

The Thymes

JULY 2025

On the blast of scorched July
Drives the pelting hail,
From thunderous lightning-clouds, that blot
Blue heaven grown lurid-pale.
Weedy waves are tossed ashore,
Sea-things strange to sight
Gasp upon the barren shore
And fade away in light.

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



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

Dear Master Gardeners,

As we enjoy the height of the growing season, I'd like to talk about a different kind of growth—*sustainability*, both in our Plateau Discovery Garden and within our organization. Ensuring that what we build today continues to thrive tomorrow is at the core of what we do as Master Gardeners.

In the garden, sustainability means using practices that protect our soil, conserve water, and support the local ecosystem. Our efforts—like composting, using native and pollinator-friendly plants, and incorporating low-impact irrigation systems—help make the Plateau Discovery Garden a living example of what smart, responsible gardening can be. It's not just

about growing plants; it's about creating a space that can grow *with us* for years to come.

But garden sustainability is only one side of the equation. For our organization to flourish, we need to nurture *leadership* just as we do our plants. One of the most valuable ways to support our mission is by volunteering to serve a one-year term on the Master Gardener Board. Fresh ideas, new energy, and shared responsibility are what keep us vibrant and resilient as a group. Just like we rotate crops for soil health, rotating leadership ensures that no one carries the load alone and that we remain dynamic, relevant, and forward-thinking.

If you've ever thought about serving or want to learn more, I encourage you to reach out. One year of service can grow into lasting impact—not just for the board, but for every project and person our organization touches.

With gratitude for all you do,

Margo



Margo Carroll. Margosky2012@gmail.com 931-202-4438

REMEMBER:

THE JULY 1ST MEMBER MEETING'S A POTLUCK DINNER: 5:00pm/Country Store

Our speaker will be Jeff Harvey, President of the American Conifer Society. Jeff and Jennifer Harvey joined the Society in 2006. Since then, they have been incredible leaders and supporters of the organization. They have organized and run many regional meetings and three national meetings. They also own and run Dirt Dawg Nursery and Tools, and have supported the Cumberland County Master Gardeners Flower Show and Festival for many years. They have been gardening for over 30 years and live in Watertown, TN. "Founded in 1983, the purpose of the American Conifer Society is to promote the use of conifers in gardens and landscaping while educating the public about their care and conservation."

Find more information here: <https://www2.conifersociety.org/>

Tomato and Pepper Test Trial on the Plateau

By Kristi DuBois

On the hottest day of the year up to that point, a crew of Master Gardeners and interns met UT's Dr. Natalie Bumgarner (aka Dr. Lettuce) and our very own Extension Agent Gregg Upchurch at the Plateau Discovery Gardens to plant tomatoes and peppers in a test trial that will serve as a demonstration site for the Fall Gardeners' Festival and other educational events.



After a briefing in the shady pavilion on the test trial goals and design, we headed out into the blazing sun and down the hill past the day lilies to rows of carefully prepared raised beds embedded with drip irrigation tape and lined with black plastic. (Thank you to the staff for preparing the beds and making our job so much easier!)

Dr. Bumgardner and other “OCD” gardeners, as they called themselves, meticulously measured plant spacing and drove in stakes. Then the Master Gardener worker bees planted three cultivars of determinate tomatoes (the heirloom Mariglobe, the hybrid Celebrity, and Defiant) and three cultivars of peppers (the heirloom California Wonder, Keystone Resistant Giant, and the hybrid Red Knight), all with varying degrees of disease resistance. In the middle of the tomatoes and peppers, we planted flowers to attract pollinators.

One row of vegetables was planted in black plastic, another with straw mulch, and the last in bare soil. I guess we need to stop complaining about our shallow soil on the Plateau because Dr. Bumgardner was very impressed with our sandy loam; she said the UT Gardens at Knoxville have a lot of clay.

Each row of vegetables will receive weekly disease prevention and fertilizer treatments, half of each row with conventional treatments and the other half with organic ones.

By the time of the Fall Gardeners' Festival, we should know which cultivars do the best on the Plateau, and with which kind of ground covering and which kind of disease prevention and fertilization treatment.

And hopefully, we will have enough tomatoes and peppers to have a salsa and tortilla chip party!



Garden of Heirlooms

By Sue Partch

I value traditions, family hand-me-downs and old stuff. My house is filled with musty old furniture, pictures, dishes and what-nots passed down through generations. I've never really tried to be "in fashion" and now buy most of my clothes from thrift stores avoiding many of the new fabrics. I insist on a flip phone cell phone and prefer my car to be gas powered without lots of bells and whistles that end up making me not pay close attention to my driving.

So it's no surprise that my gardens are mostly old family transplants from my parents. A majority of one of the only thing that does really well for me, daffodils, are from their home in New Jersey and many of them had already been there for lots of years before we moved in in the late 1950's. My favorite peony is from the same place and time; the rest are from the Vermont hill I lived on in the 1990's and had been there for probably at least a decade. I have a rampant trumpet vine that started as a piece of the New Jersey one that crawled over the greenhouse and survived sulkily in 2 places in Vermont. Especially treasured is the few runners I dug of the mock orange I played under as a little kid that now have branches over 10 feet tall and lots of blooms every spring.

Other family members have contributed, too. My oldest sister bred daylilies and I brought a selection of my favorites which don't much like the shade they're in but put out a few blossoms each year anyway. From her I also got most of my roses, the very poisonous fall crocus, "Sheldon Road" and "Whitehall sidewalk" tall stalked flowers with blue bells, and a piece of the "black" iris that blooms profusely on her grave but only occasionally for me. Most of my other iris from "home" died from some kind of root rot but I still have a couple small hardy old fashioned purple ones that faithfully bloom each year and my son has given me some white and purple ones from his yard as thanks for weeding and dividing the very crowded ones in his old homestead yard. From my youngest sister's long established gardens I've gotten red bee balm and tall yellow yarrow that are making themselves into a wildflower bed, and deep red columbine to keep the pink ones from my Connecticut house company. Small sprouts from my in-laws ancient lilacs had to be relocated to a sunnier spot before they "took" enough to produce a single spray last year but the climbing rose from them puts out tiny pink blossoms late each spring.



Then there are the things I scavenged to remind me of my childhood. I have white trillium, dog toothed violets and hepaticas from Vermont that struggled but finally are beginning to spread. I also brought myrtle/periwinkle and lily of the valley which are happily filling in sparse shady areas. From a roadside in Missouri I dug up a large blossomed primrose like the ones my mother loved. I have also raided old neglected roadside patches of creeping phlox, bronze iris and forsythia. I have been gifted primroses, a mimosa sapling, sweet betsy trillium and sweet peas by kind friends.

What's new? Not much. I buy a few annuals every year and encourage them to self seed. The gladiolas and dahlias I brought from Vermont suffered the same root rot as the iris and none survived so I've had to replace them. I bought a Jack-in-the-pulpit as a reminder of the one that suddenly appeared in my Vermont shade garden and it's making babies. I've tentatively tried a few other things without much success. So, when I take my daily flower walk it's often a trip down a memory lane of family, former places, former times - full of nostalgia, like my house.



Walking Onions - something quirky for your garden

By Laura Riester

More than a decade ago, while visiting a friend's garden, I noticed a very weird plant in his garden. My friend explained that these were Egyptian Onions (Fig 1). He promised that if I planted some, I would have onions forever. A couple of months later, he brought me a paper bag with a set of onions ready for planting. And I have had onions ever since. Egyptian onions may or may not have anything to do with Egypt; they are also known as Walking onions and Tree onions. They are a unique and intriguing variety of onion with distinctive growth habit that allows them to "walk" across the ground. Unlike most other onions, which grow in a single bulb at the base of the plant, walking onions have a unique trait. They are very adaptable and useful and so much fun to watch during the year.

Walking onions may have originated in the Mediterranean and Asia. They are now found in various parts of the world. The plant itself has a unique growth structure.



At the top of the stem, clusters of small bulbs, or "bulbils," form. These bulbils reproduce vegetatively meaning the plant can propagate itself without the need for seeds. Watching this process is fun. The tip of the green rolls up and is held in place by a sheath (Fig. 2). Inside, the flowers and bulbils develop. When the time is right, the flower buds and tiny bulbils, attached to the tip of the tubular leaf "roll out" (Fig. 3). The bulbils start to grow. As they grow heavier, they



cause the stem to bend and eventually touch the ground, where the bulbils take root and form new plants. Over time, the plant "walks" across the garden, creating a spread of new plants from the original root system. At the same time as bulbils form, they also produce tiny star-shaped flowers and thus can reproduce sexually and produce seeds. These seeds can then be used to grow new plants, adding genetic diversity to the population. Walking onions are not a species but a hybrid *Allium x proliferum*. They are believed to be a cross between *Allium cepa* (the common bulb onion) and *Allium fistulosum* (the Welsh onion).



Not only are these onions fun to grow, they provide "spring onions" during winter and spring. Later, the matured bulbils (Fig. 4) can be roasted, sauteed or pickled just like regular onions. As perennials, they are very hardy. We have gone through some very cold winters, rainy springs and hot summers here on the Plateau but the walking onions have always survived. When I harvest the tubular leaves in the spring, I am always careful to allow some to grow up and produce bulbils to continue the cycle although the mother bulb will may and often does continue producing new shoots for several years.



“Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer’s day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time.”

By Sir John Lubbock, 3rd Baronet, from his book “The Use of Life”, 1894

The Honeybee Tea

By Sue Partch/Photo Credit Michelle Cole



Our Honey Bee Tea was a great success even though the weather forecast forced us to use the indoor classroom. Of course, the predicted rain did not appear until after the tea was over, but our guests all claimed that the indoor version was just fine. The tables were rearranged to look more like a party, the room was filled with flowers and bee decor and guests and workers looked lovely in their finery and hats. The only complaint voiced was that the September tea is sold out.



We got many thank yous and compliments. Lots for Julia's guest and tea table decor of handmade beehives, little metal birds & bees and vases of rose bouquets; pots of flowers and little signs as accents and a photo area with bee panel background. There was praise also for the table settings, bee fabric runners, ribbon tied floral and yellow napkins with honey spoon, and programs containing honey info and the menu.

Good comments about the food, too. Plates of chicken salad croissants, caprese crostini, cucumber sandwiches, ham and herbed cream cheese pinwheels and honey buttered bread were on each table along with glass dishes of fruit skewers. The sweets table was filled with more glass dishes of lemon tarts, beehive topped chocolate cup cakes, lavender orange shortbread, honey sesame candy, Jack Daniels honey liquor scones, triple layer chocolate bars and honey walnut phyllo cups. All were garnished with pieces of herbs, bits of flowers and/or berries. In addition to a variety of teas we offered honey lemonade.

Our speaker, Jeremy Shoemaker, a local beekeeper, told us about the history of bee keeping and honey, the function of each kind of bee and the structure of the hive. He also explained why local honey is better than most commercial honey: imported is often thinned or has additives. Our guests enjoy having theme related products available to buy so another local beekeeper, Monica Hackett, was there with a selection of her honey and beeswax items as well as a piece of honeycomb that she cut up so people could have a taste of fresh raw honey.



To close the tea we had several options. The activity for this tea was making a honey sea salt body scrub. Elaine led a tour of the bee friendly plants in the gardens. Guests could buy MG donated plants and PDG plant sale



“leftovers”. On leaving all guests could choose a teacup beeswax candle as a favor and of course we encouraged everyone to complete evaluations which we were delighted to find were full of very positive comments.

Gardener's To-Do List for July

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. Addition info. is from the UT 2023 Lawn Maintenance Calendar.

- **Flowers** – Both Annuals and Perennials will still have to be deadheaded to encourage continuous blooms. Some plants have one central stem with a flower cluster on top. Nip off that flower cluster after it fades, to just above the next set of leaves or small branches where flower buds form. Once the entire stalk is done blooming, remove it at the base. Other plants have a single flower stalk that grows from the plants leafy base with just one flower or a tight group of flowers on it. Remove individual spent flowers every day or so until no more blooms remain, then pull or cut off the flower stem at the ground. In late June or early July, cut back by one-half, flowers that tend to be leggy or tall and floppy. Rose foliage grows in three-leaf or five-leaf groups. Prune a faded rose and that branch back to the first set of leaves.
- **Perennials** – They can be planted any time, so watch for mid-season summer sales and make additions to your garden area, and don't forget to water them regularly until they are well-established. Watch your blooms! If you have a dish of soapy water handy, just pluck them into it and they will drown. Or, they can even be attacked with a fly swatter.
- **Look Ahead** – Setting out broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower transplants, and sowing lettuce, collards, kale and spinach seeds can start your Fall veggie garden. These should be ready to harvest before the first freeze. If you want to plant Fall bulbs for spring blooms, your catalog order should go in soon.
- **Grass** – Mow all grass types according to the one-third rule. Irrigate only when signs of drought stress such as rolled grass leaves and lingering footprints are present. Treat Tall Fescue preventatively for brown patch on a 28-day interval using a strobilurin fungicide.
- **Zucchini** – Too much? Here's a fine solution from Old World Garden Farms, contributed by Janet Russell:

YIELD: 12 SERVINGS

Zucchini Crisp Dessert Recipe



This easy zucchini crisp tastes just like apple crisp and is the perfect way to use up fresh garden zucchini during garden season. **Continued on next page ---**

PREP TIME15 minutes

COOK TIME45 minutes

TOTAL TIME1 hour

Ingredients

- 8 cups zucchini, peeled, deseeded, and diced into bite-size pieces (about 3–5 medium zucchini)
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ⅓ cup lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup butter

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. In a large bowl, toss zucchini with granulated sugar, lemon juice, cinnamon, and nutmeg until evenly coated.
3. Spread the zucchini mixture into the prepared baking dish.
4. In a separate bowl, mix brown sugar, oats, and flour. Cut in butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
5. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the zucchini.
6. Bake for 45 minutes or until the top is golden and the edges are bubbly.
7. Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.

See the full article and expanded recipe at oldworldgardenfarms.com



Please send your articles, photos and news for next month's newsletter to Jan Pitzer at jprp1990@gmail.com

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

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