

## *The Thymes*

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October is fading fast. My annual quest to pick up leaves has begun and will run for a couple more weeks. I pick up leaves with a leaf vacuum attached to my lawn mower, so as I mow, I get grass & leaves. Doing it this way I get about a 50-50 mix of browns and greens that I pile in my woods and let decompose for mulch the next year. Of course, I have some piles of compost that have been there for years, (does it improve with age?)

In November we will be voting on the nominations for the 2025 Board. We have a great list of candidates nominated with: Margo Carroll for President; Greg Recht for Pres-Elect; Carla Lund for Vice-President; Lisa Briggs for Treasurer; Rita Reali for Secretary; Renee Lloyd and Linda Ferris for Directors and Patricia Dominguez for Intern Representative.

For the Meeting in November, we will be on our daytime schedule. **Since November 5 is also election day, and the Community Complex is used for voting, our meeting will be held at 1:00 pm in the indoor classroom at the Plateau Research & Education Center.** Our speaker will be Stephen Bales and the topic will be "Owlology" which should be interesting. We will not have a meal at this meeting.

**Carly's Caring Crown Donate Box** – request from Connie Farley

I will be putting a box out and collecting the items listed for foster children. The box will be at the November general meeting and the December Holiday Luncheon. After the December **Holiday Luncheon** I will get the box of donations to Carly. Thank you in advance for your donations. Items needed: Toothbrushes and paste, hair brushes and ties, nail polish, small toys, deodorant, hair accessories and bags like backpacks and totes.

**Visiting the Gardens** at the Kloster Fahr in Switzerland by Laura Riester

I grew up in a small village at the outskirts of the city of Zurich, Switzerland. As children we frequently walked or biked to the Kloster Fahr, a Benedictine convent in our neighborhood. At that time I was unaware of the historical significance of this convent which had been in our village since 1130 AD. We just had fun petting the piglets and sneaking into the stalls where cows were kept. We occasionally attempted to milk them.

We knew that nuns tended the fields and gardens and that they managed a farming school for women in the convent. The convent has a small church which dates back to the Baroque period. Regular services are still held in this church. There is also a private chapel that was decorated in the opulent style of the Rococo period. The convent supports itself with a restaurant and a winery. The nuns also create and sell a secret elixir from the herbs they raise in the garden. The garden itself was modelled after gardens

traditionally kept by farmers and served to teach future farmer's wives how to raise vegetables and herbs.

Today, the gardens are maintained by the 16 remaining Benedictine sisters. The school closed in 2014. The convent dormitories have been converted into luxurious apartments.



Maybe October is not the best time to visit gardens. Skeletons of sunflowers and spent summer vegetation dominate the scene. Yet, while plants are going dormant, pansies have been planted in the borders, and winter vegetables are thriving.

When we walked to the other side of the cloister, we saw lovingly tended graves. This is where the Benedictine nuns who have died are buried. In the background, is the original tomb for burials. Each grave has yellow roses growing, likely a symbol of the important contribution each have made.



**New Website** The new website proposal is well on its way. We would like a few CCMG members to help with this project, in simple ways. We need ideas about content and about navigation in the site. If you would be interested in helping make the new site better fit member's needs and ease of use, please contact Alan Baker 931-239-0877 or Kelsey Whitefield at the UT office and we will set up a review committee and get you connected online to the new site that is under development.

### Dogs and Cats at PDG - Sue Partch



Most of us know about Pearl, Walt's quiet, friendly, black dog that roamed free in the gardens for many years. She'd show up at gatherings and go from person to person politely asking for pats and maybe a tidbit. Dog lovers among us spoiled her regularly with treats. Garden workers would often find her checking out what they were doing. I saw her in the daylilies on occasion, most notably the day I looked up into a black snout about a foot from my nose. I gave her a surprised "hello" but since no pats or treats appeared she wandered off. She's now a memory represented by a close to life-size statue sitting near a bench across from Walt's driveway.

But the gardens still have the visiting dogs. Over the years many people have come to walk their pets or come to walk and bring their dogs as company. The canine visitors come in all sizes, breeds and temperaments. I've seen a variety including fluffy little "dustmops", sedate Shepard types, and a Great Dane dragging it's owner. While working in the daylilies I've been visited by several always on leashes, often in pairs. Sometimes the owners stop to visit but mostly, like the ones I see - or hear - in other parts of the gardens, both owners and pets are there to enjoy the quiet and the scenery. As to the recent concern about dog poop, I've only seen one deposit...but it was right in a walkway.

In such a farm like setting one would expect cats to be around. Maybe they are but I've only seen some one summer a couple years ago. I spotted some half grown feral kittens playing near the equipment building near the MG tool shed. The first time I approached they disappeared behind the equipment. On subsequent work days, usually on quiet weekend days, I'd see them again in the same area. They were all thin and skittish. Only one made tentative responses to my "kitty, kitty" calls and outstretched hand. I asked garden director, Shalena, if I was allowed to feed them and she told me there was a staff member who put out food for the mother and litter. Though I could bring food, I never did because I always forgot and as I never saw them again after I asked, it made no difference.

My cat has been to the gardens, even spent a few minutes actually in the grass by the daylilies. He was on high alert and scared and hid under the car. I was afraid he'd panic and bolt so he got put back in the car and we won't try that again.

**A BIG THANK YOU** to all CCMG's for the kind & timely donations benefiting our neighbors to the east impacted by Hurricane Helene. A full carload of your donated supplies was transported from Knoxville to a distribution center in Greeneville, TN and the generous monetary donations provided over 60 hot meals in especially hard-hit western North Carolina mere days after the storm hit. Thank you again for your fantastic response on very short notice! Jan Pitzer

Thank you for all of the contributions to this month's newsletter. (If someone would be interested in taking over the newsletter for 2025, please let me know.)