

# ◆ A Bit of Dirt ◆

Volume 6 Issue 3

Autumn 1998

## The Newsletter of the 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 have published, please call me at 770-381-2513, or email me at 103657.1211@compuserve.com



O sweet September, the first breezes bring  
The dry leaf's rustle and the squirrels laughter,  
The cool fresh air whence health and vigor spring,  
And promise of exceeding joy hereafter.

George Arnold



A Garden is a thing of beauty  
and a job forever.

Anonymous



### Future Meetings

#### Gwinnett Master Gardeners

September 14

October 12

November 9

Watch the mail for postcards



#### GPPA

Thursday, Sept 17, 7:30 pm  
Lucy Hardiman, Portland, OR  
"Gone to Pot, Designing with Containers"  
Atlanta History Center

#### GA Native Plant Society

Tuesday, Sept 8, 7:30 pm  
Connie Gray, horticulturist  
"Using Native Ferns in the Garden"  
Atlanta Botanic Garden

#### GA Native Plant Society Annual Symposium

Sat, Oct 17, 8:30 am -3:30 pm  
So. Polytechnic State  
University, Marietta  
\$30 members  
\$35 non-members  
Reservations - 770-955-1303

*Message from our  
President*

Summer is slipping away. What a difficult gardening year this has been! El Nino has not been kind to gardeners or farmers. Thank goodness we gardeners may have lost a few perennials, but not a whole year's crop. We can hope for a long, delicious, cool fall.

As fall slips in and you start dividing your perennials, please pot up and label a few for our Spring Garden Tour and Plant Sale. Gwinnett Master Gardeners will make a profit on the tour and 100% profit on the plant sale. If you can't overwinter your donations contact a Master Gardener who may have more room. This winter we can get together and plan advertising and signage for the tour. Spring is such a busy time it will be great to use the winter months for this kind of planning, and garden in the spring.

Hope to see you at the September meeting. This meeting will be held at Eden's Walk, 1180 Old Tucker Rd, Stone Mountain.

If you would like to make a nomination for next year's officers, please call me at 770-921-9246.

Happy Gardening,

Sheila

## Notes from the Extension Office

### Trees Need Room

In the financial world, many advisors recommend looking long term, but when it comes to trees...one of the main problems is that a tree doesn't have enough rooting space. Without enough soil open to the air, tree roots can't collect enough water and essential elements to live.

In yards and along streets many trees are planted and forgotten. People spent a lot of money on trees but then plant them with little forethought. Mature height, branch spread and root spread weren't even considered, dooming the trees to a stressed and greatly shortened life.

How much soil area should you leave for a tree? The only way to predict is to estimate how big the tree will become. The expected mature size of a tree can give you an idea of the soil area needed around a new tree. The two-inch oak you plant today will be five inches thick in seven years and 12 inches in 25 years. Should you allow enough root space for the two-inch, five-inch or 12-inch tree?

Trees must grow every year and will keep growing until they die. Their roots must continue to colonize soil with plenty of available water and essential elements. A tree's rooting area must hold enough water to carry an active tree from one rainfall to the next. A big tree can use a lot of

water. If the soil area where the roots grow is small, the tree won't be able to pull in enough water.

A guide for planting trees with enough root space is simple and depends upon you to estimate the diameter of a tree when it matures. Estimate the diameter at four and a half feet above the ground. A tree may be one inch now but will grow



into a good quality tree of more than 16 inches; you need to provide enough soil space for a healthy 16 inch tree. Make diameter estimates for yard trees for when they are 25 years old. Figure the diameter of trees along streets at 15 years and parking lot or containerized trees at seven years.

Once you have the estimated diameter of your tree you can calculate how much rooting area it will need. For a square planting area, multiply the estimated mature diameter of your tree by 2. The number produced will be the length in feet for each side of a square planting area. For a circular planting area, multiply the expected diameter by 2.25. The answer will be the diameter in feet of the planting area for your new tree.

Remember that the rooting area value is an average value for many different trees. The area value is also an effective minimum. The more room you can provide your tree the better.

Steve Brady

### Ag Showcase '98

This field day in Griffin on September 3 addresses, among other things, ornamental horticulture. 3 hours of Advanced Master Gardener credit will be given for attendance. Registration is at 8am, with sessions on a number of subjects of interest to all Master Gardeners. The cost of registration is \$25.00, but must be postmarked by 8/26. Make check payable to Ag Showcase '98, and send to CAES-Griffin, 1109 Experiment Street, Griffin, GA 30223-1797.

There will be tours after lunch as well as exhibits and displays at the Woodruff Pavilion. There is no charge (and no credit) if you go after lunch only for the tours.

This event is sponsored by the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Fort Valley State University and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

For additional information, please call Steve Brady at the extension office or visit their web page at [www.griffin.peachnet.edu/agshow](http://www.griffin.peachnet.edu/agshow)



*Listen! the wind is rising,  
and the air is wild with leaves,  
We have had our summer  
evenings,  
now for October eves!*

*Humbert Wolfe*



## The Garden Path



Gardening isn't all digging, raking, weeding, spraying and other back-breaking, tedious activities. One of a gardener's great pleasures is seeing other gardens - other people's efforts. This was our experience in late June when we visited Joanne Moss's "The Garden Path" in Moreland.

We met at Sheila Wilbur's and checked out her beautiful garden (also a peek at her neighbor's) and then drove to Joanne's. We started with a lovely lunch of several courses served on beautifully set tables in the shade of trees and umbrellas.

After lunch we were served cool, wet cloths to mop our glowing faces while we wandered along the grassy paths among flowering day lilies, a huge Grancy Greybeard, beautiful hollies, roses and perennials of all kinds. Little surprise statues were peeking out from among the flowers and the paths were interspersed with trellises, arbors and little bridges. And birdhouses! Birdhouses were everywhere!

Joanne's big tool shed is decorated with old tools arranged in clock formation on the outside. Another out-building contains a kitchen and bathroom. We changed into swimsuits and had a refreshing swim in her beautiful swimming pool. A floating fountain surrounded by flowers is in the center of the pool. Just beautiful.

Several pages of pictures of

Joanne's garden are in the Spring '98 Special Edition of Better Homes and Gardens. After you see the pictures you'll want to see the garden in person. Call ahead - visits are by appointment (770-251-8288). It's a lovely trip.

*Fran Robbins*



*No man is really happy or safe without a hobby, and it makes precious little difference what the outside interest may be - botany, beetles or butterflies, roses, tulips or irises, fishing, mountaineering or antiquities - anything will do so long as he straddles a hobby and rides it hard.*

*Sir William Osler*

## Decorate a Gourd...

That's what Fran Robbins invited us all to do at her home on Norris Lake in May.

As we arrived buckets of water, scrubbers, scrapers and gourds, which Fran grew last year, were all waiting for us to have fun with.

We picked out our favorite gourd and sat in the shade of a huge oak tree talking, laughing and cleaning our gourds. Noticing the beautiful and different pattern on each gourd, along with the lively conversation, had no one in a hurry to do anything else. Some of us were on our second and third gourd soaking, scrubbing, laughing and talking when Brenda informed us that it was 11:30 and we hadn't even painted or decorated the gourds yet! With that we all went into Fran's beautiful newly decorated home and had a great time painting and decorating our gourds.

We were called to lunch by Fran's three year old grandson, Luke. We brought a sandwich and Fran provided drinks, fruit and a decadent dessert of Heath Bar, chocolate cake, pudding and cream all layered in a big glass bowl. Some of us ate on the enormous screened porch overlooking the lake and others enjoyed the same view in the air-conditioning.

After lunch we went back to finish our gourds. What a lot of fun we always have together. Thank you very much Fran.



*Dolores Wyland*



## Mysterious Migrations



Each fall as we say goodby to the songbirds who have nested in our gardens and eaten our insects and birdseed, we marvel anew at their migratory habits, and wonder how and why they wander so.

How do the birds do it? How did they learn to search for distant food sources and avoid cold winters? How have they evolved?

The Arctic Tern makes an annual round-trip from its Arctic breeding grounds to the Antarctic, possible because it has adapted to feeding at sea. More amazing, however, are the non-stop flights made by some birds over open water. The Pacific Golden-Plover flies steadily for more than 100 hours to travel from Alaska to Hawaii.

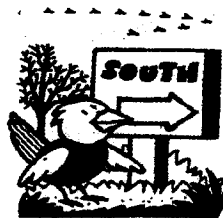
The Blackpoll Warbler and others take an over the water route from the East Coast to the Caribbean and South America. This warbler flies for 80 to 90 hours to reach its winter home. Even our tiny Ruby-throated hummingbird makes the 24 hour flight across the Gulf of Mexico to and from the Yucatan Peninsula non-stop.

Feathers provide the insulation needed to maintain a high body temperature, ranging from 107-113 F. The long feathers of the wings act as airfoils, generating lift. Well-developed pectoral muscles

power the flapping motion of the wings. Their hollow bones and streamlined body shape minimize air resistance and reduce the amount of energy needed to remain airborne. Birds have a large heart, which proportionately weighs 6 times more than a human heart. A rapid heartbeat (500 beats a minute for a small songbird, 1000 for a hummingbird) and highly efficient respiratory systems satisfy the rigorous demands of flight.

2 to 3 weeks before migration, birds turn themselves into "superbirds". An increase in appetite and food consumption entails rapid weight gain and increased fat reserves. The extra fat provides the energy to make the long flights. Many migrants who would normally feast on insects change to a diet of berries and nuts, foods abundant in this season, and high in the carbohydrates which convert to fat.

A radical shift from daytime activity to migrating at night occurs in many species during migration. It is possible that the advantages to flying at night include decreased vulnerability to predators, reduced threat of overheating, and time to forage during the day.



Monarch butterflies, unlike most temperate climate insects, cannot survive a long cold winter. Alone of all the world's butterflies, the Monarchs of North America fly to winter roosting spots when driven by seasonal changes. Western Monarchs settle along the coast of Southern California, and those east of the Rocky Mountains fly to high forested mountains of Mexico.

In late summer and fall, when the latest generation of Monarchs emerge from their chrysalides, they are biologically and behaviorally different from those emerging in the summer. The changes are triggered by the shorter days and cooler air of late summer. Although these butterflies look like summer adults they won't mate or lay eggs until the following spring, but instead prepare their bodies for strenuous flight.

Fat stored in their abdomens is a critical element of their survival for the winter. This fat fuels their flight of one to three thousand miles, and must last until next spring when they begin the flight back north.

Researchers have yet to discover how the Monarchs find their overwintering sites each year, as those returning to Mexico and California each fall are the great-great-grandchildren of those that left the previous spring.

## Gardening on the Web



## Halloween

If you specialize in a particular flower or plant, there are sites on the internet specific to almost all of them. As daylilies are a favorite with most of us, this month I will tell you about some of the daylily sites on the web.

The American Hemerocallis Society's home page is at [www.daylilies.org](http://www.daylilies.org). This site discusses the 1997 Stout Silver Medal winner, Regional activities, publications, display gardens, conventions, and a source list.

Friends of the Daylilies, [www.primenet.com/~tjfehr/daylily.html](http://www.primenet.com/~tjfehr/daylily.html) is run by a group of AHS members who want to publicize their favorite flower. On this site are many pictures of daylilies to whet your appetite. It also lists daylily organizations, shows, and an online daylily search.

Daylilies Growing Along the Information Highway, [www.dmans.com/daylilies](http://www.dmans.com/daylilies), is brought by a member of the Friends of the Daylilies to provide information about daylilies all around the world. There is a complete listing of daylily sites on the WWW, tours of daylily gardens, and flower arrangements using daylilies.

There is a picture gallery, and a list of commercial daylily growers on the internet.

Daylily sources listed in Geor-

gia follows:

- Alcovy Daylily Farm**  
Covington, GA
- Bell's Daylily Garden,**  
Sycamore, GA
- Carrollwood Gardens**  
Carrollton, GA
- Four Seasons Daylily Garden**  
Yatesville, GA
- Judson M. Cooper**  
Blakely, GA
- Lilies of the Alleys**  
Clarksville, GA
- Metcalf Daylily Garden**  
Sycamore, GA
- Oak Haven Farms Nursery**  
Upatoi, GA
- Peace on Earth Gardens**  
Blakely, GA
- Pinegarden**  
Oakwood, GA
- Story's Country Garden**  
McDonough, GA
- Swann's Daylily Garden**  
Warner Robins, GA
- Three Oaks Daylilies**  
Iron City, GA.

This site also lists Canadian and European daylily organizations. In addition, it has an extensive list of daylily hybridizers and sources, many of whom have online catalogs for placing orders.



How and when did this peculiar custom of Halloween begin? The word "Halloween" actually began in the Catholic Church, and is a corruption of All Hallows Eve. All Saint's, or Hallows, Day is November 1, and is celebrated in honor of all the saints.



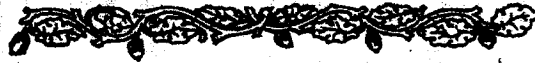
In Celtic Ireland summer officially ended on October 31. The holiday was called Samhain, the Celtic new year. The Celts believed that on that day the spirits of all who had died would come back, so the living Celts put out all their fires to make their homes inhospitable to the spirits. Then they would dress in ghoulish costumes and parade around the village to frighten away the spirits.

The custom was brought to this country with Irish immigrants in the 1840s. Trick or treating came from the European custom of begging for "soul cakes" on All Soul's Day.

The Jack-o-lantern probably evolved from the Irish tale of a man named Jack who tricked the devil, and who was given a single ember in a hollowed turnip to light his way. Pumpkins were soon substituted for turnips in this country.



## CREATE A WILDLIFE HABITAT



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the National Wildlife Federation. In those 25 years the NWF has certified over 20,000 habitats in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Switzerland and Peru. Interestingly, the state with the largest number of habitats is South Carolina, with over 1600. The smallest habitat is an apartment balcony and the largest a 6,500 acre forest, so none of us has too small a yard or garden to qualify.

In order to create a habitat there are four basic criteria - food, cover, nesting sites and water.

Trees and shrubs provide not only cover, but also provide food with their fruits and seeds. Hollies, blueberries, crabapple and sweetgum are some good choices here. Flowers, both perennial and annual, provide nectar for butterflies and hummingbirds. Monarda, salvias, lobelias and honeysuckle are favorites with hummingbirds, while lantana, buddleia, phlox, zinnias and echinacea are magnets for butterflies. Feeders provide nectar for the hummers in the summer, and a variety of seed for other birds throughout the year.

Even a birdbath, either pedestal mounted or on the ground, provides water for drinking and for bathing. On the ground it also provides water for mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Small ponds provide a habitat for fish, newts, frogs, and the ever hovering dragonflies.

A number of evergreen trees and shrubs give year-round cover from predators and inclement weather. Pines are excellent, and also are good food trees. Junipers, hollies, Leyland cypress, camellias, azaleas and mahonias are not only good in the landscape, but provide this necessary requirement. In the summer deciduous shrubs offer summer cover for nesting. Fig trees are excellent summer cover, and a food source for many birds. Rock, log and brush piles also offer cover for small mammals, reptiles and a great number of insects.

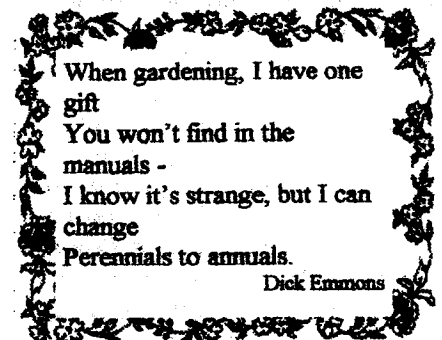
Nest boxes for various birds, such as bluebirds, wrens, titmice and purple martins can be placed in your garden. Many birds prefer to nest in the trees and shrubs you provide for cover. Mice, snakes and salamanders lay their eggs or raise their young under low branches as well as in rock piles. Skinks love railroad ties. Ponds are the receptacle for eggs of frogs, toads, newts and dragonflies. Butterfly eggs and caterpillars find safe havens among the flowers in your garden or herb patch.



*Like a small gray  
coffee pot  
sits the squirrel.*

Humbert Wolfe

Habitats specific for butterflies should contain flat-topped or clustered flowers with short flower tubes, such as lantana and buddleia. Most butterflies prefer red, yellow, orange pink or purple blooms. Many of them are picky eaters and will only feed on one or two plants, but some, such as the red-spotted purple, will feed on a variety of plants. They also prefer to feed in the sun. And don't forget to feed the babies! Dill, parsley and passionvine feed caterpillars of some of our Southern butterflies.



When gardening, I have one gift

You won't find in the manuals -

I know it's strange, but I can change

Perennials to annuals.

Dick Emmons

Hummingbird feeders should be hung in the shade, and cleaned and refilled every three to five days with one part sugar to four parts water. Try to plant flowers that will bloom most of the summer, such as *Salvia guaranitica* and *S. coccinea*. Tubular flowers are the choice here

It is easy to become a certified habitat. You can go to the nearest Wildbirds Unlimited Store and buy a kit, or write the National Wildlife Federation, Backyard Habitat Program, 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA 22184-0001. Include a check or money order in the amount of \$12.95 plus 6% sales tax.



# Fall Bulbs

## Myths and Legends

Jealousy leads to tragic death; love ends in revenge killing; suicide leaves bloody traces. Sound like the evening news? No, just legends of our favorite spring bulbs, coming to us from ancient Greece and Persia.

These ancient people were ignorant of modern science, and so to explain the existence of flowers they invented wondrous stories of love and passion, of their gods and goddesses.



A Persian prince named Farhad was in love with the maiden Shirin. Word reached him that she had been killed (false word, as it turned out). In his great grief, he galloped his favorite horse over a cliff to his death. Drops of blood from his wounds trickled to the ground, and from each drop a scarlet tulip grew, and so tulips became a symbol of perfect love.

The Ottoman Turks were the first to cultivate and hybridize the tulip. It remains the national flower of modern Turkey.

Long ago, sultans held great tulip festivals costing extravagant amounts of money. One sultan spent so much money he was executed, hence was the first to "lose his head" over

tulips.



Hyacinth, a Spartan prince, was handsome and athletic. Apollo, the sun god, fancied him. One day, as the two tossed a discus back and forth, Zephyr, the god of wind (and who was insanely jealous of Apollo) blew a gust that threw the discus right into Hyacinth's head, killing him on the spot. Apollo was so upset he turned him into a flower, granting him immortality.

A second story takes us to Greek heroes Ajax and Achilles. When Achilles was killed, Ajax felt he should inherit Achilles' weapons. Given instead to Ulysses, Ajax crept into Ulysses' tent at night and murdered, he thought, the great man and his companions. When morning revealed he had really killed a flock of sheep he drew his sword and pierced his own heart. From his blood the hyacinth grew.

In Greek tradition the hyacinth is a symbol of sport, amuse-

*If of thy mortal goods thou art bereft,*

*And from thy slender store two leaves alone to thee are left,*

*Sell one, and with the dole*

*Buy hyacinths to feed thy soul.*

*Sadi*

ment and good will. But it seems you had to spill a little blood to get a flower.

Most of us know them as daffodils, many Southerners as jonquils, but they're all narcissi. And they're all beautiful.



According to the Greeks, a young wood nymph named Echo fell hopelessly in love with the self-absorbed and excessively beautiful Narcissus. His beauty was a gift of the gods, but came with one caveat: his beauty and youth would never fade as long as he never looked upon his own reflection. Poor Echo pined for him, until the goddess Nemesis felt sorry for her and lured the handsome boy to a clear pool. He saw himself, and became transfixed, caught in his own spell. Then, of course, he became a beautiful flower.

Crocus was a shepherd boy of noble spirit who fell in love with lovely Smilax. The gods were so impressed with the depth of his devotion that they granted him immortality in their normal way - they turned him into a flower. To ensure they could remain together forever, Smilax got her reward, and was turned into an evergreen.

Crocus essence was used as a perfume, and of course they are also the source of saffron.

So plant these bulbs in the fall, and when spring comes and they burst into bloom, remember the lovers, and the ancient Greeks and Persians who turned such beauty into tales of immortality.