

The Thymes

The Cumberland County Master Gardener's Monthly Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2025

In slack wind of November
The fog forms and shifts;
All the world comes out again
When the fog lifts.
Loosened from their sapless twigs
Leaves drop with every gust;
Drifting, rustling, out of sight
In the damp or dust.

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



Photo credit/Creative Commons

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

As we head into November, I want to thank each of you for making the Cumberland County Master Gardeners such an inspiring and dedicated group. Your enthusiasm, teamwork, and love of gardening make this organization truly special.

This month we'll vote on our 2026 Board Members—please join us and take part in shaping our future. Membership meetings continue to be held on the **first Tuesday of each month, and we are moving to winter schedule at 1:00 PM at The Country Store.**

Mark your calendars for the Holiday Luncheon December 2nd, we'll meet at 12:00, 12:30 lunch will be served, and 1:30 will be the judging for the Annual Ugly Sweater Award. * please send any photos from this year's events to margosky2012@gmail.com that you'd like to be a part of the slideshow

I'm so grateful for all you do and excited to see what our committees will create in the year ahead. Together, we'll keep learning, growing, and making a positive impact in our community.

Warmly, *Margo*

President of the Cumberland County Master Gardeners



A note from the Editor, Jan Pitzer

Big thanks to ALL of the 2025 Thymes contributors! Without your input, there would be no Thymes.

While every 2025 submittal is award-winning (in my humble opinion), we will recognize one photographer and one writer at the November meeting. Qualifying photographs were judged by Crossville community members endowed with artistic credentials, and a writer was nominated for a “people’s choice” award by CCMG members.

The voting period has ended and we have two clear winners! Please join us in celebrating their talents. And again, thank you to all participants.

Autumn at the Partches

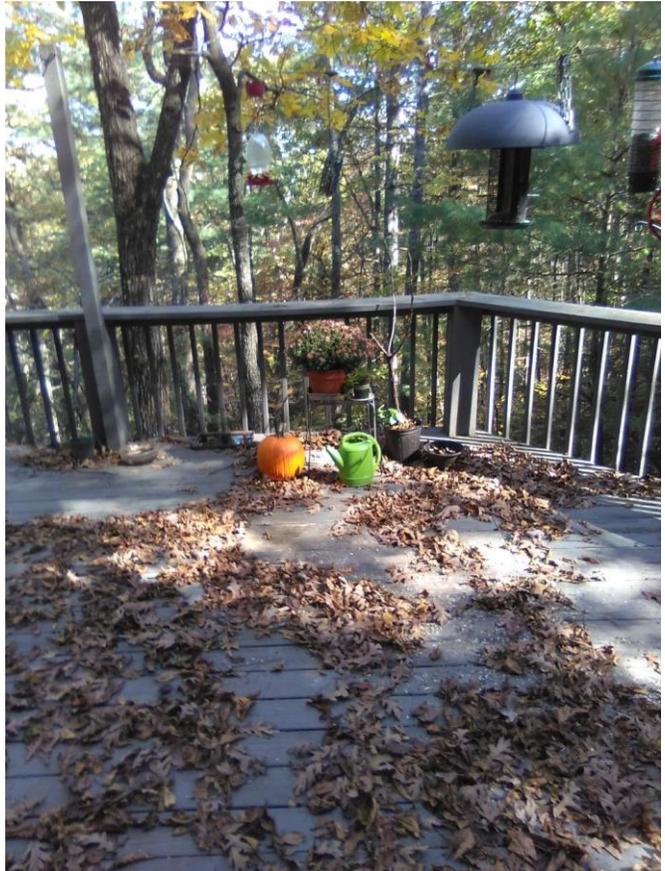
by Sue Partch

It's obviously the fall season everywhere you look. Roadsides are full of trees turning colors and any roadside weeds that aren't brown sticks look tired. Yards are sprouting mums and Halloween decorations - as are stores (along with Christmas already). We've had our first nights in the 30's. But even if I just stayed home it would be noticeably well into fall.

There are leaves all over my deck as well as the hickory nuts we hear thumping as they drop. I've blown them all off once but it already needs it again. The hummingbird feeders haven't been visited in over a week. I've brought in my porch plants so all that's left out are my chrysanthemums and a pumpkin. Now that I don't need it there's more sun on the deck because the trees are getting bare.

I've already picked my winter squash because the deer crashed my makeshift fence to eat the leaves and leave bite marks in the squash. The tomatoes have stopped producing. The beans have long since made and dried their seed pods. Big seed pods are also visible on the trumpet vine and the sweet peas.

Most of my flowers have gone to seed and look either spent or scraggly. The end of the dahlias and marigolds are falling over. The clematis vine has fuzzy spirals and the roses are full of rose hips. My few zinnias look frostbitten. The big blooms of the - very poisonous - fall crocus have come and gone. Even the goldenrod along our road frontage is more dirty white than yellow. I've done my last mowing for the year and the fallen leaves are taking over the lawn.



Still, it's not winter yet. Tho I've closed my bedroom windows through them I can see bright blue morning glories bravely continuing to bloom. My ageratum has suddenly decided to put out a big second flowering among the end of the French marigolds. Those drooping dahlias have sturdy bronze and hot pink blossoms mixed amid the last of the tall yellow marigolds. Late blooming cosmos in shades of pink tower over the oranges and yellows of sprawling nasturtiums. Small pale blue wild asters are along the woods edge and tiny sunflower type flowers are sprinkled in the browned off seed heavy roadside stalks.

And finally, some fall puzzlers. Why are some of my forsythia bushes blooming? And why did the first buds on my hollyhocks - still tightly closed - show up in September?



One of Many Mushrooms

By Laura Riester



Mushrooms are interesting. Do I know much about them? No. I rely on the Cumberland Mycological Society (club no longer active), Mushroom Expert.com, books and friends to help me with identification. I only pick for food what I know for sure I can trust. In the Crossville area, after a period of rainy weather during the summer and early fall, a huge assortment of mushrooms pop up. Some even glow in the dark, and then we have others that fluoresce in response to a black light. Unfortunately there is too much light pollution where I live to see the glow (named foxfire) of the mycelium of *Armillaria mellea* or the green glow of Jack-o-Lanterns. However,

fluorescence from a black light is easy to see and does not require total darkness. Armillarias or Honey mushrooms are particularly interesting to me; they are found on every continent except Antarctica. Although all Armillarias are genetically related, geographic location determines their species. No matter where in the world Armillarias grow, they sport an immense underground network of mycelium. All Armillarias used to be lumped into the genus *Armillaria mellea*. There is much DNA identification underway around the world. To date, there seem to be about 40 species of *Armillaria* identified and renamed, for example *Armillaria ostoyae*, *Armillaria gallica* etc. Much of the literature may still classify all species as *Armillaria mellea*. They may all show identical characteristic (appearance, spore print). Unfortunately, correct identification of species needs to be done in a laboratory. On the Cumberland Plateau not every year allows observation of the fruiting bodies - the mushrooms themselves; often it is too dry for that in





September when they generally fruit. A couple of years ago, I spotted Armillaria growing in the common area of my condo complex. It fruited where an oak tree had once stood. I also noticed clumps of Armillaria growing on the base of nearby healthy-looking oak trees. Do we have an underground network of mycelium in our condo complex that connects trees? I read that Armillaria, especially Armillaria mellea is considered parasitic; it

apparently kills trees. Paul Stamets, in his book *Mycelium Running*, writes about the underground connection of Armillaria mellea mycelium. He writes that the Malheur National Forest in Oregon may have the largest living organism on earth, i.e. mycelium of Armillaria mellea (now classified as A. ostopoyae or A. solidipes) covering over 2000 acres and being thousands of years old. Armillaria is described as both a parasite and a saprotroph, recycling nutrients in forests while destroying trees. Paul Stamets writes that „...more foresters are realizing that a rotting tree in the midst of a canopied forest is, in fact, more supportive of biodiversity than a living tree. Parasitic mushrooms may be nature’s way of selecting the strongest plants and repairing damaged habitats.....“. Paul Stamets is a self-taught mycologist. His participation in the movie Fantastic Fungi and his writings are very interesting. However, I keep in mind that he is also an entrepreneur who profits from selling various mushroom products through his company....and read his writings critically, always with that grain of salt. Armillaria is not only a parasitic and saprotrophic mushroom; it is edible, although the stems are a bit tough. Thorough cooking is recommended as not everyone tolerates this mushroom well. Whenever I come across a clump of Armillaria I stop and wonder where the origin of its mycelium is. Looking around for more clumps nearby I feel respect for the world beneath my feet and tread more softly. The photos illustrate the many „faces“ of Armillaria on the Cumberland Plateau.





Photo credit/Laura Riester

“Autumn is springtime in reverse.”

Terri Guillemets

The Emperor's Seed

An Ancient Chinese Folktale

An emperor in the Far East was growing old and knew it was time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or his children, he decided something different.

He called young people in the kingdom together one day. He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next emperor. I have decided to choose one of you."

The kids were shocked! But the emperor continued. "I am going to give each one of you a seed today, one very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this one seed. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next emperor!"

One boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother the story. She helped him get a pot and planting soil, and he planted the seed and watered it carefully.

Every day he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about 3 weeks, some of the other youths began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow. Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. 3 weeks, 4 weeks, 5 weeks went by. Still nothing.

By now, others were talking about their plants, but Ling didn't have a plant, and he felt like a failure. 6 months went by; still nothing in Ling's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing.

Ling didn't say anything to his friends. He just kept waiting for his seed to grow. A year finally went by and all the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection.

Ling told his mother that he wasn't going to take an empty pot but his Mother said he must be honest about what happened. Ling felt sick to his stomach, but he knew his Mother was right.

He took his empty pot to the palace. When Ling arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other youths. They were beautiful, in all shapes and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor and many of the other kids laughed at him. A few felt sorry for him and just said, "Hey nice try."

When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted the young people. Ling just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the emperor. "Today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor!"

All of a sudden, the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered his guards to bring him to the front. Ling was terrified. "The emperor knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me killed!"

When Ling got to the front, the Emperor asked his name. "My name is Ling," he replied. All the kids were laughing and making fun of him. The emperor asked everyone to quiet down.

He looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, "Behold your new emperor! His name is Ling!" Ling couldn't believe it. Ling couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new emperor?

Then the emperor said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone here a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds, which would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you.

Ling was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new emperor!"

If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.
If you plant goodness, you will reap friends.
If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.
If you plant perseverance, you will reap victory.
If you plant consideration, you will reap harmony.
If you plant hard work, you will reap success.
If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation.

If you plant openness, you will reap intimacy.
If you plant patience, you will reap improvements.
If you plant faith, you will reap miracles.



In Memory of Ann Ebert

Sadly, we recently lost a valuable member of our CCMG association. Ann was a MG class of 2008 and a dedicated team member of the organization, as well as the PDG. Ann cheerfully volunteered for many roles and will be sorely missed as a gardener and friend.



CCMG Committees Teams Positions : 2025

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

Dec-24