

# *The Thymes*

The Cumberland County Master Gardener's Monthly Newsletter

AUGUST 2025

In the parching August wind  
Corn-fields bow the head,  
Sheltered in round valley depths,  
On low hills outspread.  
Early leaves drop loitering down  
Weightless on the breeze,  
First fruits of the year's decay  
From the withering trees.

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



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carroll

Dear Master Gardeners,

As we enter the month of August, I want to take a moment to reflect on the road ahead — and it’s a full one! This is a season of energy, collaboration, and celebration for our organization. We’re planting seeds not just in the soil but in our community, and your dedication continues to make all the difference.

August brings a wave of important and exciting events. First, we’ll showcase our mission at the **Cumberland County Fair**, where our booth will once again be a welcoming place for the public to learn about sustainable gardening and our programs. Then, we’ll head to the **Fall Gardeners’ Festival at UT Plateau Ag Research & Education Center on August 26**, a fantastic opportunity to connect with fellow gardeners and spread the word about what we do.

And don’t forget — **our own “Cheers to 20 Years” fundraising event at the Plateau Discovery Garden on August 22** is right around the corner. This evening will celebrate two decades of Master Gardener impact, with music, garden tours, and community support. Your help with set-up, greeting guests, and making it a memorable evening is needed and appreciated.

Looking a little further ahead, the **Garlic Festival on September 27** is shaping up to be another great opportunity for outreach and fun. To ensure our **Plateau Discovery Garden** looks its absolute best for these events and visitors, we need your help. The garden team has worked hard all year, but now’s the time to give it that extra polish — weeding, mulching, tidying up beds, and getting things photo-ready. Let’s come together to give our garden the love it deserves.

Thank you for all you do, and for continuing to sow enthusiasm, knowledge, and beauty into everything we grow — together.

Warmly,

**Margo Carroll**  
President, Cumberland  
County Master Gardeners



### More Important Dates!!!

- **Aug. 5 – Monthly Membership Meeting at The Country Store. Gather at 5:00 PM, Picnic Theme Potluck meal at 5:30, Speaker/This year’s summer PDG intern, at 6:00.**
- **Aug. 22 - Cheers to 20 years of the PDG Fundraiser Gala from 5:00-7:00 PM (more details on page 11).**
- **Aug. 25-28 – International Master Gardener’s Conference (Virtual). More info.: <https://www.imgc2025.com/>**

**WE HAVE 10 RAIN BARRELS REMAINING FOR MEMBERS TO PURCHASE @ only \$76.00 EACH (THIS INCLUDES TAX)!!**



They may be purchased here: <https://www.rainwatersolutions.com/products/crossvilletn>

The discount code is ccmg20. If purchasing two, use ccmg.20.2. Please make pick up arrangements through Margo 931-202-4438. Pickup will be at the Plateau Discovery Garden. Thanks!

## July's Dragonfly Class for Kids

On July 5<sup>th</sup>, MG's Michelle Cole and Vicki May co-hosted a Dragonfly class at the PDG. Several sweet, inquisitive children aged 3-12 learned all about these expert fliers scientifically known as Anisoptera, made a craft, and walked to the newly completed PDG Dragonfly exhibit to observe them in their habitat.



Photos contributed by Michelle Cole

# Where does AI take us Master Gardeners?

By Laura Riester

The current reliance on Artificial Intelligence sometimes reminds me of science fiction writer Isaac Asimov's short story, "The Last Question" in which successions of computers were fed data. The computers' job was to reveal whether the predicted heat death of the universe could be avoided and entropy reversed. There never seemed to be enough data for the computers to answer that question. The computer, named AC, watched energy end, stars and sun go dark and life cease to exist. Mental processes of all humanity were concentrated and unified with AC. It then discovered the answer: yes, entropy can be reversed. But nobody was left to hear it. AC pronounced to the dead universe: "Let there be light" - and there was light.

There is indeed a genuine concern that artificial intelligence may become too dominant. It is so easy to ask any search engine questions and obtain answers. But, examining the answers we are given, on most topics there is no control center which distinguishes facts from fiction. We Master Gardeners are



Image and description copied from Etsy  
3+ Orange Daylily 'Hemerocallis Fulva' Tawny, Tiger or Ditch Daylilies LIVE Plant:  
Ad by SMBCharmingCreations  
\$29.36

surrounded by nonsense information. To illustrate this, I dove into AI on a topic that I am familiar with: Daylilies.

Daylilies are native to the Far East. In China, the orange "ditch" lily, *Hemerocallis fulva* as well as *Hemerocallis citrina* are used in cooking. I came across some gardening publications which cheerfully reported that daylilies are toxic. I thought I would use AI to learn more. I started with ChatGPT. Then asked Google Scholar as well as Google the same questions. After I verified that each site seemed to understand what a daylily is, I asked whether any daylilies were toxic to humans.

ChatGPT said: "As of current scientific understanding, no species of *Hemerocallis* (daylilies) are classified as *toxic to humans* in the way that *true lilies* (*Lilium spp.*) are".

Just to be sure, I asked: I am reading that daylily roots do contain colchicine. To which ChatGPT answered: „While daylilies are generally considered safe to eat after proper preparation, the presence of colchicine, a toxic compound, necessitates caution. Thorough soaking and cooking of fresh daylilies is crucial to reduce the colchicine content and minimize the risk of toxicity“. Huhh?Whaaat?

Google Scholar answered me with a list of publications. One, from China, at <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11694-023-01844-5> mentioned colchicine as a toxin produced by daylilies. As did this publication from Hong Kong: [daylilies.org+15cfs.gov.hk+15shuncy.com+15](https://daylilies.org+15cfs.gov.hk+15shuncy.com+15). I wanted to dive in a bit deeper and asked Google Scholar: Do *hemerocallis* rhizomes contain colchicine? And: Are daylilies genetically able to synthesize colchicine? Among other publications, a paper, again written by Chinese scientists: <https://academic.oup.com/hr/article/doi/10.1038/s41438-021-00539-6/6446718>, confirmed what I had learned years ago: daylilies are not equipped genetically to synthesize colchicine.

However, I also learned that *Gloriosa* lilies are often confused with daylilies. *Gloriosa* and other lilies do contain colchicine and are highly toxic. Maybe many of these scientists live in crowded cities and have never set eyes on either a daylily or a *Gloriosa* or any other lily. Colchicine, is actually used to convert diploid daylilies to tetraploid daylilies. This conversion results in larger flowers, sturdier

scapes and more intense coloration. However, the colchicine used for this purpose quickly degrades if the plant survives and then exposed to sunlight or water.

Errors in translation from Chinese, poor chemical analysis, contamination of specimens probably even plant mis-identification are possible explanation why we have reports of colchicine found in daylilies.

And to add to the confusion: sometimes daylilies are mistakenly called “Tiger Lily”, Tiger Lilies are true lilies. The photo above illustrates this: someone on Etsy is peddling common orange daylilies and also calls them “Tiger Lilies”.

Not all science is good science. I learned that AI can be used to simultaneously confirm and dispel myths.....

AI is also frequently used to generate and/or alter images. A simple command: Make it Blue turned the photo of one of my seedlings into a blue daylily, the elusive, much sought after blue daylily. Somehow AI knew where to add the blue and where to leave the actual colors. Amazing. We are so fortunate here - we can get away from AI and find refuge in our garden



Photo Credit (2) – Laura Reister



# TENNESSEE GARLIC

FEST



# GARLICFEST

CROSSVILLE TN

**September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

Cumberland County Fairgrounds

Presented by  
Galena Garlic & Cumberland County Master Gardeners

# Yard Art

by Sue Partch

My son is a sculptor. His mediums are old metal and iron casting. He's nearing retirement and planning to move back to East Tennessee when that happens. In the meantime he's slowly moving his pieces and materials to guess where. Because he positions them artistically I choose to accept his interpretation and regard it all as yard art.



I've had two actual completed outdoor sculptures for years: one of his first pieces - a sort of grasshopper that sways a bit when touched - and a piece from his master's "thesis" - a 6 foot torch that I burn to celebrate each New Year's Eve. Two tall metal candlesticks live on my picnic table. Three years ago I got 2 wheels that got put one on each side of the garage door as accent pieces. Two summers ago three pieces of old farm machinery showed up on some of the exposed ledge bits in the south yard.

Last summer a very large ditch digger that I

foolishly pointed out to him got laboriously positioned in the north yard. A trailer full of bits and pieces including a large scooter came at Thanksgiving and now they line the side of part the driveway. So far this summer he's added 2 huge spiked wheels leaning on trees along another piece of driveway, two other wheels near the bits and pieces and a circular piece of metal he calls a fire pit in the south yard - after a bit of farm machinery rearranging.



The deal is I get to do some decorating on these things. The ditch digger currently has morning glory vines winding their way up and over it and I'm looking forward to seeing lots of bright blue flowers soon. Two of the farm machines are guarding potted tomato plants so they can get some sun on my very shady deer path



property. Every fall now I put dried flowers in the spokes of the garage wheels with gourds or small pumpkins in front. Don't have a plan for the new

wheels and fire pit yet but I'm working on it.

I do have one piece all my own. At an auction at an old "mansion" I had top bid of \$5 for a plaster lawn sculpture of an old fashioned little girl. Now 20 years older than when I bought it she is slowly crumbling, her crown is crooked and a hand is missing but I still like her. She adds a bit of faded "class" and the incongruity makes me smile.



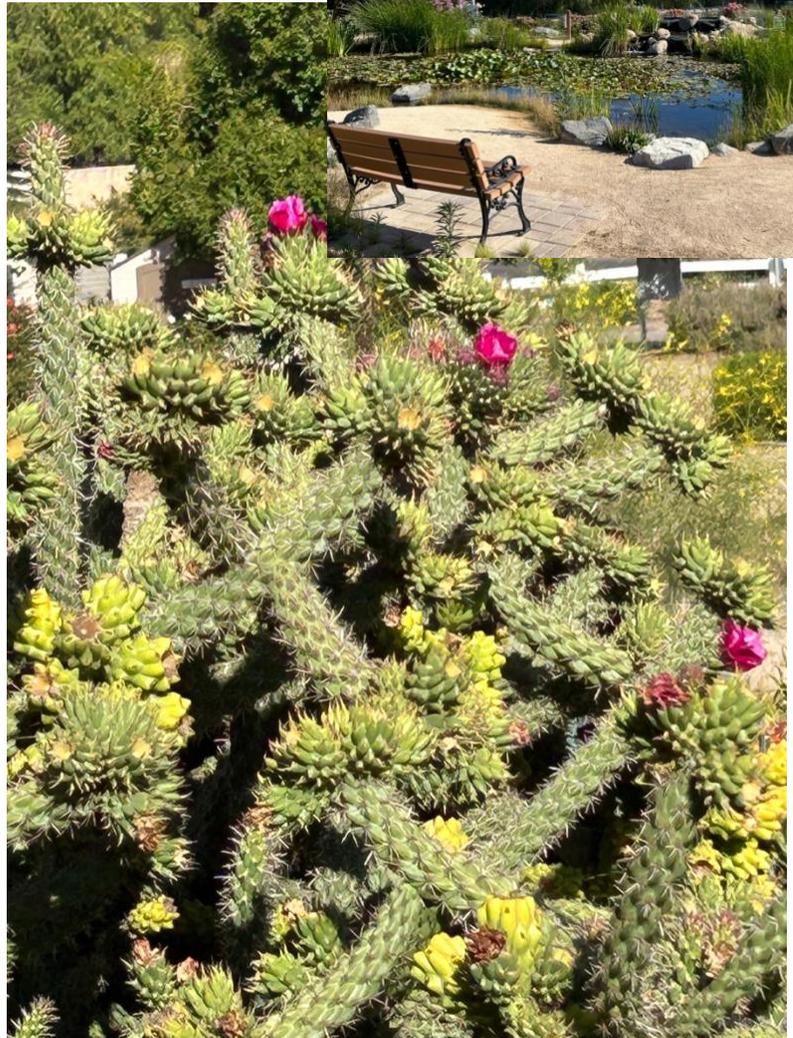
## Off The Plateau



## A Rose Haven

Photo Credit: Ginger Brindley

Pictures captured at the Rose Haven  
Heritage Garden in Temecula, CA





**Tomato in Repose**, by Janet Russell



## Let's have a Garden Party!

To celebrate 20 years of the Plateau Discovery Garden, there will be a Garden Party on Friday, August 22, 2025, and it is being held at the PDG. The event will be hosted by Master Gardeners and UT Ag Research.

There are several reasons for holding this event: 1) to celebrate 20 years of growing (and weeding) the garden; 2) to bring new visibility to the garden with a number of invited dignitaries; 3) to request donations to the PDG Endowment fund; and finally to begin to envision the next 20 years of the garden. Oh, and don't forget to have fun.

The event will be approximately two hours beginning at five o'clock for socializing and touring the garden, with a brief program at six o'clock. Light refreshments will be served and local wine will be available. All Master Gardeners and spouses are invited, with expected attendance estimated at 150 people. An invitation has been sent to all MGs, so please RSVP to help with planning. Dress will be casual. Remember it is August in Tennessee and will be warm.

This Garden Party is being held on the Friday after the Steak & Potatoes field day and before the Fall Gardener's Festival on the following Tuesday, so any help in making the PDG pristine that week will certainly be appreciated.



"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

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"Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." ~  
Warren Buffett

\*

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." ~ Frank Lloyd Wright

## Gardener's To-Do List for August

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. Also from *Southern Living* magazine, circa 1990's.

- **Fall Vegetables** – Transplants, such as cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage should be set out by August 5<sup>th</sup> and should be kept well-watered if there's not enough rainfall.
- **Weeds** – Keep attacking crabgrass and other weeds. High-test vinegar is increasingly available in our area, for treating weeds organically. Otherwise, remember to follow the label directions on your herbicide.
- **Acid-Loving Plants** – Azaleas, rhododendrons, mountain laurel, and other acid-loving plants need to be fertilized before the end of August, using an acid-based soluble fertilizer containing iron.
- **Mums** – Keep fertilizing until the buds show color.
- **Bulbs** – Now is a good time to order your spring-flowering bulbs, which you will plant in October or November.
- **Strawberries** – Make the second application of fertilizer on new plantings of June-bearing strawberries. Apply 3 lbs. of 10-10-10 per 100 feet of row.
- **Raspberries** - After the last raspberry harvest, prune old flowering canes, leaving only 3 to 4 young canes per foot of row. In spring, prune back shoot tips.
- **Containers** – If your potted plants get so dry that the soil has shrunk or hardened, just watering the surface won't be effective. Thoroughly wet the soil, put several inches of water in a bucket, then set the entire pot in the water, and let the dry soil soak up the moisture. After an hour or two, remove the pot and drain excess moisture.



Please send your items of interest (before August 30<sup>th</sup>) to Jan Pitzer at [jprp1990@gmail.com](mailto:jprp1990@gmail.com)

Your creative input is vital. Hopefully, you're enjoying the engaging written content contributed by our talented membership, as well as the stellar photographs. Remember, the 2025 photo contest continues through Autumn. Although the contest rules are few, Cumberland County gardening and related subjects will receive special consideration for the "major award", which will be presented at this year's last meeting.

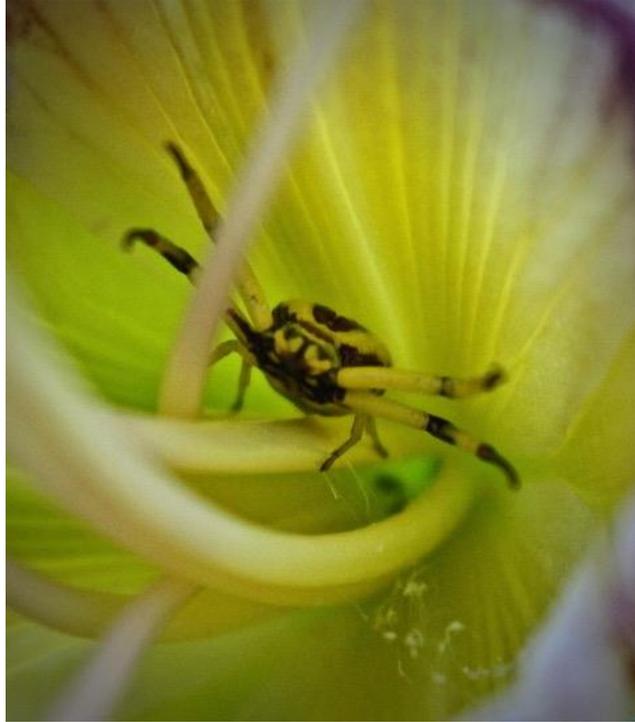


Photo Credit – Laura Reister



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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