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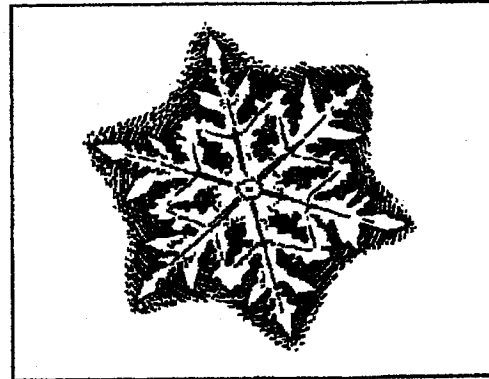


Quarterly Newsletter of THE GWINNETT MASTER GARDENERS

WINTER 1995

Issue 6

A BIT OF DIRT is published quarterly by Gwinnett Master Gardeners. Editors are Brenda Adams and Gail Martin. If you wish something published, please contact us at 466-4665 and 381-2513.



Calendar of Events

Future Meetings

Jan. 13, Sat. - Georgia Master Gardeners Annual Meeting at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Registration starts at 8:00 AM.

Feb. 12, Monday evening at 7:00 PM. 2nd Floor of Gwinnett Justice and Admin. Center.

March 11, Monday evening at 7:00 PM. 2nd Floor of Gwinnett Justice and Admin. Center.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!



*God bless the heart of sunshine
That smiles the clouds away,
And sets a star of fresh-born hope
In some one's sky each day.
God bless all words of kindness
That lift the heart from gloom,
' in life's barren places
Plant flowers of love to bloom.*

Jan. 10 - Georgia Native Plant Society, 7:30 PM, Atlanta Botanical Garden

Jan. 15 - Ame. Hydrangea Society, 7:30 PM, ABG.

Jan. 18 - 7:00 PM, Ken Druse on "The Natural Habitat Garden" at ABG. Free.

Jan. 25 - 7:30 PM, GPPA meeting, Atl. History Center.

Jan. 26-28 - Southern Gardening Symposium at Callaway Gardens. Call 706-663-5153.

Feb. 10 - 1996 GPPA Perennial Symposium. "Gardens of our Dreams". Call 404-876-5859 ext. 226.

Feb. 21-25 Southeastern Flower Show. City Hall East, 640 North Avenue, Atlanta. Call 888-5638. Free admission if you volunteer. General Admission is \$10.

Perennial Observations



BAPTISIA

For those of you who haven't tried Baptisias yet, maybe now is the time. They have proven to be worthwhile additions to my garden. There are new variations coming on the market and they seem to be more readily available than they used to be.

I, myself, first encountered Baptisia a few years ago on one of my first trips to Goodness Grows in Lexington, Georgia. There it was, out under a large oak tree, a "bush" about two feet high with white pea-like flowers scattered around evenly over a nice cover of gray-green trifoliate leaves. It looked much like a large bouquet stuck in the ground and it was love at first sight. I knew I had to have this plant. Another interesting aspect of it was the charcoal gray cast the stems and flowers had.

Rick Berry was wandering around attending to plants and I inquired about the plant to hear that it was Baptisia pendula alba. I thought the pendula was referring to the slightly weeping way of the branches but was told later it is the nature of the pendulous seed pods which follow later in the season. Rick said they weren't out of the greenhouse and on the sales ground because they hadn't put on enough growth yet. I assured him that wouldn't be a problem with me as I was a patient person and he went back and picked me out one almost a foot high.

Home with my find, I wandered

around wondering where to plant my new-found treasure. Even though Baptisia will do best in full sun as they are usually found in their native habitat in the Eastern United States, Allan Armitage assured me in his book, "Herbaceous Perennial Plants" that it would tolerate part shade. It has been in the same place in my wildflower garden for several years now and has done very well. Though not as floriferous probably as it would be in full sun, it is none-the-less an outstanding plant, blooming every year, with a foliage span this past year of three feet.

The roots of Baptisia are very extensive which helps to explain its ease of growth. If you plant one, be sure to put it in a permanent place as it will be impossible to get all the roots when moving.

When the first killing frost comes, the leaves turn black and immediately fall off, saving you from cleaning up after it.

Some of the types available are:

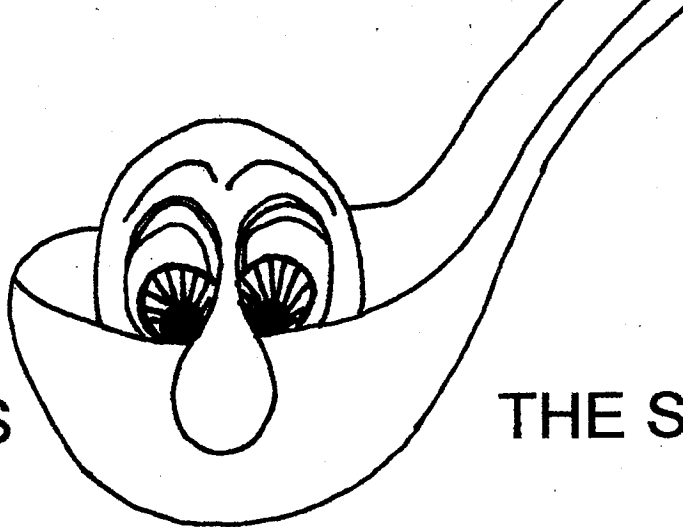
Baptisia (pendula) alba - White Wild Indigo - late spring.

B. australis - Blue Wild Indigo - spring. This plant was used for blue dye.

B. tinctoria - Flowers cream or yellow.

Brenda Adams

HERE'S



THE SCOOP

Gwinnett Master Gardeners Meeting
November 13, 1995, 7:00 PM
at the G.J.A.C.

Gail Hollimon called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for all their hard work this past year.

New Business

The 1996 Gwinnett Master Gardeners have been selected. Their classes begin at ABG on January 9, 1996. We will have a welcoming party for them on January 30 at 10:00 AM at GJAC.

Gwinnett Master Gardeners are responsible for refreshments at the MG classes at ABG on January 23, 25 and February 3.

The annual Georgia Master Gardeners Conference will be at ABG on January 13, 1996.

Gail Hollimon will have a class on fresh wreaths at her home on December 6.

The next Gwinnett MG meeting will be in February.

Questionnaires were passed out to each MG requesting information about their gardening interests.

A list of the new 1996 Gwinnett MG's was passed around so that volunteers could sign up and choose a "buddy".

Program

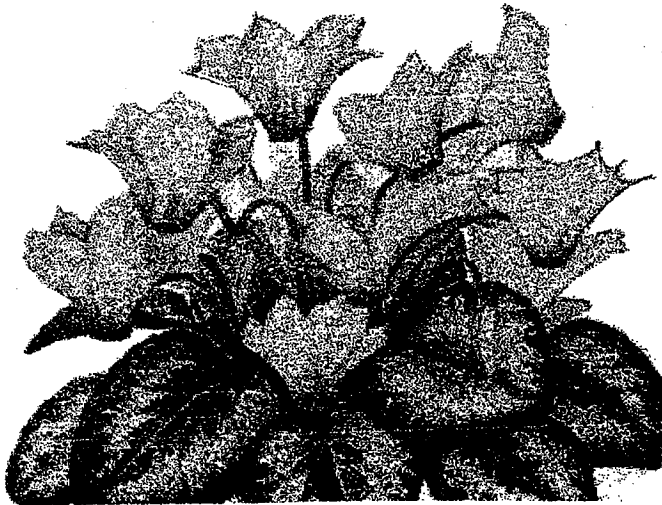
We were pleased to have Walter Reeves speak to us on Soil Improvement and Composting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Jan Hansen

THE OTHER FLOWERS

Getting tired of the same old poinsettias during the holidays? There are many other flowering plants that can be used to brighten up the holiday decor. Most of them are easy to find, easy to grow, and some are easy to keep for yearly rebloom.



Cyclamen persicum, the florist cyclamen, comes in glorious deep reds as well as the more commonly seen pink and white. These are surely the loveliest of house plants, with their 2-3 inch backswept flowers and beautifully silver mottled leaves. The hybrids grow about a foot tall, but there are miniatures that will only get to 6 inches or so. They do best in bright indirect sunlight, but must have cool nights and days to be at their best. Feed them a little every two weeks, and they should bloom for weeks.

Amaryllis hybrids provide a lot of bang for the buck. The flowers can be up to 10 inches across, in satiny reds, pinks and white. These bulbous plants do best in at least four hours of direct sunlight a day, and warmish night temps. They, like the peppers, will enjoy normal house warmth.

However, once they start to bloom, the flowers will last longer if kept out of direct sun. Fertilize monthly until the leaves turn yellow in late summer, then dry off until a month or so before flowers are wanted again. Start watering again, and soon the flower spikes will appear.

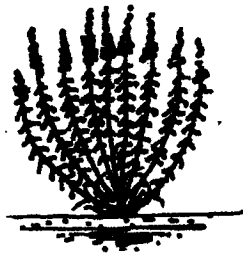
Long lasting flowers in bright colors are the hallmark of *Kalanchoe blossfeldiana*. These plants grow from 8 to 12 inches tall with an equal spread and bear masses of small four-petaled red or yellow blossoms. These too need at least 4 hours of direct sunlight a day, cool night temps and warm daytimes. The soil should become nearly dry between waterings and occasional doses of fertilizer will keep them going. Similar to poinsettias, *kalanchoe* should be given 14 hours of uninterrupted darkness from September 1 through early October in order to bloom by Christmas.

My Christmas standby are bowls of paperwhite narcissus, planted in water and pebbles in November for Christmas flowers. Set the bowls in a cool dark place until the leaves are about 4 inches tall, then move to a sunny window for stout stems. Mine never are very strong, so I tie them up with a red ribbon that adds to the festivities.

Streptocarpus, sometimes called Cape Primrose, is not often enough used for indoor color. Although I've not ever seen a truly red one, dark rosy pinks, white, dark blue and lavender add color to a room. These plants do best in bright, filtered light, normal household temps. Keep the pots moist, and feed monthly. They tend to bloom off and on most all year, but do go briefly dormant when flowering is finished.

(cont'd)

The Herb Corner



HYSSOP

Hyssop is mentioned in the Bible several times as a cleansing agent. Modern research discovered that the mold that produces penicillin grows on its leaf. The flowers are said to be useful to infuse as a tea for throat and lung complaints, poor digestion and appetite. The leaves can be used as a poultice to heal wounds and bruises.

Grow it near cabbages to lure away the white cabbage butterflies.

In the garden, it makes a rather attractive, hardy, semi-evergreen shrub with lavender flowers. Pink and white forms are also available. Grow it in full sun and light, well drained, alkaline soil. A little lime would be called for here as with most Mediterranean herbs.

Hyssop has narrow, pointed, dark green leaves with spiky flowers. If cut back after bloom, they will rebloom all season.

To propagate, divide roots in spring or take stem cuttings from spring to autumn. Sow species seed in spring.

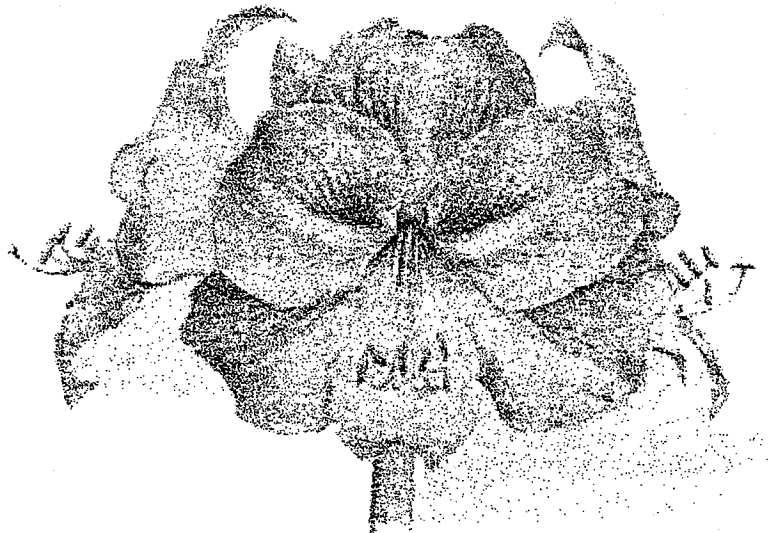
Toss in salads or sprinkle a little under the crust of peach and apricot pies.

Brenda Adams

Finally, Begonia elatior, sometimes known as Rieger begonias, are tuberous begonias of complex ancestry. There are stunning colors; brilliant red, clear yellow, apricot, pink, white. The leaves of these begonias are wonderfully crispy and lettuce-like, quite as attractive as the flowers. These begonias need at least 4 hours of direct sunlight daily during the winter and filtered light in summer. Feed them monthly, and pinch off dead flowers to encourage additional blooms.

As you can see, its possible to have flowering plants during the holiday season without resorting to poinsettias.

Gail Martin



Afterthoughts

*I learn, as the years roll onward
And leave the past behind,
That much I had counted sorrow
But proves that God is kind;
That many a flower I had longed for
Had hidden a thorn of pain,
and many a rugged bypath
Led to fields of ripened grain.*



**ATTENTION:
NEW MASTER GARDENERS**

On Tuesday, January 30, the new 1996 Master Gardeners will meet at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center. First, at 9:30 AM, they will be given a tour of the extension office by Steve Brady, Extension Agent. Then, at 10:00 AM, they will go down to one of the conference rooms on the same floor and have an introductory get-together with the veteran Master Gardeners. This will be a good chance for all of us to get acquainted.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!



On the cover page of this newsletter, you will find a membership renewal application. It is that time of the year when dues are to be paid. It only costs \$5 to belong to Gwinnett Master Gardeners. You must pay this in order to be on our Address List to receive future newsletters, be called about upcoming events in the club, and to hear about future meetings, etc. Please take a moment to send in your \$5 if you haven't done so.

Thanks, Brenda Adams, Treasurer



1996 Officers and Committees

President: Gail Hollimon
Vice President: Beverly Howerton
Treasurer: Jan Hansen and Brenda Adams
Secretary: Jan Hansen

Chairman of Programs: Beverly Howerton
Assistant: Phil Maresca
Plant Sales: Gail Martin and Jan Hansen
Fund Raising: Don Freidus
Newsletter: Brenda Adams and Gail Martin
Hospitality: Shelia Wilbur
Assistant: Maria Turk
Greeter: Glenda Patterson
Communications: Jenni Wilson
Assistants: Diane Reed, Ginny Douglas, Pam Folks
Public Relations: Jane Frazier
Project Chairmen: Pam Folks and Don Freidus

On February 2, 1996, Volunteers are needed at the Galleria Mall to man a booth at the Patio & Garden Show. People will be needed from 3:00 to 8:00. For more information, contact Pam Folks, 822-7717 Ext office.