Hanson, Lisa Lee, Deni Martin, Rita Reali, Laura Reister, Michelle Williams, Julia Wood.



Editor's Note: I discovered the following poem while scrolling through jet-lagged eyes and clutching a heart longing to return to magical places recently enjoyed. I was behind the curve Thymes-wise and needed to fill some white space quick! This serendipitous poem (it runs 5 pages) lifted my flagging spirit. I hope you like it, too. The author, Jocelyn Curry, granted permission to share her poem and artwork.

Ode to a Garden Fork: an illustrated poem

Poem and Illustrations by Jocelyn Curry

I first saw you
on a day dim with January light
while the baby napped
and joy was but a memory
pasted and closed within
a shelved album.
Outdoors the earth was frozen,
closed for the winter,
the sign saying
Stay Away.
I obeyed, reached instead
for the Smith & Hawken
catalogue, the warm wishing well
for gardeners banished by the cold.
You were on page 23:
Bulldog Garden Fork,
Drop-forged steel,
Filled-Y ash handle



Handmade in England

Lifetime guarantee.

Your tines
were four-sided spears
tapered and ready to
pierce and lift at my command,
eager to find stones
left carelessly behind
by the glacier
that was once my neighborhood.

The smooth, golden wood
of your eager up-stretched handle
was your invitation to toil
hand in hand with me.

Your gleaming image
became nectar and manna in one -
without you I would be as weak as a brittle stalk,
unable to till a single furrow.

I filled out the order form,
wrote the check and sent it off.

Time passed as slowly as lichen grows upon a stone.



At last, in late February
you arrived on my porch
a boxed *Bulldog*,
my winter savior,
my English Adonis!
I slit the tape,
opened the box,
and lifted you in wonder.

Your handle was not wood,
but molded amber.

Your tines were not
metal,
but forged light.

I rushed you to the
garden,

where the frost had heaved and crusted
the soil of our Eden.

I pressed my foot onto your steel shoulder,
plunging you into the earth for the first time.

We married at that moment,
bound by fertile purpose.

Many winters have passed since then.





The baby is now 24.

Your shaft and handle
are the color of spores,

the wood grain raised and rough.

The edges of your tines have softened,
worn by basalt stones and cedar roots.

Once, on a wet day in April
when the daffodils strained
against the rain,

I thought someone had taken you
from our garden.

I searched for you as I would
for a vanished lover.
But you were there,
leaning against the fir tree,
camouflaged against its craggy bark,
your body resting, but
your purpose unchanged.
Relieved, I grasped you
with my gloved hand
and together we worked the soil.



Poem written in 2005 as an assignment for a college class in poetry.

Artwork done in 2007

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Gardener's To-Do List for October

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** – Cool season grasses will continue their recovery during this month. A last moderate fertilizing is good for the root systems over winter.
- **Perennials** - Perennials can also use a last-minute fertilizing to help their root systems.
- **Fall Leaves** – Fall leaves will present a challenge this month as the beauty of the fall foliage continues its display. Some oak varieties will drop their leaves and others will hold onto them until spring. Cleaning gutters and raking or blowing leaves off the lawn area is important. If you simply pile them up in a wooded area, they will decompose very slowly. They will also provide good winter cover for snakes and other wildlife. The organic matter and nutrients from leaves mown into lawn areas has been proven to improve turf quality. Set your mower to a height of 3 inches and mow at least once a week during peak leaf fall when your grass has grown to 4 inches. Leaves shred most efficiently when slightly damp, so mow after a light dew. If you follow these instructions, you may never rake another leaf and the quality of your soil will improve.
- **Annuals** – Annuals and many perennials die back to the ground every year after a killing frost, making the top growth turn back. Now is the time to remove the dead annuals and cut back those dormant perennials to ground level, removing the debris from the garden. At the end of the season, never prune plants with a woody framework such as evergreens, roses and butterfly bush, candytuft, thyme, Russian sage, dianthus, lavender or hardy rosemary. You can snip off old flowers and leggy growth, but don't go any farther than that. Cutting these plants to the ground in fall is usually fatal, since they continue to photosynthesize through the winter. Prune these plants in spring after the threat of a hard freeze is over.

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.



The Thymes photo contest will continue to accept entries until the end of October. The major award will be presented to the winner at the November membership meeting. Good Luck!

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