



THYMES  
CUMBERLAND COUNTY MASTER  
GARDENERS  
APRIL, 2023

**President: Mike Barron**

My landscaping looks pitiful! Hollies, soft hollies, nandinas and Florida sunshine, all continue to look dead and will probably need to be removed. I am seeing some growth at the roots of Schip laurels and at the tips of boxwoods, which give me hope, but I don't really know what to do with them as they will take forever to come back. Fortunately, my azaleas are beautiful and snowball plants are blossoming; nine barks planted last year have all come back, but no life showing on crape myrtles or butterfly plants yet. Right now, I am thinking of removing the dead (?) shrubs and planting annuals, waiting until the fall to replace them.

**Tuesday, May 2, Member Meeting @ 9 a.m.**

For the Meeting in May, we will be doing something different again. We will meet in the morning at the PDG with two goals: 1) Celebrate the last day of class with our 2023 MG Interns; and 2) Plan and train for the May 6th PDG Plant Sale.

We will also have our monthly business meeting, and get our lunches catered, so no potluck required. Anyone with time after the meeting can help in the garden.

After the daytime meeting in March, I received positive feedback from many attendees, but I also heard from a few people who had to change long standing plans to be there, for which I apologize. In the future, I think that we will settle into evening meetings for summer and more daytime meetings in winter. I am always open to feedback on this or any other topic.

Vice President: Rhoda Hiller

Greetings MG's,

I know our low temps are a little discouraging; but we have to remember it is still April, and any of my Northern friends know, you do not plant the tender annuals and veggies before the middle of May.

We have lots of opportunities to get our hours this year. I am looking forward to the PDG Plant Sale on May 6. That will be a busy day, but we always enjoy ourselves. I hope to see the interns at the sale. I will also be meeting the interns at our May meeting. Let's come out and welcome them and get involved with our beautiful Garden.

See you there.

## Master Gardener Articles

Sue Partch: April Apology??



February and March were Yo-Yo months. They teased us and the plant world with blocks of warm weather, interspersed with periods of chilly days and nights in the 20's. We grumbled, but many of the plants actually suffered. Now it's April and it appears that *Mother Nature* is trying to make up for her capricious behavior. Yes, we've had some cold rain, high winds and the temps are still unsettled, but there have been no more damaging frosts—well, not many. Spring seems to be here to stay.

The dogwoods are putting on a show. Fruit trees and ornamentals are flowering in pinks and whites. Red maples are bright, and other trees are displaying those pastels that I like. Flower gardens have vibrant tulips and the last of the late daffodils. Mounds of purple, pink and white creeping phlox cascade over rocks and down slopes. Pansy borders have been planted. All kinds and colors of flowers are in the shops.

And the green! Bushes are leafing out. Future flowers are pushing up all sorts of shoots: tall, low, broad, spiky, delicate, rugged. Lawns are suddenly emerald with grass tall enough to be mowed--some spotted with dandelion puffs. Looking up, I spy pastel greens, ranging from soft pale to spring bright.

In my yard the wise wildflowers waited, knowing nature's tricks. Only at the end of March did they start to show: 3 small patches of snowy trillium, a half dozen scattered hepaticas, 2 spots of wild ginger leaves, 2 inches of Jack-in-the-pulpit sprout, double last year's number of false rue anemone (spreading through my periwinkle patch), my first-in-TN trout lily blossom, my one precious Dutchman's breeches leaf. But on my annual wildflower ride in the Smokies, I got to really see wildflowers: lots of several kinds of white trillium and 3 colors of violets, my favorite hillside of spring beauties with a some bluets mixed in, a few late wild bleeding hearts, patches of big hepatica mounds with spent flowers, columbine clinging to ledge faces, road edges full of yellow trillium, a wild phlox and that false rue anemone--and oh so many more I have no names for.

So, do I accept this apology? Maybe. The frostbitten tops of my daylilies are being replaced with new growth. I did get to see my Bradford pear blossoms for about a day before they were gone. But my tiger lily looks like it's toast and my one type of plant that actually thrives, the daffodils, had such frost weakened stems that most of the blooms ended up face down on the ground--for the second year in a row. So.....maybe.

## Robin Piacine: Spring Ephemerals Spotted in the Smoky Mountains

Mid-April is the perfect time for a hike in the Smoky Mountains National Park! The abundance of trails leading to the Ephemerals in the Spring make it difficult to decide which one to explore first. My husband Frank and I recently visited the Smokies and delighted in its extraordinary diversity, beauty and sense of peacefulness that abounds there.

I have previously participated in what is called the *Wildflower Pilgrimage*, organized by UT of Chattanooga which has been held in April for many years. It was through past experiences that I wanted to share the diversity offered in one of the most beautiful trails that the Smokies have to offer.

The Middle Prong Trail is the one we chose. It is located beyond the Great Smokey Mountains Institute at Tremont Research Center. There is plenty of parking available, especially during the weekdays. You have choices once you reach the trail head. Stay to the left and follow the creek.

As you walk the trail, you immediately notice the forceful sound of the creek to your left as it cascades down the mountainside! Several violets of all types line the trail. A special treat to me is the discovery of the Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*).

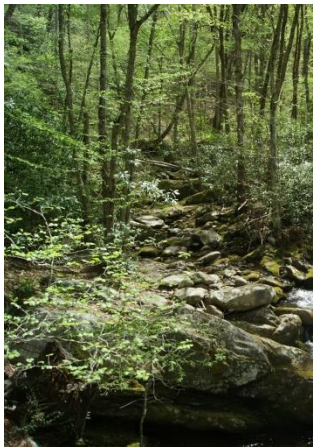
Great to see a few of these on the trail along with the abundant wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) which is thriving here. The Crested Dwarf Iris (*Iris cristata*) also lines the trail with such finite detail in the flower that it almost looks hand painted.

Showy orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) can be found on this trail as well. The flower is either pink or pale lavender with what is described as a *white lip*, which pollinators use as a platform to land and feed. Solomons seal (*Polygonatum biflorum* var.), false Solomons seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*), bishop's cap (*Mitella diphylla*), foam flower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), and many more I haven't mentioned can be found there, including a variety of ferns.

It's not a difficult trail, but use caution when the stones in the path are wet. It is so worth the hike which is not too difficult.

Reference: *Wildflowers of the Smokies*, published by the Great Smoky Mountains Association, second edition, 2003

### Showy orchis



Sweet trillium

## Connie Taylor: Question

I have a neighbor asking about repotting an orchid and I know nothing about orchids. She wants to know about size of container and what type of potting medium. If anyone has answers, can you please email me? [Tayfam53@gmail.com](mailto:Tayfam53@gmail.com)

## Jewell Wilhoite: A Few Words About the Birds

Many of the song birds are nesting and some of the warblers are still migrating. Pam Barrett is back in town and will probably have much to say on this subject next newsletter. She teaches a backyard birding class which has had great reviews. Until Pam chimes in with her observations and tips for spotting a variety of birds, here's my take on the bird visitors.

So, the little chickadees have been chasing each other from tree to tree and are quite noisy. If I happen to be near our small birdbath when they want in, they really give me a scolding. They might possibly be miniature bullies. So, I readily move on. Chickadees move very quickly and nest early. If you aren't on the lookout, you'll miss them darting full speed into a nest box hole. A bluebird house suits them just fine.

Song sparrows, not to be confused with house sparrows—notice the dark spot in the middle of the song sparrow's chest—grace us with their elaborate tunes when attracting mates. They've been quiet recently; however, they may be selecting hidden sites among bushy shrubs and thickly leaved trees. It's possible they're already nesting and just keeping it a secret in our yard. I never notice their nests until fall when all is bare among the branches.

Of course, nesting bluebirds capture our attention every year. At present, there are three perfect eggs in their nest. This pair seems young and the nest has been built up close to the box opening, so someone in this family is going to be obsessing about those eggs. Having partially grown up in the country, I remember seeing nests in hollowed-out cedar posts. So, I guess if the birds somehow escaped predators during those days, they still have a fighting chance for success in a box. If you want the most recent scoop, check out Don Hazel's column and classes on the subject.

The last bird I'll comment on is the brown thrasher. You'll see them kicking up leaves at the edge of yards, looking for bugs, and ridding us of ticks. I say right on! Eat every bad bug you find. In case thrashers are unfamiliar to you, they are a bit longer than robins but a more slimmed-down version. Somehow, they manage to navigate through thickly spaced trees and never snap a wing. I've told the story before about the thrasher which swooped in to my driveway and tried to feed a startled fledgling standing alone. The small robin fledgling jumped back and ran into the shrubbery. Where's that camera when you need it. I may have to break down and buy a smart phone.

Send me your bird news or I may just have to carry on next time with more of the same tales.

