

The Thymes

November flew by although the mild temperatures seem out of place. It is amazing that I still have Mexican sunflowers and Lantana blooming. The seasons are changing though, just as the Master Gardener are changing. Beginning in January with a new Board made up of some new people with new ideas. It is great to see people taking on new roles and setting the organization up for success in the new year. My sincere thanks go out to Margo, Alan, Katie and Rita for making my job easier this year; and to Margo and Rita for giving us some steadiness by staying on the new Board.

Holiday Luncheon will be held on Tuesday, December 3 at the Homestead Harvest restaurant in the Cumberland Mountain State Park, beginning at 12:30. We will be going through the buffet line and the cost will be \$18 per person. No reservation is required.

MG State Conference: PUMPKIN HOUSES & SCARECROWS and So Much More!

The state MG Conference Oct. 9, 10, 11 drew a big crowd from across TN, including Margo Carroll, Leslie Mullican, Renee Lloyd, my husband & I and CCMG Coordinator Gregg Upchurch. Lots of great presentations and some amazing site visits kept us running as the conference was held over two counties! Cheekwood helped to draw me to the conference – the gardens, historic mansion, and art collections were all stunning. "Cheekwood Harvest is back with an explosion of more than 75,000 pumpkins in our annual Pumpkin Village, with three pumpkin houses, sweeps of more than 4,000 chrysanthemums and a nine-foot-tall P' mumkin topiary made of orange mums arranged in the shape of a giant pumpkin." is the website description of their feature fall event.

A special addition to the Thursday evening panel was TN Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M: Dr. Hatcher is a tenth generation American farmer and a fifth generation Tennessee farmer. Prior to becoming Commissioner, he served for ten years as the State Veterinarian for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Dr. Hatcher founded Rock-N-Country Veterinary Services in College Grove, Tenn. in 1993, specializing in livestock. The veterinary practice is now managed by his daughter, Jennifer, who is also a veterinarian. The Hatchers are well known in the dairy and agritourism industries, too. In 2007, Hatcher Family Dairy began bottling its own milk and today provides milk and milk products to customers in Middle Tennessee. Hatcher's son, Charles, serves as president of the business. Dr. Hatcher earned a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (1984) and a B.S. in Animal Science from Middle Tennessee State University (1980). He lives on the family farm in College Grove (est. 1831) with his wife of forty years, Sharon. His daughter and son also live on the farm with their families. It impressed me that the state has someone so well grounded in

agriculture as its Commissioner. There was also a lively discussion among panel members and master gardeners from food security issues to protection of water.

This is a very small snapshot of a broad and deep conference -- think about attending one of next year's regionals!

Plants that Keep on Giving Laura Riester

In 1977 I moved into an unfurnished apartment with black linoleum floors and white walls in Oak Ridge, TN. Instead of buying furniture, I opted to fill the place with plants. One of my first acquisitions was a bromeliad. I had spotted it at a fall festival held at the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church. It was big, healthy and tropical looking. The person selling it to me gave me instructions on how to care for it. I have never learned the name of this particular species.



(See Fig. 1)

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

As predicted, the plant gave me a big red bloom the following year. (See Fig 2 above)

Descendents of this bromeliad have been with me to this day. I keep one or two pups and find new homes for the rest. This I have done each year for over 40 years. Not every bromeliad is as reliable a bloomer and superb reproducers as the one pictured above. The mother plant will slowly die after it finished blooming and sending out pups. Although super easy to care for, propagating bromeliads should be done thoughtfully. The pups usually form after the mother plant has bloomed. They stay connected and draw nutrients off the mother. When the pups look strong and are at least 1/3 of the size

of the mother plant, they can be separated with a sharp knife or scissors. In some cultivars, part of the base should be included. That's where roots will form. Others have stolons and stay connected to the mother plant until separated with scissors or clippers. Some publications recommend planting the pups directly into the soil. That may or may not work. I usually allow them to root in water before planting (Fig 3). Some cultivars will develop roots within a short time whereas others may take weeks. Some may even need a little encouragement with an application of rooting hormone.

Bromeliads require very little soil; many are actually epiphytes; they can grow on structures, trees or other plants. They often have rosette-shaped foliage which serves as a natural water reservoir. When potting bromeliads, it is best to use well-draining soil. They like to grow in indirect light and moderate humidity. During the warm weather, the pots can be placed outdoors in the shade. Bromeliads are less likely to bloom if kept indoors year-round. Watering and fertilizing can be done by placing water into their central cup. Some bromeliads will not bloom; instead, their foliage will become very colorful. (Fig. 4) Bromeliads are native to the tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas. In our area, when nighttime temperatures fall into the 40's, they like to be sheltered. They do well indoors with very minimal care.



For more on bromeliads with nice photos, interesting illustrations and unusual



observations, read: https://www.lloydgodman.net/Hybrid/Aesthetics_of_Bromeliads.pdf.
Reptiles, Amphibians and a Surprise



Critters at the Garden Sue Partch

The only reptile I've seen at PDG is an occasional green anole lizard skittering away near the tool shed. I have never seen a snake in the gardens although garden director, Shalena, tells me there are a few garden types around. She also said they found snake eggs in a mulch pile. I found what I think are snake eggs in my own yard this year but it's been several years since I've seen a snake - which is fine with me. Shalena mentioned there was large turtle spotted in a ditch once and while I've never noticed one, I expect there's turtle or two around the ponds.

As for amphibians, toads startle me occasionally in the daylilies when what I think is a clump of dirt suddenly hops away. In the spring I get to hear a veritable concert of frogs from the nearby ponds, especially as evening approaches. There are even some bullfrog bass notes. This year in the new dragonfly habitat, there were tree frog tadpoles that workers got to watch grow up.

And the surprise.... When I deadhead daylilies I often reach down into the plant to pick out decaying blooms that have fallen into the center. As they are frequently soggy and yucky I tend to reach gingerly. Imagine my surprise the day I reached in and felt something warm and fuzzy. As I jerked my hand back two little bundles of brown feathers ran off in different directions. I looked for them but didn't find either. I went back to the plant later to see if they had returned but they hadn't. I still don't know what kind of bird would raise babies in a daylily and wonder if they survived and if their mom found them.

This is my final article about creatures I've seen at PDG. I hope when you're out there you get to spot a few, too.

Thank you all for your support in my Presidency the last two year, and for all of your articles for the newsletter. Starting next year Jan Pitzer will be running the newsletter.

Enjoy the upcoming Holidays!