

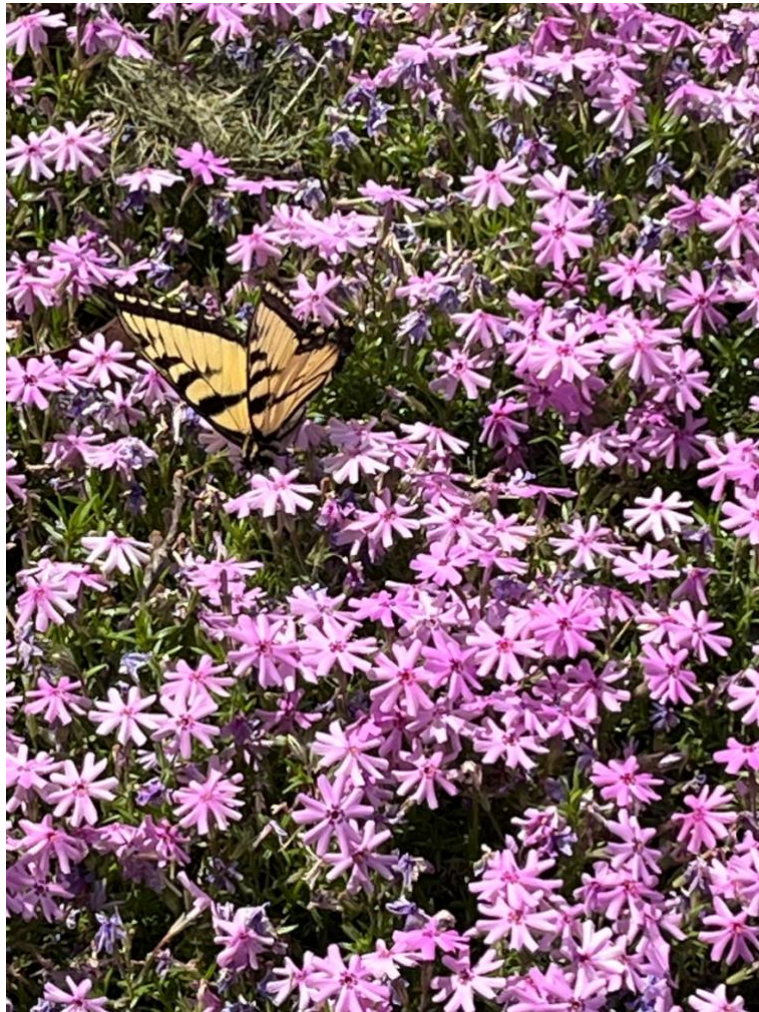
# *The Thymes*

## **The Cumberland County Master Gardener's Monthly Newsletter**

APRIL 2026

*There is no glory in star or blossom till looked upon by a loving eye; there is no fragrance in April breezes till  
breathed with joy as they wonder by.*

*William Cullen Bryant*



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, MARGO CARROLL

April is here, and with it comes one of our busiest and most rewarding times of the year.

The Plateau Discovery Garden is coming to life, and I want to thank each of you who are out working, planning, and tending the gardens. Your efforts are what make PDG such a special place for our community—a place of beauty, learning, and inspiration. As visitors begin to arrive, everything you do truly matters.

Our Classes in the Garden are off to a fantastic start, with strong attendance and great engagement. It's wonderful to see so many people eager to learn and connect through gardening. Thank you to everyone teaching, assisting, and supporting these programs—you are making a lasting impact.

The Ask a Master Gardener Desk continues

to stay busy as well. Your willingness to share knowledge and help others succeed is one of the greatest strengths of this organization. Whether answering questions or guiding new gardeners, you are representing CCMG with excellence.

And of course, one of our biggest events of the year is right around the corner—the Flower, Lawn & Garden Festival. Set-up begins on April 23, with event days on April 24 and 25. This festival is not only a highlight for our community, but also a key fundraiser that supports the Plateau Discovery Garden and our summer intern program.

It takes all of us to make this event a success. Thank you in advance for your time, energy, and teamwork—whether you are organizing, setting up, working booths, or

welcoming visitors. This is where CCMG truly shines.

April is full, busy, and incredibly meaningful. I am grateful for each of you and all that you do to make this organization so strong.

Let's enjoy the season and continue growing—together.

With appreciation,  
*Margo*



### Meeting Reminder!

The April monthly meeting will start at 1:00 on Tuesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>.

## SPRING DAFFODIL DISPLAY GARDENS

By Carol Lorenc and William Smith

Daffodils are such a glorious (and welcome) sign of spring! We see them everywhere from long gone home sites along country roads to manicured city landscapes. But, if you really want to see an abundance of daffodils in spectacular settings, check out an official American Daffodil Display Gardens. Tennessee has three: **Cheekwood Botanical Garden & Museum of Art – Nashville** (<https://cheekwood.org>), **Historic Carnton Plantation – Franklin** ([boft.org](http://boft.org)) and the **Jeff and Jennifer Harvey Garden – Watertown**.



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The Harvey's opened their gardens (and Dirt Dawg Nursery) on March 14th. The weather was perfect for strolling the beautiful grounds which include impressive conifers and whimsical pieces as well as the daffodils. We were greeted by Jeff & Jennifer along with their turkeys, Guinea hens and chickens!



We enjoyed their hospitality and eager answers to all our questions. Dirt Dawg Nursery is only open by appointment, but they will be at our Flower, Lawn and Garden Show in April with lots of plants and gardening tools.



## EATING THE WEEDS

By Laura Riester

When I weed my garden, I sometimes wonder how much—or how little—weeding we would need to do if we simply considered some of these plants to be food. Now in early March we see, among others, fleabane (Erigeron species), violets (Viola species), dandelions (Taraxacum officinale), and bittercress (Cardamine hirsute). I will confine this article to these four edible “weeds.”

Many plants we call weeds are actually nutritious, medicinal, and delicious wild foods; we are simply not accustomed to harvesting and preparing them.

I have always known that dandelions are edible. As a child in Switzerland, it was my job to gather dandelion foliage in early spring because I was the only one of the three children who enjoyed eating dandelion salad. We ate the leaves raw with a mustard vinaigrette. Later, in Pennsylvania, I learned the Pennsylvania Dutch way of slightly wilting dandelion greens by pouring a hot bacon dressing over them.

I was not familiar with fleabane as a weed. While trying to identify it, I learned about its medicinal value and edibility. I decided to try eating some—and I lived to talk about it. Raw fleabane does not have a very distinct taste. However, it is hairy, which may be disturbing to some people. That is not a problem if the leaves are stir-fried. Tea made from fleabane leaves is lovely: pale green, with a pleasant herbal taste and aroma. I simply pour boiling water over a handful of clean leaves, let the brew steep for a few minutes, and then strain it. Once the flowers are blooming, they can be harvested and dried for later use or brewed fresh for tea. There are probably many more uses for this plant.

Hairy bittercress is another abundant edible weed. By itself, the leaves have a spicy, peppery taste resembling arugula. The flower stems, however, are generally too



Fleabane



Dandelion



Violet



Bittercress

tough to chew. Bittercress grows just about everywhere and has an efficient way of distributing its seeds if left to thrive.

Then there are the violets. I never knew them as aggressive weeds until I moved to Tennessee. However, violet leaves and flowers are edible, and many medicinal properties are attributed to them. Sometimes I want something green and discover that I am out of greens—that is a good time to add a few violet leaves. I have never eaten violet flowers, but after reading about them I may try brewing a cup of violet tea.

Foraging for fleabane, wild violets, dandelions, and bittercress is easier than foraging many other edible weeds because they appear very early in the year, before many other plants emerge.

Most scientific studies of herbs use standardized extracts rather than the whole plants. Because of that, we may never know whether we consume too much—or not enough—of these plants to benefit from them, or how much might cause harm. For example, there is a caution regarding fleabane: it should be avoided during pregnancy.

The next time I head outside to weed, I may pause before pulling some of these plants. A few might still end up in the compost, but others may find their way into a salad bowl or teacup instead. Early spring offers these hardy plants long before most garden crops are ready. Perhaps they are not just weeds after all, but small reminders that useful and nourishing foods sometimes grow right at our feet.

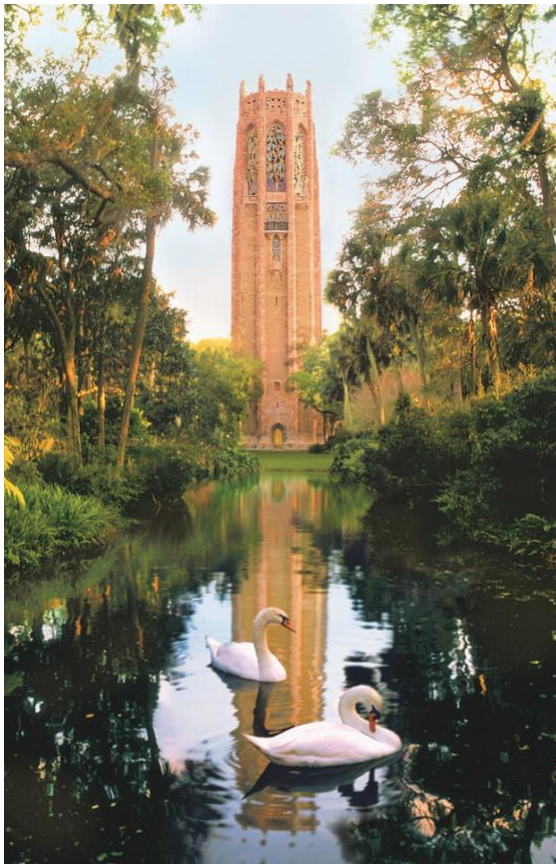


## My Winter Vacation

By Pat Kessler

How does a new Tennessee Master Gardener spend her first winter in central Florida, in a 55+ community where everyone drives around in golf carts and yards are the size of postage stamps? If she's very lucky she finds a beautiful garden to work in and pass the days learning about semi tropical plants amid the heavy scent of orange blossoms. And that's what I did for my winter vacation.

The little fixer upper my husband and I purchased in Bartow, Florida last summer happened to be just 23 miles from Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales, Florida. If you haven't been there, it's worth a trip. The 205-foot tower built on the 15<sup>th</sup> highest point in Florida—at 298 feet above sea level—was built by the philanthropist Edward Bok in 1929 as a gift to the American people. He hired the foremost landscape architect of the age, Frederick Olmsted of Central Park fame, to design an 80-acre garden sanctuary around the tower, and in his tower, he hired the John Taylor Bell Foundry to construct and install a 60-bell carillon.



The “singing tower” and gardens were designated a National Historic Landmark In 1929 by President Calvin Coolidge. Today it is a popular attraction for visitors from all over the world who come to walk among beautiful camellias, azaleas, palms, ferns, birds of paradise, and thousands of other beautiful plants while listening to the stunning chimes of the carillon bells played twice daily by a master carillonneur, one of only a handful of musicians capable of playing the instrument.

And this beautiful garden uses volunteers to help keep it beautiful for the public. Which is where I came in. It was the typical backbreaking, knee aching work of weeding, pruning, and planting, but the beauty of the setting made it an amazing experience, enhanced by the heavy, sweet smell of hundreds of acres of blooming orange trees surrounding the gardens. It's an experience I hope to repeat each winter for as long as my knees and back can handle it.

**2026 Intern Class Notes**  
From Julie Lesko

Gregg Upchurch demonstrated pruning techniques for apples, grapes and blueberries and the interns appreciated having hands-on experience.





## Tomato & Pepper Re-Potting Day By Rita Rice

In March, volunteer MG's helped with re-potting, labeling, and watering Tomatoes and Peppers for our upcoming Flower Lawn and Garden Festival. They had a great time. And to quote Rita, "Sometimes, working hard and spending some quality time with friends is the only therapy you need".



*Figure 2 Working at a potting table*



*Figure 1 The Tomato & Pepper vols*



*Figure 3 Job well done*

## Dirt Pile Saga - Part II

by Sue Partch

Throughout March and April 2025, we looked out our living room windows at the dirt pile about 50 yards away. The new grass around its edges grew lush and bright green so I figured it was going to be OK. It sure didn't look like much with big hard clumps and small pieces of plastic, rope, metal and wood sticking out. Meanwhile I was planning and pricing; my son was going to help me build my raised beds when he came in May.

I got all sorts of conflicting info from the internet: stones in the bottom for drainage, stones unnecessary; different depths recommended; soil variations. I sifted thru it and made up my own plan. I did some math and went price shopping for the frame materials. I'd pretty much decided on cinder blocks when my son came and made a big pitch for used railroad ties as sturdier and more attractive. My concern about creosote leaching into my soil was deflected by suggesting a plastic liner on the inner walls.

And so by the end of May, 16 railroad ties showed up on his trailer. We stacked them more or less where they were to be placed and he promised to make at least one bed before he had to go back to teaching in August. Then he was off on his summer commitments. As it turned out all he had time for in August was to drive in the fence posts I bought for support on the downhill side of the one wall for each bed we had stacked. It was too late to put in a garden by then anyway but he said he'd finish one when he came for Thanksgiving so it would be ready for spring 2026.





### **Tahiti Double Daffodil**

Elegant double flowers of the Daffodil Tahiti in the perfect mix of gold and orange open to an almost rose-like bloom on strong stems. Long-lasting in a vase and simply beautiful!

Editor's Note  
from  
Jan Pitzer & Laura Riester

This publication is not responsible for errors and omissions.  
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