

The Thymes

August has been an incredible month for Master Gardeners, capped off with another successful Fall Gardener's Festival, and so much more. The booth at the Fair was beautifully done and we helped our friends at the PREC in the annual Steak & Potatoes Day. A team took on the old aquaponics and turned it into a great Dragonfly Habitat, which along with the decorations made the PDG beautiful and educational. All of this was in addition to the Classes in the Garden. MGs can be very proud of everything done.

In September, we will be nominating a slate of candidates for President, President-Elect, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. In addition, we would like to add two Directors and one representative from the latest class. To keep our organization fresh, we need to add new members to the Board that can bring new ideas. Each of the members of the Board is elected to a one-year term in office, although our by-laws allow two-year terms, which many of the current officers have fulfilled. If you are interested in being part of the MG Board, or know of someone else that you think would be an asset, please contact someone on the Board. Please take this opportunity to get involved and help lead MGs.

For the Meeting in September, we will be on our evening schedule. The September 5th Member Meeting will begin @ 5:30 in the Country Store. Our speaker will be Ali from Deep Draw Yaks. The theme for our September potluck dinner will be "Mexican Fiesta" so bring in your Mexican dishes. Since it is a fiesta, wear your brightest shirts to show off.



Kathy Limp is showing off some of some of her landscaping.

Newly planted in spring, Anise Hyssop, Phenomenal Lavender and Bluestar.

Master Gardeners at the Fair



Master Gardeners participated in the Cumberland County Fair in several ways. There were volunteer workers and individual exhibitors and an educational booth. Connie Taylor and Elaine Peters are annual volunteer workers in the quilt room. Connie Farley and Rita Reali were exhibitors in the quilt and baking areas respectively; some ribbons were won. And I'm sure there are others this writer is not aware of.

A highlight for us was our educational booth - we took 3rd place! Believing the theme to be "Follow the Herd" we modified it to "Follow the CCMG Herd to..." and displayed 9 scenes representing key things that Master Gardeners do using cow figures in place of people. To play up the cow theme we added 2 big cartoon cows, a cow barn quilt loaned by Linda Engel, a cows-in-the-field poster courtesy of Gregg and Vanessa in the extension office, hay, cornstalks, sunflowers, and various small cow themed items scattered around. Thanks to Vicki May for the use of her ancient phone and for making a mini-birdseed wreath for us; also to Carol Lorenc for a cow figure. The booth was designed and created by Sue Partch and Connie Farley with help setting up and breaking down from Michelle Cole.

Transformation of a Dragonfly Habitat.



The new Dragonfly Habitat is an example of a great project, made possible by Vicki May's imagination and a team of volunteers working together. The end product is not only beautiful, but also very educational.

Argiope aurantia – Sue Partch

One “bug” I consider worth a separate article is a big black and yellow spider. I’ve seen one twice since I’ve been working at the gardens. Several years ago, someone took me to see one in the hydrangea area; it was the first I ever remember seeing. Last year we had one in the 400’s section of the daylilies. Garden director, Shalena, says at least one shows up in the gardens every year.



This spider, commonly known as a writing or yellow garden spider is *Argiope aurantia*. It can grow up to 2 inches long with females being noticeably bigger than males. It has a black on yellow patterned body with black and yellow legs. Its web is circular and can be up to 2 feet in diameter but most impressive is the web construction. It weaves strengthening zigzag patterns of silk called stabilimenta. Each individual weaves its own unique pattern some of which look like writing, hence the name.

These spiders are found in gardens, fields and woodlands where they eat whatever insects they can catch, even grasshoppers and wasps. Farmers like them because they eat lots of agricultural pests. They can be found throughout North America but are especially prevalent in the southeast US because they like the climate.

After showy courtship and mating, a female lays about 1000 eggs in a silken sac which she attaches to the web or some vegetation. Unlike most arachnids, writing spiders care for their young by guarding the egg sac and then tending the spiderlings for several weeks after eggs hatch. Lifespan depends on climate, food sources, sex, and predators but under favorable conditions they can live a year or more.

Last year my daylily “partner”, Laura, sort of adopted “our” spider. She took its picture and checked on it every time she came to work the daylilies - especially after I unintentionally ruined its spectacular web by pulling up the scape that was the main

anchor. The spider rebuilt on the shreds but much smaller. It stayed as far into the year end as we did. Where actually do those long-lived spiders go in the winter?

Final “bug” note: after writing about bugs I have paid closer attention to creepy crawlies in the daylilies. I was rewarded last time I was out there by seeing a ladybug and - first one in years - a praying mantis.

Most of the research info for this article came from allanimalfacts.com.

Thank you for all of the contributions to this month’s Newsletter.