

♦ A BIT OF DIRT ♦

Volume 5 Issue 14

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The Newsletter of Gwinnett Master Gardeners



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

FUTURE MEETINGS

March 10, 7:00 pm. at GJAC in Lawrenceville, second floor. Our guest speaker will be Jeff Potter speaking on Annuals. There will be a gift plant for everyone to take home.

April 14, 7:00 PM at GJAC. Guest speaker will be Jane Bath, Landscape Designer and owner of LAND ARTS, speaking on Landscape Design.

May 12 meeting will be held at Garden South on Hwy. 20 near Lawrenceville. Gary Gleason will give us a tour of the nursery and provide a room for our meeting. Details and directions later.

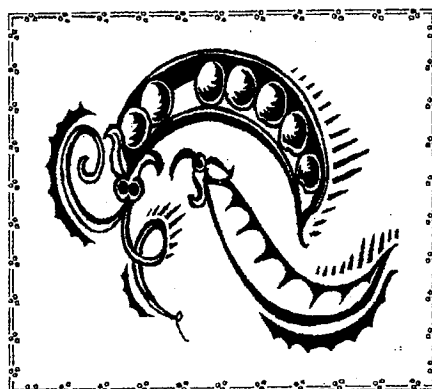


"The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth."

Chief Seattle

*A light exists in Spring
Not present in the year
at any other period
When March is scarcely here.
-Emily Dickinson*

*April comes like an idiot,
babbling and strewing flowers.
-Edna St. Vincent Millay*



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If you have not paid your 1997 dues, please do so. See front cover for details.

UPCOMING ATTRACTIONS

GARDEN SOUTH Spring Seminars.
Lectures begin 11 AM Saturdays.
March 8: lawns and groundcovers
March 15:16: spring planting festival.
Free. 950 Ga. 20, Lawrenceville.
770-963-2406.

GA. NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY -
March 11: Tuesday. "Endangered species—Trilliums" presented by Tom Patrick of the Ga Natural Resources Dept. Plant Sale in the parking lot at 6:45 PM. 404-851-9050. Northwest Unitarian Church, 1025 Mt. Vernon Hwy., Sandy Springs.

GA. PERENNIAL PLANT ASSOC.
March 20: Thursday. "What's Great in Atlanta Gardens: Choosing New & Underused Perennials" by Jeff Klingel, VP, Saul Nurseries, Inc. Plant swap, parking lot 7 PM. Speaker, McElreath Hall (Atl. History Center), 7:30 PM.

GA. NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, THIRD ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM.

This year will be at Oglethorpe University 8:30 am - 4 pm. Speakers include Hank Bruno: "Landscape: the Zen of Design and Maintenance with American Native Plants".

Felder Rushing: "Get Away with it: Wildflowers and Other Unacceptable Stuff in Town".

Harry Abel: "From the Orient: An Artistic Performance with Georgia Natives".

Dr. Richard Lighty: "Spice for the Gardener: Variations in Native Plants" 770-483-6651.

MOSS IN THE GARDEN

I have a secret love affair going. With moss. Yes, moss. I admire it, adore it and cherish every little piece that makes its home on my country spread. In my wildflower garden, there are patches of probably ten different kinds that have been collected from here and there, and reset, to provide a complementary setting to the wild plants and rocks that make their home there too.

There isn't too much written about moss, except for technical botanical literature; but there has been more written and said about it in the last few years. Perhaps because of the desire of so many to "get back to nature" and because there is so much new interest in native plants and wildflowers. Most Japanese gardens use moss liberally.

There are also related plants such as lichens and plants that are called moss, but actually are not moss. One of these is Irish Moss (*Arenaria verna*) which gives a pretty carpeting effect the way moss does. This has a light, apple green color. The related Scotch moss has a darker color, but has not been a happy grower in my garden. Irish moss can take more sun; a lightly shaded area is best.

Reindeer moss, which is a light grey, dry, airy ground dweller found in abundance in our area, is actually a lichen. It can be pretty in a natural garden and is useful when doing crafts, working with dried natural items. Also looks nice at the base of potted plants.

Selaginella is a moss relative. Common name is spike moss. A popular selection is called rainbow moss which has shades of blue and green. Most

have a ferny look and like the same conditions as true moss.

Ground pine or ground cedar which is found in GA woods, is a *Lycopodium*. They also favor moss but are not related. They are small, perennial, usually evergreen plants. Please don't pull up and attempt to transplant these plants. It is difficult to find roots and they usually die.

WHAT IS MOSS? According to the dictionary: "any of a class (*Musci*) of bryophytic plants having a small leafy often tufted stem bearing sex organs at its tip". Mosses are plants that don't transport food and water through a vascular system as most plants do. They consist of tiny one celled leaves which absorb nutrients. They don't have flowers, but produce spores which are dispersed for reproduction.

The Pacific NWest is probably the best place in America to grow moss. They desire coolness, shade and must have adequate moisture to thrive. However, moss can be grown quite well in our area if given the right conditions and misted with water occasionally during hot, droughty times. If not misted, they seem to go dormant and re-appear when more moisture is available.

It is hard to identify different types and species of moss and since there won't be line drawings to match with names, I won't attempt that here. If you admire moss and want to encourage it in your garden, always note the conditions it is growing in and try to duplicate those conditions.

Some moss grows right on the open ground usually on poorly drained, acid soil and others seem to prefer rocks. There is moss that grows on granite outcroppings, in mostly full sun. To encourage moss to grow, make sure it is in good contact with the soil. You can make metal pins from a coat hanger to pin it to the ground or use rocks to hold it down. I have had success mixing moss with buttermilk and pouring it in place, but this is a little slow.

If you have stepping stones in your garden, moss can successfully be grown between the stones.

Moss makes a good natural material to use in decorating also. Clay pots and birdhouses are two good uses. It should be cleaned of debris and then dried. You can spray the dry moss with food coloring to get more color strength. Combine with other natural materials such as interesting bark, acorns, pebbles, berries, pinecones.

I hope this has encouraged you to give moss a chance. Moss and other mossy looking plants can be worthy additions to your garden and your craft projects.

LOOK down and appreciate.

Brenda Adams

Yesterday I sat in a field of violets for a long time perfectly still, until I really sank into it—into the rhythm of the place, I mean—then when I got up to go home I couldn't walk quickly or easily because I was still in time with the field.

—ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH

TO CULTIVATE A GARDEN IS
TO WALK WITH GOD.

CREATIVE ENTERPRISES GREENHOUSE UPDATE.....

Many changes have taken place, not only in the Greenhouse at Creative Enterprises, but at Creative Enterprises in general. Don Freidus is no longer working at CE. Also more and more clients want to participate in growing the plants. The Day-hab clients are eager to experiment and learn the art of making things grow. The staff is coming together in a herioc way, also learning not only how to grow the plants, (which are absolutely beautiful) but also making exciting, new plans which are sure to expand their Greenhouse business. Sales will begin again this Spring to all parties interested—landscapers and homeowners, alike. There is much to do, however, before everything will be ready. When the weather warms up, Master Gardeners who would like to help Sharon Bahre, Diane DeVore, or me with the landscaping directly in front of the Greenhouse are not only welcome but urged to join us if you possibly can. We have planted a number of ornamentals—birch trees, Lorepetalum, youpon hollies, clump liriopse, and a daylily bulb garden—which will add beautiful color this summer. All 100+ bulbs were donated by Diane DeVore. The pond has also been started and will need to be completed before April. Anyone wanting to learn how to build a pond from start to finish, is welcome to come out and help. It really is a lot of fun! Of course, I am not into early morning or cold weather, so you know I won't be out there during those times. But if we can make the front of the Greenhouse as aesthetically appealing as possible, hopefully, we will be able to "draw" people in.

The staff is also working on a publicity campaign which will begin soon. If any of you would enjoy working in the Greenhouse either helping to teach the clients or simply working in the Greenhouse with the plants, or on the outdoor gardens, please call Creative Enterprises or me.

There are now many opportunities to propagate many different plants, such as the ever popular "Gold Medal Plants", ornamental grasses, and herbs. The Purple Fountain Grass has already been started from seed and we are now ready to plant herb seeds and plugs. It may be worth a trip there to see how great the plants look.

There was a fungus and whitefly problem which is now under control. Of course, as in any type of gardening, we will be subjected to insect and disease problems. There is a good selection of annuals in six-pack flats, 4 inch pots, 6 inch pots, and hanging baskets. There are some

perennials, but we need donations for many more! The Greenhouse is huge, so there is a great deal of space to fill. Also, because the regular client class has expanded, there is ample opportunity to learn while teaching! There certainly is the willingness to grasp the knowledge that we, as MG's are able to supply. Many have helped in so many ways throughout the process of "working out the kinks". Certainly, Don's effort and time is appreciated for his part in getting things started. Randy Meyer, at Luxury Landscapes continues to help in too many ways possible to mention. He has donated mulch, door prizes at the Grand Opening, advice and his continued support, which is greatly appreciated. Dr. Richard Ludwig's expertise as well as his donations of time, interns, and "overflow" plug replacements for the Greenhouse has been indispensable. Gary Gleason at GardenSouth has also been a wonderful source of information and help. The success of the Greenhouse project is definitely the result of the hard work and dedication of many generous people.

Pam Folks

Editors Note: Thank you , Pam, for your ongoing dedication and hard work at Creative Enterprises.

Due to personal obligations and computer breakdown, the newsletter will not be entirely in format this quarter. We will be back up to speed next quarter. Thank you for your patience.

Brenda Adams

THIS CRAZY WINTER

As somebody said in the Atlanta Constitution, we've had so many springs and winters this winter that neither the people nor the plants know quite what to do. I decided to check the blooming dates of the last few years and compare them to what has happened so far in 1997, and it seems that most things are a couple of weeks early.

For instance, in 1995, *Narcissus 'Rijnveldt's Early Sensation'* bloomed on Jan. 14th; in 1996 its first bloom was Jan. 23rd; in 1997 it bloomed on Jan. 4th. *Prunus mume* opened on Jan. 12th in 1995; in 1996 not till Feb. 15, while this year it bloomed January 2nd. *Daphne odora* began on Jan. 20th in 1995, Feb. 19th in 1996, and Jan. 2nd in 1997. *Helleborus orientalis* started on Feb. 8th in 1994, Feb. 11th in 1996, and Jan. 8th in 1997.

Some of the other plants that have come into bloom a week or two (or more) earlier are *pulmonaria*, in bloom Feb. 28th, our native bloodroot, in bloom March 1st, and the little bulb *Ipheion*, blooming on Feb. 28th. There are more, such as *Vinca minor*, *Euphorbia c. wulfenii*, *Carolina jessamine* and *lamium*.

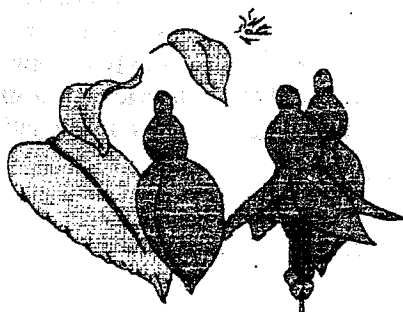
I checked back to see what weather conditions I had recorded for those years, and found enough to frighten both me and the plants. In 1993 we had an ice storm on Feb. 26th, a bad freeze on March 4th, a couple of days of 70 degree weather then the great blizzard of '93 on March 13th.

In 1994 and 1995 I didn't record any weather aberrations, maybe because I was afraid to...then in 1996 I see we had a deep freeze on Feb. 3rd, another deep freeze on March 7-8th.

I still worry what will happen in March of 1997. So far we and the plants have been very lucky with a fairly mild winter. They haven't frozen, but they've just about drowned.

In March, if all goes well, we'll have the early azaleas, the spring wildflowers, the early woodland phlox and some of the fragrant viburnums. We can look forward to *Salvia greggii* hybrids, the *loropetalums*, *Clematis armandii* and the *illiciums*. If we get no surprises from the weather people, we may see April's blooms in late March, and enjoy the spring spectacle a little earlier than normal.

BUT, does this mean a longer, hotter summer?



Gail Marti

CREATIVE COMBOS

Planning a new flower bed is sometimes difficult, and we tear our hair out trying to plant pleasing combinations of flowers and foliage. Here are some ideas to help you .

Parsley, lamb's ear (Stachys), Lamium, sage and lavender.

Ajuga and purple sage.

Lavender, lamb's ear and garlic chives.

Lavender, Coreopsis 'Moonbeam' and Artemesia 'Powis Castle'

Purple coneflower (Echinacea), Artemesia 'Silver King', Sage and lamb's ear.

Sage 'Tricolor', pink begonias and Sedum 'Autumn Joy'.

Roman Chamomile, perennial blue salvia and Artemesia 'Powis Castle'.

'Spicy Globe' Basil, chives, lamb's ear and common pink yarrow.

Rosemary, coralbells (Heuchera) and Sedum 'Autumn Glory'.

Feverfew, blue salvia and Veronica.

Globe thistle (Echinops), artemesia and lamb's ear.

Russian sage (Perovskia) and Globe thistle (Echinops).

Veronica 'Georgia Blue' and miniature daffodils.

Sage 'Tricolor' and blue salvia.

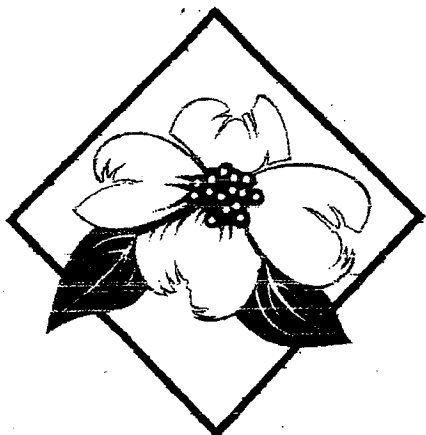
Rue, artemesia and marigolds.

Coreopsis, variegated thyme and 'Spicy Globe' basil.

Russian sage (Perovskia), blue salvia and lythrum.

Chives and Siberian iris.

Gail Martin



ORGANIC FERTILIZER FORMULAS

Since the time for fertilizing is fast coming upon us, I thought you might be interested in various home-made organic fertilizer formulas, so that you may customize the specific fertilizer you may need.

4-5-4

2 parts dried blood
1 part phosphate rock
4 parts wood ashes

2.5-2/5-4

3 parts granite dust
1 part dried blood
1 part bone meal
5 parts seaweed (kelp)

3-7-5

1 part dried blood
1 part phosphate rock
3 parts wood ashes

2-4-2

4 parts coffee grounds
1 part bonemeal
1 part wood ashes

6-8-3

2 parts fish scrap
2 parts dried blood
1 part cottonseed meal
1 part wood ashes
1 part granite dust
1 part phosphate rock

2-13-2.5

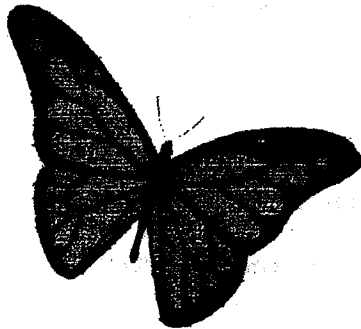
1 part cottonseed meal
2 parts phosphate rock
2 parts seaweed

3.5-5.5-3.5

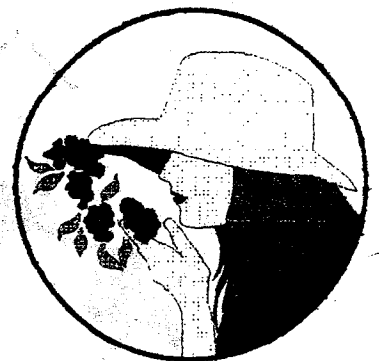
2 parts cottonseed meal
1 part colloidal phosphate
2 parts granite dust

2-8-3

3 parts greensand
2 parts seaweed
1 part dried blood
2 parts phosphate rock



Gail Martin



1997 GEORGIA GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

Although announced in 1996, a reminder of this year's Gold Medal Winners might remind you of planting plans you had and had forgotten.

Annual *Scaevola* 'Blue Wonder'. This scaevola produces a solid carpet of blue flowers in beds or weeps gracefully over a basket.

Perennial *Rudbeckia triloba*. This native coneflower is biennial to perennial and becomes covered with small yellow daisy flowers with black centers.

Shrub *Loropetalum chinense rubrum*. These are the pink flowered loropetalums. They are medium to large shrubs that produce a heavy flush of pink spring flowers and scattered blooms throughout spring and summer.

Tree *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Yoshino'. This cryptomeria is a conical evergreen that grows fast. It has rich green foliage, and can be used as a specimen or screen, reaching 30 to 40 feet.

If you are planning a new crape myrtle, don't forget the 1996 Georgia Gold Medal winners, the hybrids released from the National Arboretum and selected for their bark, disease resistance and long flowering season. The specific cultivars named are 'Lipan', 'Sioux', 'Tonto' and 'Yuma'.

The other three 1996 winners were *Petunia* 'Purple Wave', *Baptisia*, and *Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird'.

