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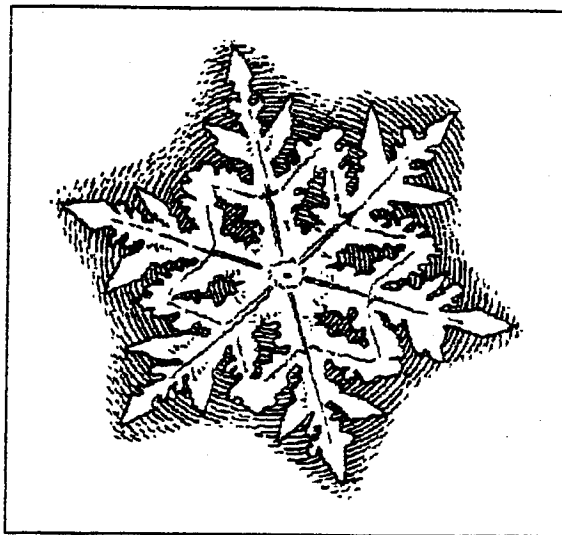


Future Meetings of
Gwinnett Master Gardeners

No January meeting due to the Ga.MG conference at
ABG on Jan. 14

Feb. 13 - "What's New for Spring" by a Speaker from
Pikes. 7:30 PM at GJAC

Mar. 13 - "Worm Composting Indoors" by Jena
Buttimer. 7:30 PM GJAC. Spouses are invited.



THE MIRACLE OF CHRISTMAS

*The wonderment in a small child's eyes,
The ageless awe in the Christmas skies,
The nameless joy that fills the air,
The throngs that kneel in praise and prayer..
These are the things that make us know
That men may come and men may go,
But none will ever find a way
To banish Christ from Christmas Day...
For with each child there's born again
A mystery that baffles men.*

Helen Steiner Rice

A BIT OF DIRT is published quarterly by Gwinnett
Master Gardeners. The newsletter committee this
year is composed of Brenda Adams, Chairman, Gail
Martin and Polly Patterson. MERRY CHRISTMAS!



Jan. 14, Saturday, The annual conference of Georgia
Master Gardeners at Atl. Bot. Garden. Program
starts at 9 AM. Theme: "Digging Deeper"

Feb. 4, Saturday, The 1995 Perennial Symposium: By
GPPA and ABG. 8:30-3:30. Cost \$40 & \$45.
Call 876-5859 for info. & brochure. Theme: "What's
Old is New Again: Timeless Garden Favorites to
Complement Your Perennials"





It has been a very busy time at the Extension Service the last few months. Gwinnett County gardeners did not seem to miss a beat with their gardening endeavors because the number of calls coming in was above average for this time of the year. We also had many walk-ins during the month of October.

Projects that are continuing as well as some which have been completed are: Gwin Oaks Memorial Garden - Master Gardeners responsible for the inspiration in landscaping of this garden were: Martha Whitman, Jena Buttimer, Brenda Adams, and Glenda Patterson. Thanks to all of you for your great ideas and hard work. The garden will not only be a reminder of the dedication of a wonderful teacher, but will also hopefully be something that the children can benefit from in a variety of ways. Perhaps even a new "master gardener" will grow from the experience.

Hanary Estates Homeowners Association requested a Master Gardener speaker to advise them about fall planting. Don Freidus volunteered to fulfill this request. We always appreciate Don's eager volunteering spirit!

Flinthill Subdivision also called requesting a speaker to help them with fall planting as well as lawn care. This is a new subdivision and they were in "need". They were anxious to have Anthony Williams, C.G.M., MG '94, come and speak. Anthony is the Pine Isle Golf Course and Grounds Manager. Needless to say, the subdivision was willing to "wait" until golf season had slowed down to hear Anthony speak about turfgrasses.

Public Lands Day at Tribble Mill Park was also a challenging and fun experience. There were several exhibits displayed by the Extension Service, with the theme and purpose of environmental education. Kim Rissinan and Christi Reff did an excellent job on their composting exhibit. Dolores Wyland brought public awareness as to the benefits of bats, with a beautiful and very informative exhibit. Judy Howe was also a tremendous help in donating her time to show the exhibits for the day.

Programs which are still in the making are the ones at Sugarhill Elementary, Richards Middle School, McKendrie and Gwin Oaks (wildlife habitat).

Jenni Wilson and Jena Buttimer are working on an environmental program workshop with 200-300 Girl Scouts which will take place on Dec. 10. This is an all-day workshop which will require much preparation. Our Master Gardeners are real troopers!

For those of you who are interested in horticulture therapy as well as container gardening, the out-patient clinic at Joan Glancy wants a program to begin at their new facility. As soon as they have moved and know what their situation is as far as light, accessibility, etc., we will begin calling those of you who are interested.

There are still other schools interested in programs should they be able to obtain funding from government or private companies.

As if these programs are not enough, we are also developing leaflet/brochure publications which will be created from start to finish--research, design, etc.--by our own Gwinnett Master Gardeners!!! One such publication being done by Jena Buttimer, is a pamphlet on "Earthworm Composting" which is one way to get people into the composting habit. There are many ways to compost, but this one can be done easily--in your kitchen!

As mentioned in the last article, there is also a recognized need for "bloom charts" which will enable Gwinnett County residents the opportunity to "identify" just where all the color is coming from. Gail Martin has been working diligently on a "perennial bloom chart". Not only has she researched this topic extensively to determine a variety of perennial color, but she has "first-hand knowledge" of these dates because she has most of these perennials in her landscape! Harold Edwards has also made great progress compiling the "shrub bloom chart". This work is very tedious and time consuming and the work they are doing is greatly appreciated.

As you can see, there has been a lot of activity during this season. The popularity of gardening continues to increase; especially in an area such as Atlanta, where a long growing season exists. But with this increased interest comes great opportunity for perpetuating the love of gardening, using gardening in many cases as a means to an end, as well as a means of growth in our own abilities and contributions as Master Gardeners.

PAM FOLKS

(Editors note: Keep the Extension Service informed of your GMG activities so everyone can be included.)



BATS ARE MORE THAN HALLOWEEN

by: Dolores Wyland,
Master Gardener, Class of 1993

With the notorious popularity of Halloween and Dracula, bats have gotten a bad image. But, they're not really bad at all. After reading this article, your knowledge of bats will place you in the top 1/10 of 1% of the world's population. Bats are among the most beneficial, least understood and most maligned animals in the world.

At de-bugging, bats wrote the book. Large numbers of bats eat insects; others thrive on fruit, nectar and fish. Bats are the only major predators of night-flying insects; 600 mosquitoes an hour!

Bats that eat insects are about the size of a sparrow. Bats that eat fruit, nectar and fish range from the size of a hummingbird to those that can have a wing span of six feet. Vampire bats, which make up 1/3 of 1% of the bat population are four inches long, only live in Latin America and are a nuisance to cattle owners.

Throughout the world's tropics, fruit-eating bats are nature's most important seed-dis-bursing animals and nectar bats are absolutely necessary for pollination of countless trees and shrubs (you thought bees were doing all the work). If it weren't for bats, we might have never had bananas, peaches, figs, mangos, avacados, cashews, cloves and plantains.



Unlike the cliché "blind as a bat", bats are not blind. Their outsized ears and nostrils are used in addition to "see" and are adaptations that are used for echo-location. Echo-location is the means by which bats find their prey on the darkest night. They emit sounds that strike objects and come back as echoes. By interpreting these echoes, bats can tell what the object is, where it is located and how fast it is moving. Echo-location is a thousand times more sophisticated than the best "black box" invented by man. If more farmers and gardeners were to utilize bats, they wouldn't need pesticides, which kill butterflies, bees, birds, worms, frogs and other helpers of the environment.

Bats are not flying rodents. Unlike mice, they reproduce slowly having one baby per year and are devoted parents.

Bat wings are like our hands, four fingers connected by a membrane and a short thumb for holding on. Their thumb is not for hanging on to ladies' hair, according to Dr. Merlin Tuttle whose tests disproved that myth.

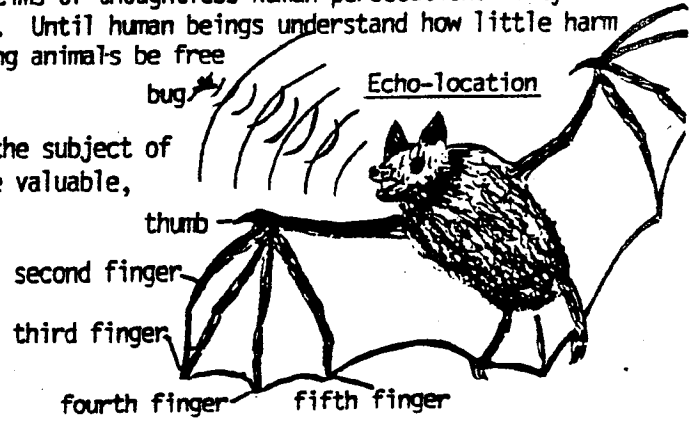
And the rumor about rabies resulted from mistakes made by reasearchers about 50 years ago. It turned out, good research brought to light that the bats they looked at had a virus that is not harmful to bats or to people. The virus is fatal to mice and early researchers had tested their theory by injecting mice. The tested bats weren't rabid at all. Dr. Tuttle is president of Bat Conservation International and he says that less than 1/2% of .005% of bats contract rabies and, unlike most mammals, even when rabid, bats rarely become aggressive. Only 10 people in 40 years have gotten rabies in United States and Canada from bats.

Many bats live in caves, but some roost in attics, branches of trees and in belfry towers, as in the other cliché bats in the belfry. In Europe, bats are widely recognized as beneficial to the environment. Europeans build and buy bat houses the way we do bird houses.

These sophisticated animals are disappearing rapidly, victims of thoughtless human persecution. They are among the world's most beneficial, yet vulnerable mammals. Until human beings understand how little harm and how much good bats do will these gentle and fascinating animals be free to live their quiet lives in safety.

Now that you're way ahead of just about everyone else on the subject of bats, you might think about trying to be a friend to these valuable, intelligent and friendly little animals.

BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL 1-800-538-BATS
GWINNETT COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE 822-8800
PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK NUMBER 599.4





Just before Thanksgiving the first of our holiday tables is spread; it is the one for the wild birds who have made our house their winter resort. This table is like Grimms' magic pot, for it never runs dry.

Our guests begin to arrive early in November, and by the New Year they are mostly all assembled, giving brightness and gaiety to the browns and grays of the winter garden.

A hanging feeder swings just outside my kitchen window, so that the birds may be seen easily and often. It is filled with a mix of black oil sunflower and millet. On a big plank spread across the deck railing go more seed and lumps of suet. Peanut butter mixed with millet fills a jar lid, and I also melt a little suet, spread it on pine cones and hang them wherever birds might like to dine.

Our birds give us great pleasure throughout the winter. Hours have been spent pressing noses against the window the better to see the raspberry color of the purple finch, and a new bird sends us running to the window, grabbing bird books on the way.

Last winter a group of bluebirds congregated daily on the deck railing. They investigated the house I had set up there, obviously trying to decide if it were a fit place to raise their children. After exchanging bits of news with one another, and indulging their taste for peanut butter, they flew away to return the following day for more gossip and goodies.

The brave and scrappy little pine siskins come in a flock of twenty or so. As they bicker over the choicest sunflower seed they scree like little bagpipes. If one of us goes out on the deck they clamp their tiny feet down on the plank, watching greedily to see what new treat we've brought. Not until we have almost reached them do they fly away, flashing yellow in their dull brown wings. They always post a sentinel in a small tree nearby and as soon as the door closes behind us the sentinel becomes an advance guard, flying back to the deck and signalling that all's clear.

The gay little finches, both gold and purple, hop around the climbing rose growing on the deck. The female purple seems such a drab, sparrow-like bird, while her lord and master struts around in rosy red, raising his little crest in gracious bows to our admiration. The goldfinches are a dullish olive green now, with only hints of their bright golden summer plumage. They are cheerful, sleek, round little birds, always well groomed.

The twittery little titmouse flits to the feeder, his buffy sides contrasting with his smooth gray back. He casts his bright black eye on the day's offerings, makes his selection and swoops back to a nearby tree to think about his next course.

The juncos stay always on the ground, very formal and correct in their oxford gray and black morning dress. Not for them this wild hopping and scrapping and leaping about. Also strictly ground birds are the towhee family, with their funny jumpy way of scratching for a seed.

The chickadees and the nuthatches are feeder birds, carrying on continuous guerilla warfare with the house sparrows for room at the trough.

Landing away from the feeder, the mourning doves advance slowly along the ground until they reach the fallen seed. Occasionally one of the more adventurous doves flies up to the feeder, balancing precariously while the whole thing swings wildly back and forth with his weight. Sometimes, when they are full of food, they fluff

their feathers, tuck in their heads and take a little nap, their brownish-gray color almost matching the dried Bermuda grass.

A pair of red-bellied woodpeckers swoon to the feeder from a high oak, their approach so fast the other birds fly off in alarm. They hang sideways, poking their long beaks into the seed at an impossible angle, then fly back high in the oak tree waiting to make another swift assault. A pair of downy woodpeckers concentrate on the suet, and the red-headed woodpecker, with his Mondrian-like plumage, comes rarely and so is a special delight.

A playful mockingbird who cares only for the peanut butter apparently desires to dine in privacy. He dive-bombs the feeder, zooms low over the plank, and only when he has sent all the other birds helter-skelter will he alight and very elegantly gourmandize to his heart's content.

The blue jays come, jabbering in groups of three or more, and the cardinals promenade in solemn dignity, resplendent in their crimson robes. One little myrtle warbler was a guest all winter, but defied identification until spring, when he appeared in his courting suit of black and white and yellow.

The cycle of the birds matches that of the seasons, and each has its special rewards. Spring means checking the bluebird houses for sky-blue eggs, and summer is spent keeping an eye on the young birds until they too fly away. Fall brings a kind of frenzied activity, as the birds return gradually to the feeder, gorging themselves as if to eat their fill before winter catches them. Then it is time to put out the plank and increase their rations, for Thanksgiving is again upon us. The cycle has run full.

Gail Martin

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THE DANCING WORMS...Fall Reflections

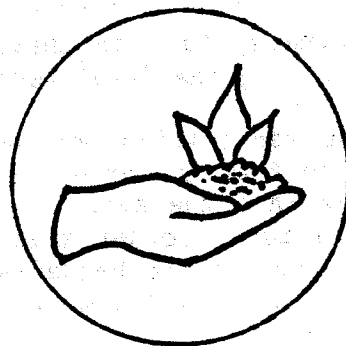
by Shelia Wilbur



Fall is a beautiful time of the year. We all enjoy the changing of the leaves and the relief from the summer heat. Fall is also a bonus for our roses; their flowers are even more beautiful than in the spring. But as uplifting as fall can be, it can also be a sad time for an avid gardener. It is the time of the year to do your garden cleanup and bid a farewell to your favorite plants and vegetables. It is time for their long winter nap.

On a recent fall cleanup day, I discovered my raised vegetable bed was alive and the soil was almost dancing. While pulling up the spent tomato vines and preparing the bed for winter, I put my fork in the soil and turned it over. Dozens of beautiful, large worms scampered everywhere! So I turned another fork full and even more worms were dancing! They were bragging size worms—a gardener's dream come true. When this bed was started many years ago, the soil was compacted, hard to work and had no drainage. After years of adding compost, leaves and kitchen scraps during the winter months, the result is friable, well-drained soil with dancing worms.

Well, the beds are now covered with newspaper to control the weeds and pine straw for neatness. Even though the peppers, corn and tomatoes are gone for this year, it is a warm, fuzzy feeling to know the soil will be busy all winter as the worms continue to "dance in the soil" until spring planting time comes. I can't wait for spring—and winter is not even upon us yet!



OUR CLUB'S HISTORY

On September 20, 1993, the first official meeting of Gwinnett Master Gardeners was held at the Gwinnett Justice & Administration Center. Don Freidus was instrumental in drawing the people together. As a result of Don's initial call, we now have a strong group of Master Gardeners dedicated to contributing to and maintaining an organization in which we can communicate and interact on a regular basis.

The first officers were not elected by the usual manner (testimony to our inexperience) but either volunteered or were appointed by the president. President was Don Freidus; Vice President: Gail Martin; Secretary: Maria Turk and Treasurer: Brenda Adams. I nominated myself and Faye Harwell to be the programs committee. Brenda Adams and Gail Martin started up and produced our quarterly newsletter "A BIT OF DIRT" which started with the Winter Issue 1993. Gail Hollimon volunteered to coordinate the communications phone tree.

During the first 15 months, we have managed four big projects--three plants sales, and the writing and adoption of a constitution and by-laws. The first pansy sale in Oct. 1993, was a success. The Snellville Days plant sale was a nightmare of logistics and a pitiful producer, but all the members threw in their support. We learned what not to do! The fall 1994 pansy sale in October was a great success.

When we elected our 1995 officers in October, the constitution and by-laws gave us methods and order. The new officers for 1995 are Gail Hollimon as President, Beverly Howerton as Vice-President, Glenda Patterson as Secretary and Brenda Adams as Treasurer.

Faye and I had a good time finding programs and working together. We received excellent suggestions and support from club members. The '94 programs were as follows: January - GMGA Annual Conference at ABG; February - Steve Brady/pruning; March - Gary Gleason/perennials; April - Randy Kucera/ponds; May - Garden Tour at Ryan Gainey's; June - Phil Maresca/growing and using herbs; July - Robert Belcher/daylilies; August - Kathy Parent/xierscaping; September - Chuck Zdeb/hostas; October - business meeting; November - Kathy Henderson.

Kathy Henderson concluded our year with an inspirational and entertaining talk. Her topic was Master Gardeners--listen and learn from all your sources, then promote and share all that you have gleaned.

Exchanging plants, how to's, where to find, and what to read are just a few of the benefits we enjoy as a result of this year's efforts to set in place a working structure for Gwinnett Master Gardeners. Now that we have "planted" ourselves, we can set off across Gwinnett planting the seeds and joys of gardening and see what 1995 brings.

Polly Patterson

SCENTED MEMORIES

I come from gardening families. The love of plants and the soil has been passed on to me from both sides. Some of my fondest childhood memories are of the times I spent wandering around the grounds where I lived; contemplating the plants. What were they doing at this time of the year? Did Moma's favorite Golden Delicious out in the side pasture have apples on it now; bending the branches ever closer to the ground? What about those flowers Moma called tiger lilies? I loved to feel the fuzzy powder on the pistils that I now know was pollen. But most of all, there were the wonderful smells in the garden wafting on the gentle breezes that swept our yard during the warmer months.

First came the yellow daffodils with their heady fragrance. Then, my favorite of all time, out by the dirt road--lined up like soldiers, were the tall lavender-flowered German bearded iris that smelled akin to grapes. Yes, grapes; with floral overtones. The two-toned wine colored types were there too, but they weren't as fragrant.

In the front yard, in a favored position, was a much overgrown weeping forsythia. It was the first thing to bloom in the spring, which made all those weeping yellow bells a favorite, too.

But let's move on to the apple orchard on the left side of our property. (You're way ahead of me.) There is nothing quite as delicate and wonderful as the smell of apple blossoms in the spring. They even look delicate; like a maiden lightly blushing. Come summer, you would find me standing under an apple tree eating green apples. My brother and I found these trees favorites for climbing and the robins considered them extra fine for setting up a household.

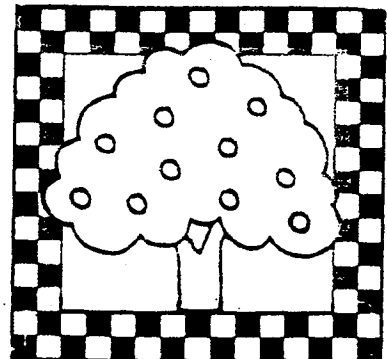
Although scentless, there was fun to be had out at the shrub border where several bushes of Rose of Sharon were growing--the flowers were all different shades from white to rosy red. Remove a blossom, turn it upside down and you have a lovely southern belle dancing in her sweeping ball gown. In those days, children used their imaginations more, I believe.

Later, along came autumn and going back to school. Ugh! But there were still some warm, fall days and time to explore the nearby fields and woodlands, before winter set in. Then, the smell of the moment was muscadines ripening along the edge of the woods, hanging from the trees. (Makes a good snack.)

The final smell of the year, the grand finale, was the wonderful, magical tree that turned out to be our Christmas tree. At times, we were blessed by being able to go out and cut our own.

Nature has many blessings to bestow upon those who have eyes that look for them and ears to hear. May many blessings be yours at this holiday season and the new year to come.

Brenda Adams



MASTER GARDENER CERTIFICATION

"AN ANNUAL EVENT"



By definition of the Cooperative Extension Service, master gardeners are trained volunteers who provide effective educational networks of gardening programs and activities to enhance their communities.

You have completed your classes, 50 hours of service to the Gwinnett Extension program during your first year, and 25 hours of master gardener volunteer time every year thereafter.

Each year master gardeners renew their certification with 25 hours of volunteer service in a multitude of ways. In the volunteer service log book provided through the Extension Service, hours are divided into two categories, volunteer and educational. Please keep a record of your activities, hours, contacts, programs, and speakers.

Verified logged hours of master gardener service time document the value of the Master Gardener program to Gwinnett County, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Services, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture during annual budget evaluations.

To insure the continuance of our wonderful and valuable program, please serve your annual 25 hours and renew your master gardener certification.

The following list will serve as a guideline as you choose how to serve your community this next year. It is by no means comprehensive. If you have any questions call Pam Folks.

VOLUNTEER

***Disseminating unbiased research information:**

Newsletter articles - homeowners association newsletters, the master gardener newsletter or other club/association newsletters.

Lectures/Demonstrations - Scouts, schools, garden clubs, and other community organizations.

Assisting at plant clinics - being the "expert" and answering questions.

Organization - coordinating a symposium or seminars.

***Community Gardens as educational, therapeutic, and food resources** - Therapy/nursing homes retirement facilities, hospitals, clinics, after school programs for youth at risk. Education/community school gardens, nature trails and natural habitats. Food/urban gardens.

***Service volunteer** - master gardener plant sales; master gardener conferences; Vines Botanical Gardens and Atlanta Botanical Gardens volunteers-grounds, projects, programs, and special events.

***Gwinnett Extension Service Office** - anything that facilitates the use of extension service information and educational programs.

PHONE DUTY/answering questions.

4-H Plant Sale

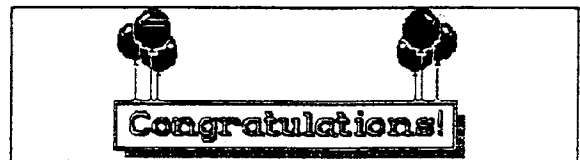
Gwinnett County Fair

General office and development work/developing brochures and or files on most often asked questions and their answers; organizing or doing an inventory of printed material.

EDUCATIONAL

***Educational Horticultural Programs**/broadening your scope of expertise - attending seminars, lectures (Gwinnett master gardener monthly informational programs, Georgia master gardener conferences and other plant society programs - herb, hosta, rose, perennial society, etc.) and symposiums.

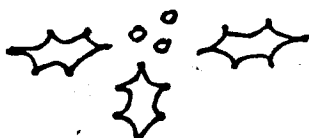
THANKS!



Since Thanksgiving was here recently, I would like to take time to publicly thank Eddie Rhoades, Cobb Master Gardener and garden writer, for being like my mentor during the first year of this newsletter. He gave me lots of free advice and answered all my questions; freely giving of his time. THANKS, EDDIE!

Excerpt from the Atlanta Journal Constitution, Friday, Nov. 18, 1994: "For two days each week, students at Gwin Oaks Elementary School in Lawrenceville turn the trees shading their campus into a laboratory. Glenda Patterson is the volunteer tour guide through the natural classroom, tailoring lessons to each grade level. The Lilburn resident and certified Georgia master gardener is teaching "Habitat Activities in the Forest", a special fall nature program...."

We are proud of you, Glenda. Keep up the good work!



IT'S CATALOG TIME!!

This is the time of year to send for new catalogs, and to spend winter evenings drawing up lists of plants you have to have. There are many many little known mail order nurseries that offer very special plants. I've listed a few that may interest you - send for a couple of them, and try something new and different. Where I've know the catalog price I've included it, but I've found that a quick telephone call gets me a catalog, too.

JACQUES ARMAND
PO Box 59001
Potomac, MD 20859
Free catalog
Wonderful rare bulbs

KURT BLUMEL, INC.
2740 Greene Lane
Baldwin, MD 21013-9523
Cat \$2
Excellent selection of grasses

THE COOK'S GARDEN
PO Box 535
Londonderry, VT 05148
Cat \$1
Wonderful array of veggies

THE FLOWERY BRANCH
PO Box 1330-HC6
Flowery Branch, GA 30542
Cat \$2
Collector's seeds

GREER GARDENS
1280 Goodpasture Island Rd
Eugene, OR 97401
Cat \$3
Woodies, vines, bonsai

LOGEE'S GREENHOUSES
141 North Street
Danielson, CT 06239
(203) 774-8038
Rare plants, extensive list

TRANSPACIFIC NURSERY
16065 Oldsville Rd
McMinnville, OR 97128
Cat \$2
Exotics, rare and wonderful

AMANDA'S GARDEN
8410 Harpers Ferry Rd
Springwater, NY 14560
(716) 669-2275
Nursery prop. wildflowers

CANYON CREEK NURSERY
3527 Dry Creek Road
Oroville, CA 95965
(916) 533-2166
Uncommon perennials

DIGGING DOG NURSERY
PO Box 471A
Albion, CA 95410
(707) 937-1130
Perennials, woodies

FORESTFARM
990 Tetherow Road
Williams, OR 97544-9599
Cat \$3 (Extensive)
Woodies, perennials, ferns

HOLBROOK FARM & NURSERY
115 Lance Road PO Box 368
Fletcher, NC 28732-0368
(704) 891-7790
Choice perennials, woodies

PLANT DELIGHTS NURSERY
9241 Sauls Road
Raleigh, NC 27603
Cat \$2
Wonderful perennials

WE-DU NURSERIES
Route 5, Box 724
Marion, NC 28752
(704) 738-8300
Nursery prop. wildflowers

