



THYMES
CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS
NOVEMBER, 2023

Mike Barron: President

Two things happened on the same day. I was celebrating the fact that I finally have about 98 percent of my leaves picked up (which is no small task) and I felt pretty proud of myself. Then I see a Facebook post about starving birds, and suddenly I feel guilty about keeping my yard look good at the expense of our bird population. I will say that I have been picking up leaves since moving here in 2009, but I never thought of it as taking food from the birds. If it helps, my system seems to leave all the acorns uncovered, which keeps the squirrels and deer happy, but not the blue jays or other birds which hide food in leaves. Maybe a few leaves left on the ground are not so unsightly, after all.

The year 2023 has been a good one for the Master Gardeners. A talented class of interns joined us, and they have proven to be ready volunteers who like to work. The PDG plant sale was an incredible success, and MGs sold tomatoes, peppers, trees, and hostas—adding to our bank account. Three *Teas in the Garden* were held with sold-out crowds as great fundraisers, further bringing an even bigger value with the number of new people who came out to the PDG for the first time. In addition, over 600 participants attended thirty-five *Classes in the Garden* and over 1200 attendees came to the *Fall Gardener's Festival* in August. At our monthly meetings, we learned about armadillos, opossums and coyotes and numerous other topics. Finally, we had a prosperous fundraiser selling bulbs. I am not sure how you count, but for me all of this adds up to a pretty amazing year. And, I'm sure I've left some accomplishments out. Thanks to everyone for making it all happen.

On Dec. 6, we hold our annual Christmas luncheon, and it appears we will have a nice crowd. One thing I really appreciate about the luncheon is our collection of *Toys for Tots*. So, remember to bring an unwrapped toy for some child in Cumberland County who may not get much else. We have a lot to celebrate and sharing our bounty is only one more way to give back to our community.

On January 2, we will be back together to start 2024, keeping to our daytime meeting schedule. We look forward to a great year ahead and many more bragging rights. Go Cumberland County Master Gardeners!

Sue Partch: Autumn's Final Show



These articles about roadside observations have about come full cycle. The tree skeletons are back. More and more appear as November goes on. That means the skyline keeps lowering and it's now low enough that I can again briefly see an Eastern ridgeline on my way to town. Rocky ledges, foliage hidden structures and trash on the roadsides have reappeared.

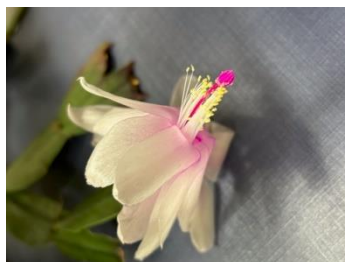
Browns are the dominant color. There are dark brown tree trunks and limbs. All shades of tan show up in roadside and field weeds. Dull yellow-tan corn stubble and even a few small forlorn patches of cornstalks emphasize the coming of winter. And there are the leaves.

Unlike January where the leaves were matted and decaying, November's leaves are crisp and light. Some still have a bit of color and cling to their trees, but most have broken free to dance in the air or swirl with friends on roads and lawns. They coat yards and roadsides. Ambitious homeowners rake or blow them into piles to burn or use as mulch or bag and cart away. Lazy people, like me, leave them for the spring. Kids and would-be kids shuffle through them for the crackly noise or make piles to jump into or tunnel beneath.

Some fall displays of hay bales, pumpkins, etc., are still in yards, but Christmas decorations have started to appear. Mostly just lights so far, but a few homes have yard displays. For anyone who likes to take a *look at holiday displays ride*, I recommend a mid-December drive down Pomona Rd and POW Camp Rd. between 70N and Taylor Chapel Rd. You'll get the full range: from a single candle in a window or discretely lighted doorway to full blown, over-the-top light show and a yard of blow-ups. The corner on POW Camp Rd. with a field of small trees, each hosting a string of different colored lights--next door to a lovely lighted angel in a gazebo--is my favorite.

Robin Piacine: Holiday Cactus

I had been wondering what type of holiday cactus I have. It's rather easy to tell them apart. According to *Gardening Know How*, the shape of the leaves tell half the story and the blooms the other half. The leaf ends of a Thanksgiving cactus have small sharp-looking stickers (not dangerous), while the ends of Christmas cacti leaves are rounded. flowers are yellow. That's what I have blooms more than once in a



The anthers which project from the have! There have been times when year. Colors may vary.

You can find out more at *Between Holiday Cactus Varieties:*

Gardening Know How: Differences Do I Have A Christmas Cactus Or

Thanksgiving Cactus <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/cacti-succulents/christmas-cactus/holiday-cactus-differences.htm>

On another note:

Happy birthday to all those lucky enough to be born in November. You know many people give thanks every year as we sit around those tables. Is some of that for us? This, in sharp contrast to the usual, unfortunate windy, rainy and cold conditions outside. One of the stories I heard as a child was that my sisters found me lying on a stump down on the hillside. The weather was so nasty that they decided to take me in. Didn't I say we were a lucky lot?

So, for my Nov. birthday, I received Gardening Can Be Murder, a book by Marta McDowell. For those who have a literary background (okay, I belong to a book club, so that counts), you might enjoy reading about the many mystery stories which have incorporated a garden setting or theme over the years.

Feel free to give a shout out to the gardening books or even magazine articles you've read recently. I know we're an active bunch; but winter is coming, so some indoor time will become available.

Meanwhile, another birthday, another excuse to eat cake. Those December babies also deserve celebrations. But, they get to have the entire house decorated in their month.

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE SHARED THE WRITTEN WORD THIS YEAR!