

The Thymes

FEBRUARY 2026

The sky appears broader now than it did. The day has opened its eyelids wider. The lengthening of the days, commenced a good while ago, is a kind of forerunner of spring.

[Excerpt From Henry David Thoreau's Journal, February 19, 1852]



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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, Margo Carrol

It's hard to believe we're only about six weeks away from spring. Even if the days are still cold and gray, this is the season when gardens begin.

February is the perfect time to plan not only our gardens, but also our Master Gardener activities. We have a full year ahead — classes, garden workdays, outreach, and special events such as the Flower, Lawn & Garden Festival and the Spring Plant Sale the following weekend. Our community loves these programs, and they don't happen on their own; they happen because each of you brings your time, talents, and ideas.

I encourage you to think about how you'd like to take part this year. Maybe it's helping at the Plateau Discovery Garden, assisting with a class, working behind the scenes at events, or welcoming new members. There's a place for everyone, whether you prefer digging in the soil, organizing, teaching, or simply lending a hand where needed.

I'm excited for another season of learning, friendship, and growing together. Thank you for being part of this wonderful group and for all you do for our gardens and our community.

Here's to the season ahead — it will be here before we know it.

Warmly,
Margo

931-202-4438
Cell/Text



Meeting Reminder:

Tuesday, February 3rd

Gather @ 12:30 PM - Meeting starts @ 1:00 PM. People can bring cookies/snacks.

No speaker: Gregg Upchurch will award service hour pins. The 1st 2026 intern class will begin at 9:00 AM & all members are welcome to attend. If there is inclement weather or the roads are problematic, the meeting will be canceled.

Dirt Pile Saga

Part I

By Sue Partch

My husband hates Christmas lists and refuses to get anything he knows is on one or that has been specifically asked for. I was really surprised when in December 2024 he asked me what I wanted for Christmas. After I recovered and thought a little, I said with a bit of a pipe dream sigh, “A pile of good garden dirt” (sorry Gregg). His turn to look surprised but it wasn’t for the reason I thought. There was a bit of a pause and then he said “Well, good. That’s what I was planning to get you.”

We shared a laugh and then talked about how to accomplish it. He sent me to Proffitt’s to research what was available, pricing and delivery options. I decided on the grow mix and took the price list home to discuss quantity and delivery dates. He chose the full truck load and we decided to wait until after Christmas to order it and set a date. Meanwhile I needed to think about where I wanted it and how I was going to use it.

I walked around my yard considering things like where it got the most sun, access for watering and where I could deal with a heavy truck on my lawn. In spite of my son arguing for a different spot I chose the one I preferred with truck access a significant influence. I decided on two 8x4 raised beds and started researching them. Any remaining soil would get used to improve existing garden beds. Early in January the dirt order was called in with a delivery date someday the next week.

It didn’t come. The answer to our phone call was that the dirt was too wet to load - it had rained a lot - and that they’d contact us when they could make a delivery. Every cold spell throughout January and February I hoped for a call. Finally in early March we got a call that if it didn’t rain the truck would be there in 2 days.

So, 2 months after I expected it, I got my Christmas present. The dump truck showed up. The driver said he couldn’t put it where I wanted it because his truck would tip over. With a slight location adjustment so an exposed bit of ledge could brace a back tire a huge pile of dirt got dumped in the middle of my south lawn.



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Winter Garden

By Laura Riester – (Article and Photographs)

On the Cumberland Plateau, we have the opportunity to create gardens that have year-round interest. During the winter we experience rain, wind, occasional ice and sometimes snow. Our plants are subjected to a wide range of temperatures. Rarely are our gardens buried deep under snow.



Figure 1

Normally, plants that are green during the growing season become muted yellows, pale golds or beiges. This absence of bright colors brings out the structure of plants. In our climate zone ornamental grasses hold especially much winter interest; their seed heads catch frost and snow, and they move with the wind. (Fig. 1) They also provide shelter and food for birds and other wildlife

For greenery and some color, kale, Brussel sprouts and cold-hardy brassicas are fun to have around. They thrive after a first frost, although they may not always survive single-digit temperatures (Fig. 2).

What would a winter garden be without some evergreens? The UT Garden in Crossville is a perfect example of a garden that has year-round interest.



Figure 2

The garden has a lovely collection of evergreens, ornamental grasses and other plantings that are always attractive. Some hardy ornamentals that are dry and dormant in the winter are intentionally left to provide structure and to draw in our attention.

During the winter months we will also immediately notice anything that is red, because there is not much of it while the garden is dormant. For example Red Twig Dogwood (Fig. 3), rosehips (Fig. 4) and the sedum rupestre ‚Angelina‘ (Fig. 5) really attract our attention.



Figure 3



Figures 4 and 5

The UT Garden also has a collection of evergreens that provide continuity. Some stand out with bright shades of green/gold, for example Golden Mop Cypress (Fig. 6). They contrast other evergreens, especially those that have quiet shades of blue/grey such as the Grey Owl Junipers (Fig.7)

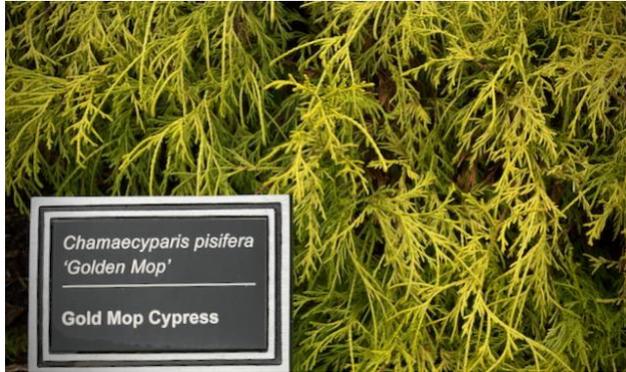


Figure 6



Figure 7

In other parts of the gardens we will find dry seedpods of ironweed, asters and many other hardy flowering plants. These not only provide food for birds and shelter for insects, they are also quite attractive. (Figs 8,9)



Figure 8



Figure 9

Dust of Snow

BY [ROBERT FROST](#)

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

