

## **Master Gardener Plant Sale, April 25, 2014, 9:00 to 2:00**

We chose to go back to GJAC for plant sale to avoid the site costs of the last plant sale. There is security to monitor plants and tables available for sale.

Jessica Miller designed a flier to advertise the event. Faye Sisson agreed to promote the sale. At the end of the sale, Marlene Westrom said that her former job as in advertising and would help next time.

Members were asked to pot up plants from their own gardens as soon as plants were out of the ground.

They were asked to complete digging by April 1 so that plants would be well established. Members were asked to send plant information to Jackie Kujawa, who kept the list. There was poor response until the last minute. A few days before the sale members reported they had potted 700 plants.

Sonia Friedus was the contact person for volunteers and kept a good list of volunteers for set up and sale day. We had very good volunteers for each day.

I suggested that we buy some native shrubs and sell them for \$5.00 over cost. The board authorized we purchase plants not to exceed \$1,000. The board suggested that we feature native azaleas. The plants cost \$740.41. The azaleas were in bloom, but did not sell well. The best seller was 3 native wisteria plants that were in bloom. We bought 43 shrubs and 20 purple cone flowers. I would probably not try to sell shrubs again. Few people were willing to spend that much money.

Linda Edwards made some beautiful laminated pictures of the shrubs. I used paint stir stakes to mount the pictures. Next time, I would make the pictures larger—this time 4 per page, next time 2 per page.

We bought 60 tomato and pepper plants from Sharon Cassidy for \$1.50 each and sold them for \$3.00.

Her plants were very healthy and all were sold. Carol Hassell brought a few herbs and tomato plants and most of them sold.

The most challenging task was transporting and setting up tents. Aaron Tulin and Steve Holbrook got the tents and brought them to GJAC. Don Stewart supervised putting the tents up and taking them down. Aaron took the tents to his house.

Kathy Parent had an "Ask a Master Gardener" table.

Carol Hassell had an information table about Invasive non-native plants.

Steve Holbrook donated bird houses and planting boxes that he builds.

We made small stakes using plastic blinds to display prices.

The prices were 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, and 20 dollars.

Treasurer, Maggie Howze and some assistants collected the money and made deposits.

Weather was perfect both days. There was a steady flow of shoppers before noon, few shoppers after lunch. Reduced prices at 1:00 and many members bought plants.

Creative Enterprises came at 2:30 and took unsold plants.

Clean up was finished by 3:00.

***Susan Hanson, Chair***

## **Additional Plant Sale Notes:**

### **Things to know:**

If the future plant sale is held at GJAC, Robert Brannen arranges permission and coordinates the date. Security is in the building until 10PM. Cameras on the area overnight monitored by Control . (note: nothing stolen overnight when set-up was the night before the sale.) Parking barriers: one can be removed allowing access for cars/trucks to unload and reload.

Publicity: Robert can arrange to send email to GJAC employees (predominate buyers). Publicity chair will publicize 1-2-3 month out notifications and the sale was posted on GCMGA website.

Tables: This was also coordinated by Robert. Fifteen were used in 2014. Tables were outside and ready for use. GJAC asked that they were covered with plastic as some of the tables are old and to have them wiped down and cleaned after sale. If sale is in another location, the Chair will have to consider how to obtain tables.

Arrangement: Several arrangements have been used over the years. 2014 arrangement was recorded by Don Stewart. This can/should be rearranged depending on amounts and kinds of donated plants.

Tents: White tents should be erected first. Small blue pop-up used for pay-table area with two tables. "Ask a Master Gardener" tent and table provided by Extension. Large blue pop-up (Genia's) is aging and difficult to erect so consider borrowing a pop-up from extension to use for worker rest area. NOTE: white tents are very heavy. Guys/strong women needed to erect. Tents are stored at Aaron Tulin's.

### **Signs:**

- There are very nice, permanent banners that were made in 2012. Two each saying "Gwinnett County Master Gardeners", "Saturday Sale", "Plant Sale". Additional cardboard signs (half poster size) were made for 2014 "Shade" "Sun" "Native" "Pay Here". These were trashed and will need to be remade. There are numerous, older, smaller (8 1/2" x 11") laminated informational signs that can be used but should be reviewed for needed and/or up-to-date information.
- Twenty street signs indicating "Plant Sale" with directional arrows were provided. Signs were strategically placed at intersections on the morning of the sale before opening time. Signs were picked up immediately following closing time. Members familiar with the area should be assigned this task. Signs and additional sign materials are available for future use and are stored at Kistner Center.
- Plant signs with pictures of plants with correct Latin name, common name and brief information were and will be a huge plus.

Supplies: Bring reference books with pictures and detailed information on plants. There is a large plastic box with permanent markers, tape, scissors, and other general office supplies for the pay table. Box is stored with tents.

Inventory: All members were asked to email Jackie Kujawa with the information on their donation: type of plant (Latin and common name), pot size, sun or shade and number of plants. Jackie kept an Excel spreadsheet with the information which was invaluable for preparation and set-up. Over 800 items were donated for sale.

### **Volunteers:**

- Twenty-seven volunteers worked shifts on Thursday or Friday and some worked both days.
- Remind volunteers to wear badges
- Ask to bring wagons.
- Also to wear aprons if they have them. GCMGA green aprons were provided for those who didn't have personal aprons.
- May wish to bring chairs, water, snacks, hat and gloves.
- Bring plastic grocery bags; extra boxes for folks to haul their plants to the car/home.

### **Things that worked well:**

- Invasive Plants: It was agreed that no invasive plants would be sold at the plant sale. This keeps with our mission as good stewards of the environment. I hope this exclusion will be considered for all future years.
- Pricing: Placing all plants in designated areas BEFORE pricing. As plants come in during intact over a two-hour period, pot (and plant) size varied for the same type plant. By grouping all like plants together, the pricing people were able to make sure bigger and/or better plants were priced higher than their companions. Two or three people should price everything using helpers to mark each pot with price sticks.
- Pictures of plants as some of the donated plants were immature and had not flowered or grown to a large size.
- Asking that all donated plants be potted no later than three weeks prior to the sale to firmly establish the plants.
- Asking that donated plants be watered thoroughly the morning before bringing to the sale.
- Asking that donated plants (each pot) have a plant marker in the pot stating common and/or botanical name.
- After ½ price sale (1/2 an hour before closing); then leftover plants were “picks for projects” then all remaining plants were picked up by Creative Enterprises. No plants left. (Note: Chair must arrange with CE to pick up leftovers).

### **Things that need to be reviewed/reconsidered:**

- Buying plants. The upcharge is \$3 - \$5 and either requires babysitting the plants for over a month (if bought at the 4-H Extension Plant Sale) or arranging to buy and get plants delivered from a wholesaler. Whether the plant sell or not is still a gamble for little profit.
- Hours: if at GJAC – consider 8/8:30 to 1PM rather than 9 to 2PM
- \$300 start cash – could be \$200.

### **Things learned/to consider:**

- Carol Hassell pointed out that she thought Susan's idea of establishing a theme or particular focus for the sale was excellent. She felt this gave some overall structure to the event and could see this happening in future plant sales -- say, a theme of pass-along plants or bringing shade plants front and center. Each theme or focus would allow a slightly different sort of structure. In all cases, it gives a "hook" to communications materials.
- Making tent weights for blue popups.
- Having small rocks to weight down literature.
- Veggies. Consider selling much more than 60 (36 tomatoes; 24 peppers) veggies which sold almost immediately @ \$3. There could be starters of many additional vegetables. We had very few herbs and they would sell too. Perhaps members with greenhouses could be asked to consider starting veggies and herbs early from seed.
- Publicity: consider the “patch.com”. One member posted on Facebook about the sale – consider temporary Facebook page. Members on Facebook could also be asked to post info on the plant sale on their own pages.

***Becky Wolary, President***