

A Bit of Dirt

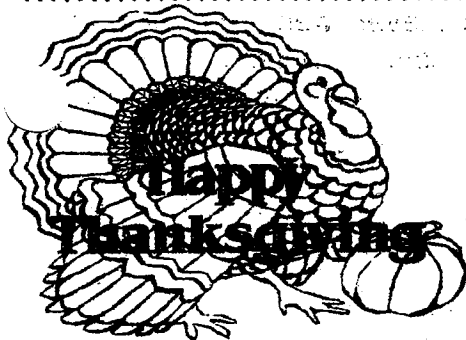
Volume 5 Issue 16

Winter 1997

The Newsletter of Gwinnett Master Gardeners



A Bit of Dirt is published quarterly. Editor is Gail Martin. If you have news, or an article you would like to publish in our newsletter, please call me at 770-381-2513.



When all the leaves are off
the boughs
And nuts and apples
gathered in,
And cornstalks waiting for
the crows,
And pumpkins safe in barn
and bin,
Then Mother says, "My
children dear,
The fields are brown, and
autumn flies;
Thanksgiving Day is very
near,
and we must make
Thanksgiving pies!"

1998 Officers

President: Sheila Wilbur
Vice President: Judy Pitts
Treasurer: Jan Hansen
Secretary: LaDonna
Benedict

Congratulations to our new officers. Please support our new leaders.

"If it is true that one of the greatest pleasures of gardening lies in looking forward, then the planning of next year's beds and borders must be one of the most agreeable occupations in the gardener's calendar."

Vita Sackville-West

Optimism: A cheerful frame of mind that enables a tea kettle to sing though in hot water up to its nose.

Anonymous

In Memoriam

WADE J. ADAMS

November 15, 1997

CALENDAR

Southern Gardening Symposium

Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center
December 5 & 6, 1997

Pruning Workshop State Arboretum

December 1, 1997
Leave from Extension Office
at 9:15 a.m.

Callaway Gardens

"Fantasy of Lights"
November 21 - December 28

Southeastern Flower Show

City Hall Exhibition Center
February 18-22, 1998

GMGA Annual Meeting

Atlanta Botanic Garden
January 10, 1998

WHY WE DECORATE WITH GREENERY

There are many traditions surrounding Christmas and plants. The original custom of decorating with evergreens as life symbols was adapted by the early Christians from Norse, Roman and other pagan traditions. They thought that by bringing greenery into the home, the return of plantlife in the Spring was ensured.

Early rules governing this greenery were fraught with danger. It was unlucky to bring greens into the house before Christmas Eve, and they must not be removed until Twelfth Night. In some places they must be burned, others said it was unlucky to burn them and must be left to wither on their own. Greens in churches must be gone by Feb. 2. One tiny piece overlooked meant bad luck!

Mistletoe is one of the most magical plants known. Because it was so closely associated with the pagan rites of the Druids it was seldom sanctioned to be used in churches. It was used for winter solstice celebrations, thought to protect houses from lightning, thunder and evil spells. It was unlucky to cut mistletoe at any other time of year than at Christmas. In England they kept a bunch to

burn under the following year's Christmas pudding, and also wore a sprig around their necks to repel witches. "Give me a kiss" is its meaning in the language of flowers, and when all the berries are gone no more kisses are available.

Holly, because it bore fruit in the winter, came to represent eternal life. Unlike mistletoe, holly was completely acceptable to have present in churches. A tree planted outside the home protected it from lightning, thunder and the evil eye. In Wales, holly brought into the house before Christmas Eve was thought to lead to family quarrels. Holly picked on Christmas Day was especially powerful when used for medicinal purposes. Disaster was sure to come if you burned a green holly, stamped on the berries or brought holly flowers into the house.

Ivy was considered a feminine life symbol because of its clinging habits. If used with holly it would bring fertility to the entire household. If it grew on your house, you were safe from witches. If it withered, disaster was sure to come. Ivy leaves were used on ulcers and abscesses, corns

removed by wrapping them with ivy leaves soaked in vinegar, food or drink taken from a bowl made of ivy wood cured whooping cough and an ivy wreath worn continuously would prevent your hair from falling out.

Holly and ivy represent the male and female, and whichever was brought into the house first indicated which sex would rule the house that year!

Egyptians, Romans and Druids decorated trees to honor their gods, and when these people accepted Christianity, they continued their winter rites but gradually changed them to honor Christ. The evergreen tree came to signify bringing new life to the world after the dark days of winter. The decorated tree soon became popular in Germany, and its use spread throughout the Scandinavian countries. Prince Albert has been given credit for bringing it into fashion in England and thence to the US. He and Queen Victoria included a decorated tree in their 1841 Christmas decorations. The Christmas tree has been welcomed universally into our homes and churches, and has become the center of our Christmas decorations.

SACRAMENTO



The International Master Gardener Conference was held in Sacramento, California July 15-19, 1997. Things are a little different out there. We have all lived in or heard stories about towns that the sidewalk was rolled up after a certain time. Well, it was hard to believe, but this was true in the capitol of California. At dusk the town is almost deserted.

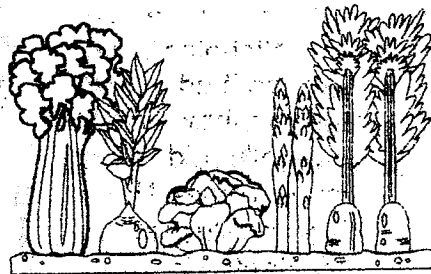
On another subject, I had the chance to stay in the dorms at the University of California at Davis which was a short drive from the conference. While there were cars, most people could get around on foot, bike or roller blade quite easily. There are even traffic lights for bicycles. The temperatures were amazing; 100+ during the day (of course no humidity) and a very pleasant 58 in the early morning.

I particularly liked the self guided tour of the campus and gardens. Everything was irrigated, well almost everything. The olive trees that lined one main street were a new experience; have you ever seen what olive oil does to sidewalks and bike paths? There was no doubt where the irrigation was broken in the turf areas. UC Davis is where many fruit and vegetable varieties originated. Do the names Burbank plum and California Won-

der and Yolo peppers sound familiar? This state really is the salad bowl and wine cellar of the United States.

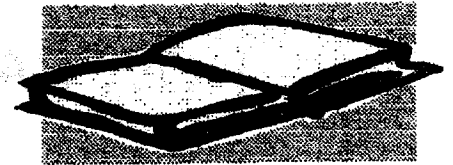
The conference offered many different speakers (and I do mean different). I enjoyed everything from "House plants that clean interior air" to "Compost and reducing plant diseases". I found that even though we think we have it bad with termites, in California they have more trouble than us. I highly recommend you attend one of the International Conferences when you can and enjoy the diversity of people, plants, soils and experiences.

Steve Brady



*"Oh, what a blamed uncertain thing
This pesky weather is,
It blew and snow and then it
thaw,
And now, by jing, it's friz".*

Philander Johnson



ANTIQUE ROSES FOR THE SOUTH by William C Welch

Old roses have a favored place in the South, and Mr. Welch offers a primer on rose culture and introduces many varieties of old roses. He describes how he and fellow rose enthusiasts conduct their "rose rustling". The book is nicely designed, with many of the pictures taken by the author.

NATIVE PLANTS OF THE SOUTH by Sally and Andy Wasowski

This is a how-to book, stressing that native plants should not be grown in a setting alien to their native habitat. She includes a chapter on planning your own native plant garden. Well organized and illustrated.

THE SOUTHERN HEIRLOOM GARDEN by William C Welch and Greg Grant.

An over-sized book with wonderful pictures and information on how our Southern gardening traditions grew through the influence of gardeners from many countries. Alphabetical lists of heirloom plants worthy of our own gardens, from Albizia to Zizyphus.

STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

It's time to think about starting seeds inside, to be ready to plant out in next year's garden. For some plants it is imperative to start early, as some seeds require soil temperatures close to 70 degrees to germinate.

As seeds started indoors need the same conditions as those started in the garden, we must provide the proper soil, water and light.

The worst thing that can happen to a flat of seedlings is Damping-off disease, so it is essential that you use a sterile medium for your seeds. You can sterilize your own garden soil by sifting it, then baking in your oven, but it is a lot of work and besides, smells terrible. Much easier to use a commercial starting medium, usually called a "soil-less" medium.

Clean your containers if used before; a rinse with a light Clorox solution will then do away with any bacteria that remains. Thoroughly moisten your medium. The easiest way to do this is in a large bowl, using warm water and your hands, as though you were kneading dough. Once the medium feels like a squeezed-out sponge place it in your container - these can be pots, flats or one of the more sophisticated self-wicking systems. Follow directions on the seed

packet and plant your seeds accordingly.

The next consideration is light. Even the sunniest window will probably need supplemental light to grow strong seedlings. Set up a growing area in your basement or an unused room using only artificial light. You can make an inexpensive light source using a hanging bracket and white fluorescent bulbs. It is not necessary to use expensive plant lights for seedlings. The lights need to be on for 14 to 16 hours a day, so an inexpensive timer is a big help here in turning the lights off and on. The lights should be placed only a few inches above the newly planted seeds, inching them up bit by bit as the plants grow. They should never be more than 12 inches from the growing plants.

The third ingredient is water, and the one that requires con-

*"I don't believe the half I hear,
Nor the quarter of what I see!
But I have one faith, sublime
and true,*

*That nothing can shake or
slay;*

*Each spring I firmly believe
anew*

All the seed catalogs say!"

Carolyn Wells

stant attention. It is best to water from below, allowing the medium to soak up water like a sponge. It can be hard on newly emerged seedlings to face a waterfall from a watering can! The newly planted containers will benefit from having a plastic cover or sheet of plastic wrap over them to aid in germination. This keeps the medium warm and moist, but must be removed when the plants sprout or the babies will suffocate. The self-wicking systems are easy to maintain - just fill the reservoir when it becomes empty. Others must be checked daily for moistness - just be sure not to overwater. Many seedlings, once up and growing, prefer to be run a little dry. As you experiment, you'll find out which need more water to grow well.

Feed your seedlings with a dilute solution of a balanced water soluble fertilizer. If your seeds were started in February, they should be ready to plant out in the garden in mid to late April.

Buy some new and different seeds, and experiment with plants you've never grown before. It's great fun, and you may be the only gardener you know with a new and exotic plant.



The Southern Gardening Symposium

Gwinnett Tech and the University of Georgia Extension Service invites you to **The Southern Gardening Symposium** for the finest in gardening education. The two-day program, held at the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center, will feature gardening experts discussing a wide variety of topics.

The two day program costs \$55. Registration deadline is Tuesday, November 25.

770-962-7580 ext. 227 or 770-995-9697 to register.

Speakers:

Kim Hawks & Bill Fontenot
Plants from Venus & Mars

Lee May
Growing relationships in Gardening and Life

Erica Glasner
The Fragrant Year, Planting for Fragrance and Scent in Your Garden

Jimmy Stewart
Best Performing Plant Combinations for Southern Gardens

Richard Ludwig
Wake Up Your Landscape

Phil Gibson
Working With Nature

Denise Smith
Growing Herbs in the Landscape

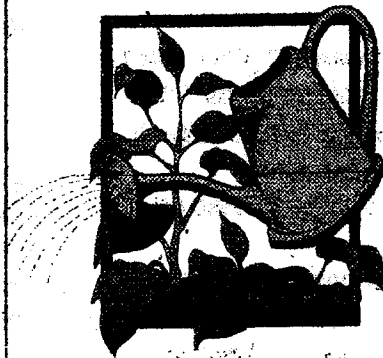
Rex Bishop
The "Top Forty" From a Different Perspective

Glenn Austin
Roses in the Garden...Again

Gary Gleason
Shade Gardening

Wil Corley
Ornamental Grasses in the New American Garden

Michael Dirr
Georgia Evaluation Program Update: Best Plants for Georgia Landscapes



FEED 'EM RIGHT

Birds seem to be as picky as children when it comes to what they want to eat. Some will eat a wide variety, but others are quite particular. Here is a list of seeds, and the birds they attract.

Sunflower Seed

Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, all Nuthatches, Goldfinch, Cardinal, House & Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Blue Jay, Woodpeckers

Thistle

Junco, Goldfinch, Purple and House Finch, Pine Siskin



Cracked Corn

Junco, Dove, Blue Jay, Cowbird, Grackle, Sparrows

Suet

Starling, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Chickadee, Nuthatches, Mockingbirds

Millet

Junco, Dove, Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbird, Cowbird

GWINNETT COUNTY EXTENSION PLANT SALE

3 YEAR OLD BLUEBERRY BUSHES COST - \$8.00 EACH

Varieties:

- * Climax - Brightwell - Premier - O'Neal - Austin
- Early season - usually start ripening Mid-June
- * Bluebell - Tifblue - Powderblue - Mid-season,
usually start ripening in early July.
- * Delite - Centurion - Baldwin - Late season,
usually start ripening Mid-late July.

Blueberries are relatively pest free and require little care once established. The average family needs 4-6 bushes. You can plant as few as 2 plants as long as you have 2 varieties for good cross pollination. They prefer full sun but can tolerate some shading. You can plant them as close as 4-6 feet for a hedge or screening affect or 10-12 feet apart as specimen plants. They will produce a small quantity of berries the first year and produce up to 2 gallons per bush after 3 years.

ORDERS TAKEN THRU 2/20/98

**PICK UP DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT
GWINNETT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS FROM
12:00 TO 7:00 P.M. ONLY. PLANTS MUST BE
PICKED UP ON THIS DATE.**

CRAPE MYRTLES COST - \$4.00 EACH

Varieties:

- * Natchez - color of bloom - white
- * Catawba - color of bloom - violet purple
- * Tuscarora - color of bloom - dark pink

We are offering (3) three improved varieties. They are improved releases from the U.S. Arboretum and have a high resistance to powdery mildew disease and are approximately one foot tall. They will grow rapidly to a height of 12 or more feet and have a very distinctive exfoliating bark.

ORDERS TAKEN THRU 2/20/98

**PICK UP DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 AT
GWINNETT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS 12:00 -
7:00 P.M. ONLY. PLANTS MUST BE PICKED
UP ON THIS DATE.**

We look forward to a great sale. If you have any questions, please call our office. 770 - 822-7700..

THORNLESS BLACKBERRY BUSHES COST - \$ 4.00 EACH

Varieties:

- * Arapaho - Ripens mid-late June for about 4 weeks. Has firm fruit with slightly smaller seeds than Navaho.
- * Navaho - Ripens early mid-July for about 5 weeks. Has firm fruit that yields over longer season than Arapaho.

Thornless Blackberries are relatively pest free and require little care once established. Blackberries are self fruitful so you can plant just one plant and still get fruit. The average family needs 10-15 plants. They yield more in full sun but can tolerate some shade. They can be planted as close as 2 foot for a hedge or screen. Some choose to trellis for a neat landscape effect. The Arapaho and Navaho varieties are not as aggressive as their wild cousins and won't invade your flower or vegetable garden. With just simple renewal pruning each winter, you can expect yields up to 3 to 4 pints per plant over 4-8 weeks.

ORDERS TAKEN THRU 2/20/98

**PICK UP DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH AT GWINNETT COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS FROM
12:00 TO 7:00 P.M. ONLY. PLANTS MUST BE PICKED UP ON THIS DATE.**

ORDER FORM

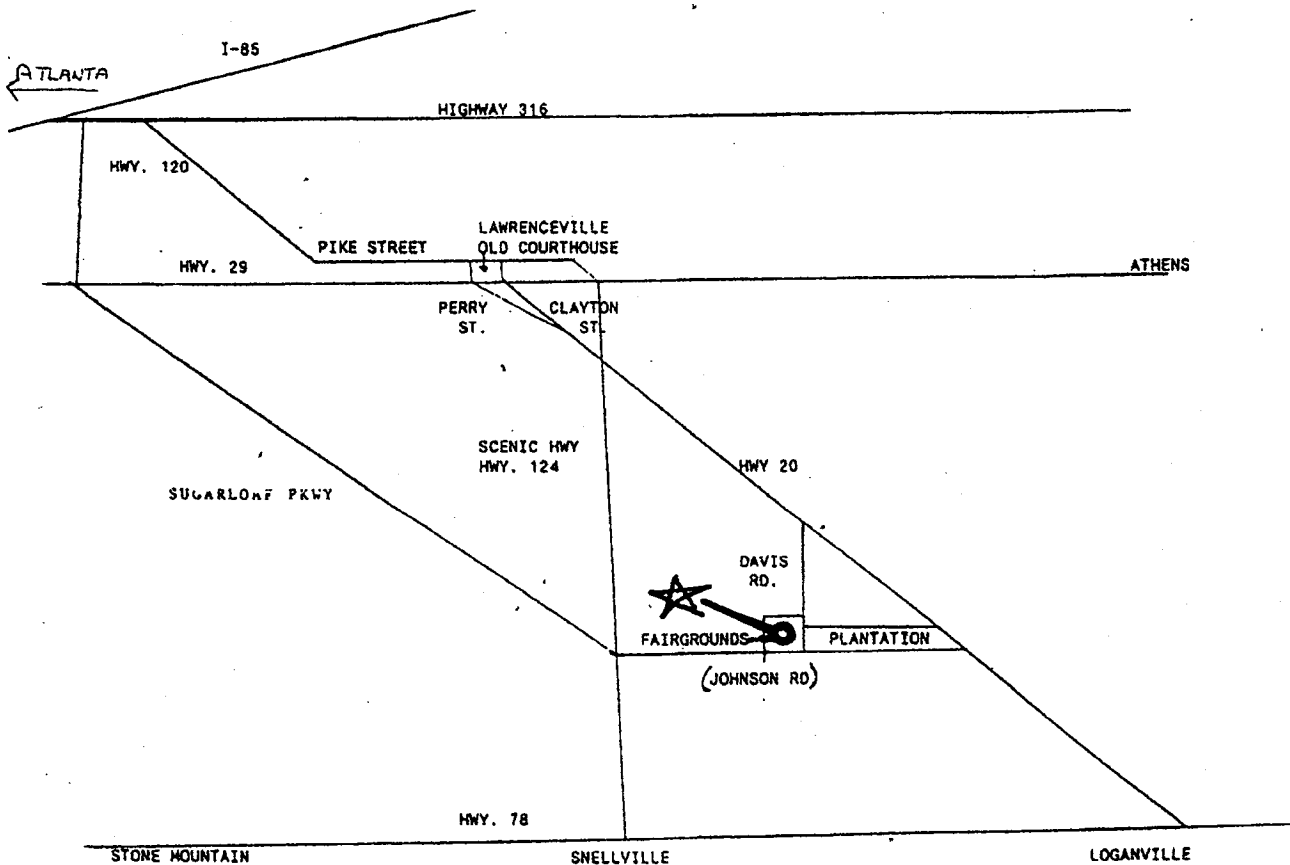
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: GWINNETT EXTENSION SERVICE

MAIL TO: Gwinnett Extension Service - GJAC - 75 Langley Dr. - Lawrenceville, Ga. 30045
Phone 770 - 822-7700 ALL ORDERS MUST BE PREPAID. ORDERS TAKEN THRU 2/20/98

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS	CITY	ZIP
<p>Blueberry Bushes - \$8.00 Mark how many you want of each plant</p> <p>___ Powderblue ___ Climax ___ Brightwell ___ Tifblue ___ Premier ___ Bluebelle ___ Delite ___ Baldwin ___ Centurion ___ Austin ___ O'Neal</p> <p>Total # of bushes _____</p> <p>AMOUNT ENC.\$ _____</p> <p>Check if you will be attending class at Central <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Crape Myrtles - \$4.00 Mark how many you want of each plant</p> <p>___ Natchez ___ Catawba ___ Tuscarora</p> <p>Total # of bushes _____</p> <p>AMOUNT ENC.\$ _____</p>	<p>Blackberry Bushes - \$4.00 Mark how many you want of each plant</p> <p>___ Arapaho ___ Navaho</p> <p>Total # of bushes _____</p> <p>AMOUNT ENC. \$ _____</p> <p>Check if you will be Attending class at Central</p>

There will be a free class offered at Central Gwinnett High School February 19th on Blueberries and Blackberries. The class will be from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. **PLEASE CHECK BOX** above if you plan to attend.



DECEMBER TIPS

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service

ORNAMENTALS

* Wreaths made from cut greenery will last much longer if kept cold, so plan to use them outdoors. Bring them inside for short periods on special occasions.

* Yews, juniper, holly, boxwood, broadleaf evergreens and many deciduous trees and shrubs can be propagated this month. Insert evergreen cuttings in vermiculite or sand in a cool greenhouse. Tie bundles of deciduous cuttings together, and bury in sand in a cold frame. Remove in early spring and plant in a nursery bed.

* Assess the energy efficiency of your landscape. Do you have evergreen trees or shrubs blocking a window where the sun's warmth would be welcome? Consider replacing them with deciduous plants that would let sun in during winter, but cast cooling shade in summer.

VEGETABLES & FRUIT

* A diary or record book can help the home vegetable gardener keep track of the factors affecting the garden -

harvest.

* Research indicates you can improve yields by growing produce in smaller containers. Scientists grew "Better Bush" tomatoes in 3.5" and 11" plastic pots for 12 weeks, and found they could get roughly twice as much fruit from plants in the smaller containers. Plants in the smaller pots were somewhat dwarfed, and their fruits were either slightly smaller or less abundant than those on unstressed plants, but the overall yield per area was actually greater since three small plants could fit into the space occupied by one large plant. The tomatoes in this experiment were fed and watered 3 to 6 times a day.

THANKSGIVING PUZZLE

The following words are embedded in this puzzle - see how many you can find.

BAKE	LEFTOVERS
BREAD	NAP
CARVE	NOVEMBER
CIDER	PARADE
COLD	PECAN PIE
COLONY	PILGRIMS
COOK	PLYMOUTH
CORN	PUMPKIN PIE
DIET	SLEEP
DRESSING	SNOW
EAT	STUFFING
FAMILY	THANKSGIVING
FEAST	THURSDAY
GIBLETS	TURKEY
GRANDMAS	WINTER
GRAVY	YAMS
HAM	
HOLIDAY	
INDIANS	



I	C	G	R	A	N	D	M	A	S	C	Z	A	Y	G
G	N	A	G	N	I	F	F	U	T	S	D	A	N	L
K	I	D	R	E	V	V	A	R	G	A	D	I	A	E
R	G	B	I	V	K	N	Y	D	E	I	S	P	P	F
S	E	N	L	A	E	A	I	R	L	S	U	Y	D	T
M	A	H	I	E	N	E	B	O	E	M	S	A	E	O
I	T	K	M	V	T	S	H	R	P	W	L	D	I	V
R	S	O	F	C	I	S	D	K	G	C	E	S	P	E
G	A	O	T	C	T	G	I	W	C	O	E	R	N	R
L	E	C	I	U	F	N	S	W	E	L	P	U	A	S
I	F	D	R	A	P	D	R	K	I	D	Z	H	C	N
P	E	K	M	I	A	W	Y	O	N	N	A	T	E	O
R	E	I	E	Y	N	O	L	O	C	A	T	R	P	W
Y	L	P	L	Y	M	O	U	T	H	W	H	E	A	B
Y	A	M	S	R	E	B	M	E	V	O	N	T	R	P

