

Summer 2025 Survey of Cumberland County Master Gardeners Plateau Discovery Garden

Thoughts, concerns and ideas to make the next 20 years even better!

Q1: In a few words, describe your vision for the PDG. Our vision should support our Mission, which centers around education and how the PDG can be used for that mission. If you have multiple ideas, it would be helpful if you can number them with number one being the most significant.

- For the garden to be more sustainable, ADA accessible, places to sit and shade, more use of the outdoor classroom & multi-media, larger indoor classroom-events space
- Continue to provide education and beauty
- Actively reach into high schools to recruit students that need their 10 volunteer hours before getting their TN Promise college funds .
- I think you need to have an idea of how many MG are coming in, leaving and/or are no longer active before you look at plans for the garden. It needs to start with labor and work backwards. After Covid you had a big influx of retirees to TN and the Plateau - that is starting to slow and home sales are down. Many gardeners are aging and are unable to do what they have done in the past. Shalena is wearing out - literally- unfortunately. So I think less is more and the simpler designs and the easier the maintenance the better.
- Better signs at each exhibit so a brochure (to be carried) is not needed!
- That the PDG continue to be a beautiful, vibrant, inspiring garden that everyone may enjoy and learn from. That the "education" include working with UT and trials to continually advance our understanding of best garden practices for yields and the environment.
- "1 Larger classroom. Could be an addition to the outdoor classroom, or possibly some way to enclose the outdoor classroom when weather is a concern.
- 2 ADA Compliant. Paving the walking paths. Better parking."
- A place to learn what grows well in this area and about the variety of plants and crops that can thrive here. A place to inspire local gardeners with pleasing displays and garden ideas. A source of good information about local plants.
- "1. To be a significant free-access educational opportunity for our community
- 2. To grow in a sustainable responsible manner
- 3. To offer changing / rotating educational exhibits and classes"

- Keep offering educational classes to the public.
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- I think you should find a way to have more paid help for the Gardens. Often, it seems like just a few can help and they do a lot of work.
- Provide education and visual display in a natural setting of landscape material available and sustainable in the Plateau area of Tennessee
- To educate people who want to further their education in gardening.
- nice to have trial gardens to determine best plants for all types of gardening
- "1.) Plant name tag identifiers, with the Sun/half sun/shade symbols. People come to see and learn what type of plants they can use in their gardens on the Plateau. There are a lot of transplant people who come from other areas and need basic plant knowledge.
- 2.) A waterproof, clear plexi lidded box with a sheet of deer resistant annuals and perennials
- to educate gardeners into the types of plants that will survive if they don't live in town. Any dwellers outside city limits will have deer problems. If the deer eat everything they put in the first year, they may become discourage."
- Continue to focus on education and celebrate what makes gardening unique on the plateau. Become a more well known destination.
- Maybe partner with local businesses in town for hands on demonstrations so that all ages could participate. Partner with the schools for a community vegetable garden at each one.
- 1. Garden projects that are sustainable by the volunteers we have. 2. Social interaction opportunities to build bonds with each other and encourage involvement.
- Make it easy for the public to vist garden and see what grows good on plateau

- I love our PDG, and although I have lived in this area all my life, I really knew next to nothing about it until I became a master gardener. I would love to see more outreach/publicity of this wonderful resource in our community.
- My personal vision is that the garden showcase and demonstrate how to grow native plants of the Plateau, not just pollinator perennials but all kinds of native plants, especially endangered and threatened ones.
- Keep the gardens current by refurbishing the beds.

Q2: What are some specific items that you would like to see done in the PDG? i.e. structures, infrastructure improvement or operations. Please prioritize.

- Benches, fencing around the Dragonfly pond to prevent vandalizing
- Surveillance cameras to deter vandalism
- Combine Food Scape & Container Garden into the same area. I do not think new areas should be set up, but have new MG help refresh what is already located at PDG.
- More commercial equipment - edgers, tractors, carts. Less structures that require continual maintenance
- More shaded sitting and stopping places, like benches
- "Trials and Classes in the Gardens are great and definitely should be continued as a cornerstone of education efforts.
- MG learn a great deal from hands on work with the trials, etc. -- perhaps more intimate or hands on programs in the gardens would be relatable & useful.
- We have seasonal whole garden tours. How about adding monthly ""Evenings in the Gardens"" (April - October?) to highlight a specific section of the garden with timely demonstrations of specific topics. Topics could relate to the CCMG almanac ""to dos"" lists."
- "1 Paving pathways
- 2 Classroom expansion
- 3 Greenhouse for demonstration and seasonal use
- 4 Parking accessibility"

- More written information available to the public about the plants in the gardens. Would include information on where to find more information. Perhaps a community garden area where folks without garden space could plant what they want and take care of it. Unneeded food could be donated to the food banks.
- "1. Improve the access to pressure water for plant maintenance
- 2. Make the desired entrance to the Garden more obvious and inviting to the public (currently its hard for a newbie to figure out where the desired entrance is)
- 3. Add demonstrations of simple low-cost concepts such as cold frames, hoop gardens, mini green houses, a permanent rain barrel display, interactive kiosks/laptops in the downstairs classroom."
- "More water stations to water the plants.
- "1. Improve the access to pressure water for plant maintenance
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- I think you could improve the entrance by adding some taller, shade types of trees around the entrance deck. And improve the directions to the entrance (more signage).
- No opinion at this time
- Offer classes in various type of gardening and landscaping .
- Improved building with classrooms / conference rooms. Become wedding venuet
- I don't know if it's even possible, but, industrial strength weighted roll down screens for the sides of the outdoor classroom. It would cut down on the wind that blows tablecloths and handouts, and slow down the impact of blown rain.
- "1 - Help for Shalena (could be: new hire and/or more interns)
- 2 - Better, more welcoming signage for the garden
- 3 - Climate controlled storage for batteries for battery-operated tools
- Rain Totes located strategically throughout property so as to be located close to areas that need watered regularly. 2) Drip irrigation. 3) More seating in shaded areas 4) Another outdoor classroom. 5) Increase in interns
- Paved sidewalks
- Walking paths
- None

- I think the PDG is beautiful but not hospitable for lingering. We need more shade trees, shade clothes, and benches to provide people with places to relax and enjoy. I know we need to make the gardens more handicap accessible, but I would like to see more natural wheelchair friendly paths, not concrete, if that is possible. It would be cool to get a grant for an all terrain wheelchair for visitors.
- "Shade structure with bench.
- More valves for watering "

Q3: What are things that you like about being in the Master Gardeners and working with the PDG?

- The PDG is a treasure! Education and learning, hands on learning
- Peaceful surroundings, great comaradary, beauty
- I have learned so much from classes, from being with other seasoned Master Gardeners, and from classes taught at the PDG
- The education and knowledge that is available and the classes.
- It's a beautiful space - love to simply weed, deadhead and weed. Like the opportunity to work with trials that I might be interested in
- I like digging in the dirt and wish my physical limitations didn't make that so difficult (more raised beds?)
- "The PDG is an extraordinary garden from the Kinder-garden and new dragonfly exhibit to all the gorgeous flowers, trees, shrubs -- it's a joy to be there!
- Outreach needs to be constant to continue to acquaint more with all the Gardens have to offer."
- The educational aspects. Learning while doing at the PDG. Access to UT professors."
- I just started, but so far I just like feeling like I'm part of something beautiful. I like being able to learn about plants that are new to me and working with them. I like being around others who are crazy about gardening and knowledgeable.
- "* Pride of accomplishment
- Opportunity to teach"
- Enjoy talking to other gardeners and the public about gardening in regards to flowers or vegetables.
- It's a good group of people who have become friends. I enjoy the meetings & functions like the Spring Flower & Garden Show (sorry, I can't get used to the word "flag") and the Fall Gardeners Festival. There's always lots of information (even tho I don't have a garden anymore.
- Infinite opportunities!
- You meet people with all kinds of backgrounds in gardening
- no restrictions, self directing
- i continue to learn, and I like that I can share that knowledge with others. It's nice to be with people who share a love of gardening.

- "1 - Ability to participate in research
- 2 - I learn something new every day that I'm there
- 3 - Feel blessed to have the PDG here in Cumberland County
- 4 - It's a happy peaceful place to be
- The people and the many opportunities available for us.
- Learning at the gardens through classes and working with experienced gardeners.
- I see great ideas and am all ways learning
- Being around like minded people and the knowledge I have gained.
- I like the opportunity to learn and pass on what I've learned by writing , designing activities, or giving classes.
- "Opportunities to volunteer
- Friendly group with a common interest
- Continuing education is actually first."

"Q4: What are things that you dislike about being in the Master Gardeners and working with the PDG?

- All the work it takes from volunteers at the PDG
- HEAT!!
- I dont think that It was made clear that we would be asked to do so much at the PDG.
- I do not think most MG have the time to work a lot in the PDG. If you love gardening, landscapes, etc you have your own place to take care of during the summer. More money needs to be raised so there is more than one intern to help Shalena with PDG. I do not see how she can do all she does.
- Hard to take emails that criticize work that's been done while admonishing that more work needs to be done - but that's only one person
- There is a "cliqueishness" that makes it difficult to meet other gardeners.
- "poison ivy, fire ants, etc. -- WARNING SIGNS in areas prone to infestations would be helpful to workers & public (and may be worded carefully not to ""put off"" anyone)
- Briefings before MG work sessions could also include such warnings -- as MG we should recognize poison ivy, etc. but it's easy to just ""jump into the work"" and then realize it.... "

- A lot of fundraising without a plan for the raised funds. Just supporting the general fund is not enough. Fundraising should be targeted for some purpose, or because the event is either educational or fun to do.
- It's time demanding and kinda far away. I don't know anyone.
- "* Only a small percentage of CCMG members actually work there (me included)
- The amount of financial contributions needed
- The high frequency of emails to all members from Shalena...suggest a weekly email unless very time sensitive topics."
- Would like to see water being provided to the workers like it use to be during events and work day.
- "* Only a small percentage of CCMG members actually work there (me included)
- The amount of financial contributions needed
- The high frequency of emails to all members from Shalena...suggest a weekly email unless very time sensitive topics."
- The amount of work required to keep up the PDG. In the heat, especially, it's difficult to get out in the sun.
- I would like to be more geographically located to spend more time at PDG
- Spend lots of effort in raising money.
- Our group isn't that large so there is a ton of work for any fundraising show, and the maintenance of the PDG, with not that many people to do the work. Since most of the members are retirees, many have health restrictions on how much they're able to do, while still maintaining their own yards. That leaves the bulk of the work to the younger able bodied people.
- "1 - Bermuda Grass invading the plots
- 2 - Poison Ivy
- 3 - Hydrangeas are disappointing"
- It seems like the same people are doing everything. It would be nice for the whole group to volunteer. I feel bad for leadership.
- It gets overwhelming with so many projects and fundraisers. I have other interests too, but the MG seems to need a lot of volunteer hours. Lack of social contact with other gardeners.
- I like all!
- Working in the garden to maintain the pollinator garden in the blazing sun and humidity is torture to me. I know sun is important to many plants, but coming from the Pacific NW, I would much prefer to have more shady woodland gardens to work in. I would love a native tree garden with ferns, moss and native shrubs and flowers.
- Some of the gardens are overgrown with plants that looked great when they were small. However they weren't designed with "right plant in the right space" and have since become a maintenance problem.

Q5: Do you have any other comments concerning Master Gardeners or the PDG?

- The PDG is a wonderful asset for the CCMG
- Need more volunteering
- I have really enjoyed MG. I am just worked to death at my own property and very little energy left to work at PDG.
- There has been a lot of discussion regarding people not showing for classes or showing up without registration-think we need to utilize software better to push and confirmation emails
- Since soil is the cornerstone of any garden, I wonder if we could do more to improve the soil quality around the gardens? Mulch is spread annually but some sections are really hard. Are the garden soils evaluated periodically?
- Possibly changing up the roles for Officers to help with recruiting people into the roles. Would it be possible to identify the critical tasks in each position and slim down some of the responsibilities to help get more people interested in being on the Board?
- I need more information about how the club works. I don't know how much the dues are or when they are paid, what all the projects are—really very little information about the club.
- We sure didn't know (or plan for) what we were creating!!
- EXCELLENT resource and of great value to our mid-Tennessee location!
- UT should provide more financial support for pdg
- Vandalism to the gardens.
- It's been a great organization to expand on my interests and keep my mind active.
- Great organization, beautiful gardens

Q6: Share your ideas how we can make the Plateau Discovery Garden less work to maintain?

- Lets look for ideas for better weed management, possibly more or different types of mulch, or methods for planting, and watering
- Just more hands
- Hire more part-time people to share in the load.
- Maybe start adding automatic watering systems to the critical areas so that labor can be used in other areas.
- Better equipment, simpler designs and some use of chemicals
- Mowers seem to take a lot of time. Reduce the daylily bed and put in more displays
- "Whew -- that's the million dollar question, isn't it (for our home gardens, too)?"

- Watering is a big issue -- is it time to cost a garden wide drip line system?"
- The "Adopt a Spot" idea works. Could it be expanded to other business, church or school groups to adopt a spot?
- I have no idea. My own gardens take so much time—if you come up with some good ideas I'd love to hear them.
- "1. easy pressure water access
- 2. More golf carts
- 3. Freeze the boundaries of the Garden and re-use beds instead of constantly expanding
- 4. Go back to the class project...ongoing responsibility model."
- Hire another person (or 2). Are you telling me that UT "can't afford" it?
- Weeding seems to be never ending - utilize consistent mulch applications throughout the 4 seasons
- "Assign credits back to Master Gardeners not just in volunteering, but CEU
- courses that go toward yearly certification earning CEU's
- paved sidewalks. Maybe that could control Bermuda grass from creeping in beds
- Since PDG is a state authorized Tennessee garden, I think that UT should provide one or two more paid people to support the growing maintenance and trials being done for the state. Crossville doesn't have the number of citizens or volunteers that Knoxville does, to maintain such a large garden and trial areas. We don't have the numbers or the community financial support that Knoxville has. If UT expects a small town to do the same work as a large metropolis, they should provide another fully paid employee.
- "1 - Occasional edging may help keep Bermuda Grass out of plots
- 2 - Periodic refresh of overgrown plots "
- Open up more slots for more interns and more paid positions. (Open up for us retired persons too) Utilize mulching at least 2-3 x / year. Drip irrigation.
- Keep promoting the Adopt-a-Spot, change out heavy water hoses for lighter ones.
- Develop a way to keep out weeds
- Utilize student (high school) volunteers.
- Transportable shade clothes for weeding on hot days. I would be able to work longer then.
- Refurbish old beds by starting over

Q7: Any additional comments, ideas, ways you'd like to be more involved?

- I would like to see more hands on learning opportunities for the public and MGs, and promoting/ publicizing the Garden.
- We need youth involvement and for the high schools to provide school credit for Ag students to work at the garden.

- It's hard to be involved in middle of summer when you have your own garden or landscape to attend to - I'd focus on spring, fall classes and events and less during summer.
- Good job on asking the local CMGs for help!
- Daytime meetings are much preferred.
- Maybe a buddy could be assigned to each new MG to show us the ropes, sit next to us at meetings until we get to know a few people.
- needs more publicity. People don't even realize its here
- I've heard others ask what can we do with the greenhouse; here's a thought... We could make a floral display garden (perhaps off the deck area) out of the University of Tennessee logo. We could start the flowers from seed or get plugs and grow them in the greenhouse.
- CCMG gatherings at the PDG for fun. Like Ice Cream Social or something, in place of Field Trip some months.
- I would be very interested if the PDG became a resource for mental health professionals in their work with clients.
- I think a demonstration food production area would be very popular.
- Fund raising for the garden refurbishment

**Thank you for taking part in the
Summer 2025 Survey of Cumberland County Master Gardeners
Plateau Discovery Garden
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