

**THYMES**  
**CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**  
MAY, 2024



President: Mike Barron

This month we tried a little *cross county* Master Gardener sharing. Thirteen Master Gardeners from Hamilton County came to the PDG. Shalena and Ernie led a great tour of the garden with lots of accolades from our visitors. Hamilton County has a membership of about 250 MGs with about 80 very active. After the tour and during lunch, we discussed topics in education, fund raising and just having fun. They were amazed at how much we accomplish with a much smaller organization.

In education, they do offer some programs, but not an overall approach like we offer in our Classes in the Garden. In Fundraising, they just finished their *Expo* which is an annual event similar to our Garden Show. Their annual dues are \$20 compared to our \$15, and they also have some unique fund raisers like *garden buckets* and a tour of local gardens. For fun, they regularly take road trips, like the one to the PDG. It was an interesting discussion, and I hope that in the future we can interact more with MGs from other counties.

For the Meeting in June, we will be on our evening schedule. The June 4<sup>th</sup>, Member Meeting will begin @ 5:30 in the Country Store. Our speaker will be from Deep Draw Yak Ranch and I am sure we will all have questions. The theme for our June potluck dinner will be salads as we get into summer. I hope to see you all there.

Vice President: Katie DePoortere

For our Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, we will be having Ali Bryant from Deep Draw Yak Ranch speak. Deep Draw Yak Ranch is a small family-owned Yak farm. They specialize in breeding Yak and collecting and harvesting their wool.

## Master Gardener Features

### Sue Partch: Swallows

More often than bluebirds, I see swallows when I'm at PDG. The ones along the entry road and around the daylilies are tree swallows. Last year, cliff swallows built nests in the pavilion rafters. Barn swallows have been seen around the hay storage buildings.

Tree swallows are an iridescent blue green with pure white underbellies. They are slim and streamlined like a jet.



They compete with the bluebirds for nest boxes in which they build grass and other plant-material nests lined with feathers. The bluebird society monitors and protects them also. Solitary pairs protect their nests, but in non-breeding season, tree swallows collect in large flocks. They winter in very southern USA and Mexico.

Tree Swallow

Cliff swallows often look brownish grey, but in good light, are dark blue with patches of rust at throat and rump. They have a white underbelly and a small white patch above the beak. They are chunkier, more like a military supply plane. Large colonies of them build mud-pellet, gourd-shaped nests on cliffs or under open structures like bridges, but each pair is fiercely protective of its nest. They winter in South America.

Barn swallows are cobalt blue with a pale orange or buff underbelly. They have a rusty face spot and throat. In flight, their deeply forked tail makes them look like a missile. Their favorite nesting place is, as their name implies, in barn rafters. The nest is in a cup shape. Older siblings often help feed nestlings. Barn swallows are the most abundant and widely distributed swallow species in the world. Ours winter in Central and South America.



All the swallows eat insects caught in flight. Cliff swallows tend to hunt higher, but barn swallows and tree swallows can often be seen skimming only inches from the ground. Tree swallows supplement their diet with berries. Swallows prefer to nest near water, as wet areas are a good source of insects. They don't come to feeders, but may be attracted by putting out pieces of eggshells that they eat for the calcium.

And why did I compare swallows to aircraft? Because, of all birds, they seem to me to be especially built for flying. With their dips, turns and swoops they give the impression of playing in the air, of flying for the love of it. If I could be a bird, I'd choose to be a swallow so I could fly like that.

Much of the information for this article came from [www.allaboutbirds.org](http://www.allaboutbirds.org).

## Carla Lund: Raised Produce

Since finishing my Master Gardener class this year, I have earned my certification and have started harvesting broccoli from my raised bed garden.



Congratulations to Carla and to all who completed this year's MG certification.

## Bill Morgan: Common Invasive Plants on the Cumberland Plateau and Recommended Native Alternatives

When non-native plant species are introduced into other parts of the world, they often are no longer subject to many of the natural biological mechanisms, e.g., diseases or predators, which moderate their growth in their native world. Many of these foreign plants also produce numerous high viability seeds which are widely distributed by seed consuming birds. In the absence of natural controls, these species are considered invasive plants, as they spread rapidly and threaten to crowd out and replace native plant species.

Because the danger of introducing non-native plants was not appreciated for a long time, many invasive plant species were inadvertently introduced into the United States, often by the international nursery trade. Most, but not all, originated from the Orient, and many have been here for more than a hundred years. Now that they are so well established, it is often exceedingly difficult to eradicate them.

Several of the more common invasive plants found on the Cumberland Plateau are discussed below. Surprisingly, some of these noxious plants are still offered commercially, particularly on the internet. To

avoid inadvertently adding one of these to your landscape, preferable native alternatives are also recommended.

### **Invasive Chinese privet**

The USDA classifies Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) as one of the *most highly invasive plants in the south*. However, it is widely sold commercially as a hedge-producing shrub for the home landscape.

**Recommended native alternatives:** Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a good native alternative that can be used to produce a hedge. American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) and ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) are other native shrubs to use in place of Chinese privet.

### **Invasive Japanese honeysuckle**

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is a fast-growing invasive vine which spreads rapidly at the ground level. Unfortunately, it forms thick coils around and eventually strangles any shrub or tree that it encounters. Once established, it is exceedingly difficult to eradicate.

**Recommended native alternative:** Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) is a very desirable alternative. It serves as a protective habitat for nesting native birds and small mammals, including rabbits. In addition, its red, trumpet-shaped flowers provide a rich nectar source for hummingbirds and native butterflies and bees.

### **Invasive Morrow's bush honeysuckle**



Morrow's bush honeysuckle may be the second most common invasive bush found on the Plateau. As the common name implies, it is a bush with multiple woody stems. The stems are hollow, light in weight and have deep, longitudinally oriented grooves in the bark. In summer, the bush produces large numbers of bright red berries. Although they have little nutrient value, the berries are eaten by birds which scatter the seeds widely. As a result, within a brief time, the whole surrounding area is littered with large bush honeysuckles. Although they may look tasty, bush honeysuckle berries are toxic to humans.

**Recommended native alternatives:** American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) is an excellent native alternative to bush honeysuckle as it produces clumps of red-purple berries in late summer and are a choice food source for a wide variety of wildlife.



**Winterberry** (*Ilex verticillate*) is another excellent native alternative to bush honeysuckle. Winterberry is dioecious with separate female and male plants. Although they both produce flowers, only the female plant produces bright red berries after fertilization by the male. Without berries, female and male winterberries are difficult to differentiate. Therefore, it is recommended to buy winterberry plants only from nurseries which specialize in native plants and offer both female and male winterberries.



**Coral honeysuckle** is also a very desirable native alternative to Morrow's bush honeysuckle.

**Invasive Multiflora rose:**



Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) is a very fast-growing, thorny invasive bush. It also climbs, can become tall, and spreads everywhere. Although it produces multiple, small white flowers in the spring, these only bloom for a short time. Once established, the plant is difficult to eradicate. However, it is commercially available; and because of its thorns and speed of spread, it is sometimes advertised as a *living fence*.

**Recommended native alternatives:** **Carolina rose** (*Rosa Carolina*), and **mountain laurel** (*Kalmia latifolia*) are better alternatives. They do not have noxious thorns, but produce an abundance of attractive and longer-lived white flowers. Carolina rose prefers sun to partial shade, while mountain laurel thrives best in the more dappled light conditions found on northern-facing slopes.



### **Invasive Tree of heaven**

Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) was introduced from China as a tall, rapidly growing, ornamental shade tree with an absence of insect problems. However, a very rapid rate of growth and the massive bundles of seeds produced by mature trees make tree of heaven the *most invasive tree in the south*. Tree of heaven also produces massive roots which cause sidewalks to buckle and water lines to break.

**Recommended native alternative:** Winged, webbed, or shining sumac (*Rhus copallinum*) is a desirable native alternative. It produces abundant clusters of white flowers in mid-summer which attract native pollinators, particularly native bees. Soaking the seeds of shining sumac produces a refreshing lemonade-like drink.

### **Invasive Bradford Pear**

Bradford or Callery pear is an ornamental tree which produces attractive white blossoms in the spring and for decades was widely planted in new suburban developments. It was initially advertised as non-fertile. However, it does produce small fruits which are spread by birds and, as a result, is an incredibly invasive tree. New, rapidly growing sprouts appear everywhere: on roadsides, in parks, fallow fields, and in recently abandoned home sites. The wood is brittle and frequently susceptible to wind damage. Bradford pear also produces a strong, disagreeable, pungent smell, particularly when blooming in spring.

**Recommended native alternatives:** Native fruit trees, including American plum (*Prunus americana*) and serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*) are much more desirable alternatives. They both produce abundant white blossoms in spring and tasty fruits in the fall.

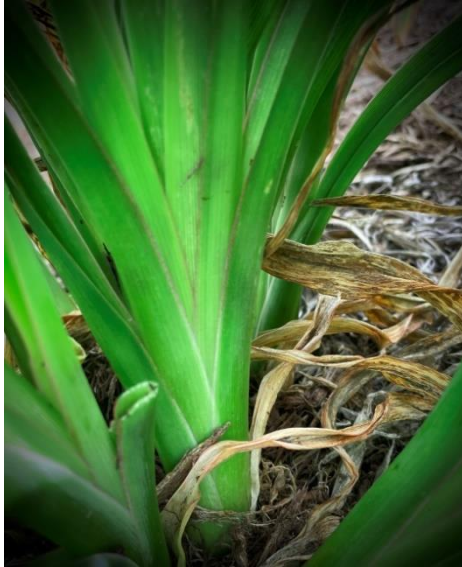
If you want to learn more, join me for the class *Invasive Plants on the Plateau* on Monday, July 29, from 9 to 11 am at the UT Gardens, Crossville. Known as the Plateau Discovery Gardens, the classroom is located at 320 Experiment Station Road, off Hwy 70N. Free, pre-registration is required at [ccmga.org](http://ccmga.org)

## **Laura Riester: Daylily Event in PDG**

Last weekend, I should have stayed with the daylilies until after dark. At the PDG I would have had a good view of the northern sky and seen the aurora borealis on May 12th. I am currently living in the Ozone Falls area from where I see only trees, cliffs and a big hill when looking north.

While working in the daylily plot at the PDG earlier that day, I noticed that some clumps now have scapes and will soon bloom. We don't buy daylilies because of their foliage, but when I see pink at the base or

around the edges of daylily foliage, I think that maybe the flowers will be nocturnal and fragrant. The parentage of a daylily with pink in the base of the foliage may have genes from *H. citrina*, a species native to East Asia which has pink at the base of its foliage.



The name of the daylily above has not yet been identified. In a few weeks I will be able to tell whether I am right or wrong about its parentage.

On July 13<sup>th</sup>, in the Plateau Discovery Garden, Pavilion from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., we will have an outdoor event dedicated to daylilies. Linda Hassler, who has been growing, showing and hybridizing daylilies for over 30 years, will tell us how to judge the quality of a flowering daylily scape.

Janet Dowlen, well known for her expertise in soil conservation and growing and maintaining perennials, and I will demonstrate how to hybridize daylilies to create new cultivars, as well as how to collect and store seeds. Some clumps will be dug a few days before the event. Divisions will be available for sale to benefit the PDG. And, we will have free literature which was donated to us by one of the regional officers of the American Daylily Society.

Attendance is limited to 30 participants and registration will be required. Plan ahead!

**Many thanks to all contributors to the May newsletter!**