

# A Bit of Dirt

Volume 7 Issue 2

Summer 1999

## The Newsletter of the Gwinnett Master Gardeners



*A Message From Our  
President*

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; GailTMartin@compuserve.com for email.



### FUTURE MEETINGS

A reminder that meetings will now be held on the third Monday of each month.

June 21  
July 19  
August 16

### Ga. Perennial Plant Assoc.

June 17            July 15  
August 19        September 16  
October 28       November 18

### Ga. Native Plant Society

September 14

### UGA Trial Gardens

Betty Johnson Horticultural Gardens Annual Public Open House  
June 26



As a new gardener about 15 years ago, acquiring new plants (the more the better) was the joy of any day. I repeated this from year to year, trading, driving several states to garden nurseries to buy, buy, buy. Well, after years of this your garden areas become very crowded. I never thought I would say "I am running out of room for new plants". It is true my beds are becoming crowded. The funny thing is the desire to acquire new plants is still pretty strong. My husband Dirk laughs when I come home with new babies. He says "Oh, you have new plants for the driveway".

So lucky for me the Gwinnett Master Gardeners had a plant sale. I dug up some crowded plants, potted them up and donated them to GMG, and found room to buy some different plants at the sale.

What a great cycle! I love it.

So thanks so much to everyone who helped, either by donating plants, potting plants, or working at the sale. It was a great success.

Shelia



*He who plants a tree, he plants  
love,  
tents of coolness spreading out  
above wayfarers  
he may not live to see.  
Gifts are best, hands that bless  
are blessed;  
Plant! Life does the rest!*

*Lucy Lancom*

## Notes from the Extension Office

### Timely Topics

Stem cuttings of annuals and perennials may be taken now. Also collect seed of poppies, wild indigo and bleeding hearts. Fall bloomers that get too tall, such as chrysanthemum, can be cut back by about one half now to reduce their fall height.

Use pliers to pull up woody seedlings and weeds. Grip the stem at the soil line, twist it around the pliers, and pull straight up. Watering deeply the day before pulling weeds will make the job easier.

Mimosa trees often disappoint home owners when they die an early death. Lab tests show mimosa deaths, once blamed on wilt disease, result from a combination of wilt and nematodes. New tests will help plant breeders select varieties resistant to both problems.

Climbing roses don't really climb - they have long canes that require support. You'll need to loosely tie the canes to trellises with broad strips of material. Do not use wire, it can damage the cane.

Determining whether you have Chinese or Japanese wisteria is not difficult. The blossoms on the Chinese variety open before the leaves appear. On the Japanese type, they develop with the unfolding leaves. Also, Chinese wisteria usually has 7 to 13 leaflets while the Japanese type has 13 to 19.

When it is necessary to transplant woody plants in hot weather, drape them with a wet sheet after they are planted. Dampen the sheet two or three times a day keeping the plant covered for several days. This will help the plants survive the untimely move.

For fragrance in the garden, use perennials such as Sweet Woodruff (*Asperula odorata*), Lily-of-the-Valley (*convallaria majalis*), and Lemon Lily (*Hemerocallis liliosphodelus*). Try the new dwarf form of butterfly bush. They are about half the size, and their fragrant mid-summer flowers are attractive to butterflies. 'Petite Indigo' has dark, lilac blue flower spikes, and 'Petite Plum' has reddish-purple flowers with an orange eye in each floret. The ultimate size of both cultivars is about 6 feet.

When your early annual flowers are spent, replace them with summer annuals, such as nicotiana, portulaca, zinnia, impatiens or celosia. Before planting, rework and enrich the soil with compost.

Petunias and marigolds are more useful as cut flowers than most folks appreciate. The flowers will last for several days and are very attractive in mixed bouquets.

Leach container soils occasionally to remove any mineral salts accumulated from fertilizer and hard water. Brown leaf edges and crusting on the sides of clay pots are two indicators of a salt problem. To leach large containers, water until the soil is soaked, then allow water to run slowly from your hose into the pot for about 20 minutes. For small pots, water each container until it drains freely from the bottom holes. Wait a few minutes, then repeat.

When selecting a window box, it is best to choose a wooden box. Metal ones are more likely to overheat if sitting in the hot, summer sun. Also, wooden boxes allow for drainage, whereas metal or plastic ones often do not. The color of the box should also be considered - dark ones get warmer than light-colored boxes.

Heavy rains encourage slug problems. Go on a few extra slug patrols during rainy periods to hand pick the pests.

A sundial should be set on June 15. Place it so the shadow falls on the twelve o'clock position at exactly noon on this date.

The use of milky spore disease (*Bacillus popilliae*) for Japanese beetle control is most effective in neighborhoods where most residents use it. Otherwise, Japanese beetle larvae hatching in other yards will reinfest your property.

Hanging baskets exposed to sun should be checked daily and watered if needed. Also, outdoor hanging containers should be sheltered from high winds.

### Treasury Report

We now have 62 members in Gwinnett Master Gardeners.

The balance in our treasury on May 1<sup>st</sup> was \$2,075.91.

Susan Hanson

*"A child with a sufficient store of fresh honeysuckle blossoms becomes kin to the gods who feed on ambrosia, kin to the bee, the hummingbird, the lunar moth, to all the creatures of the air who pay their visits to this sweetest of all "serious weeds"."*

Allen Lacy

# HEAT MAPS




All of us are very familiar with the Hardiness Zone maps published by the US Department of Agriculture, and while this map helps us with winter cold hardiness, it does nothing for summer heat hardiness.

The American Horticultural Society, in an effort to equalize summer and winter hardiness zones, has come out with the AHS Plant Heat-Zone Map which took 14 years to develop.

The map charts 12 regions of the United States using the annual average number of days of 86 F or higher, when plants begin to suffer. The color-coded scale that accompanies the map shows the number of "heat days" per region, while the USDA's Hardiness Maps show minimum temps per region.

The 12 zones range from seven months of heat days in the tip of Florida to no heat days at high elevations in the Rockies.

Some nurseries are tagging plants with both cold and heat hardiness ratings, and more will follow. The cold range is always given in increasing numbers and the heat range in decreasing numbers, for example Z 5-7 for cold and 8-5 for heat.

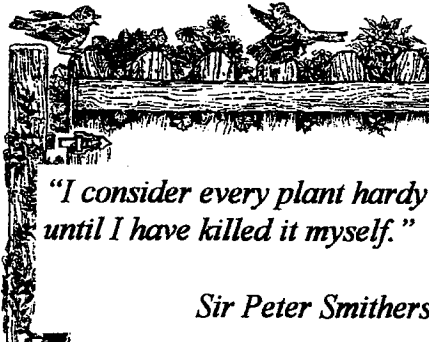
Metro Atlanta lies in Heat Zone 7 while North Georgia varies between Zones 5-7. Zone 8 means that there are 90 to 120 heat days, or days of 86 degrees

or higher in an average summer.

This new map is helpful as far as it goes, but some Southeastern nurserymen say it doesn't go far enough. According to the map, Atlanta is in the same heat zone as parts of Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico, although the climates are vastly different. Not taken into consideration when drawing up the map were such things as annual rainfall, and more importantly, humidity and night temperatures. We all know what warm, humid nights can do to such plants as phlox and roses!

All that aside, however, the new map is a strong step in helping us find the right plant for our climate. Soon all the plants we buy at our garden centers will be tagged not only for cold hardiness, but also for heat tolerance.

Maps are available for \$14.95 from the American Horticultural Society, 1-800-777-7931 or <http://www.ahs.org>.



*"I consider every plant hardy until I have killed it myself."*

*Sir Peter Smithers*

**W**eb



ardening

GardenWeb is a website full of information for gardeners. You can find it at: [www.gardenweb.com](http://www.gardenweb.com).

GardenWeb has a number of forums discussing various aspects of gardening and specific plants, such as the Iris forum. [www.gardenweb.com/forums/](http://www.gardenweb.com/forums/)

Their storefront is called the Garden Bazaar, and their directory has more than 175 garden-related businesses listed. Browse through the entire directory or search for specific items. [www.gardenbazaar.com/](http://www.gardenbazaar.com/)

Each month GardenWeb has a mystery plant contest, where readers guess the plant chosen using hints published by GardenWeb. [www.gardenweb.com/contest/](http://www.gardenweb.com/contest/)

There is also a plant database with many, many listings, and more added constantly. [www.gardenweb.com/plants/](http://www.gardenweb.com/plants/)

Local and national garden events are listed on the Calendar of Garden Events. [www.gardencalendar.com](http://www.gardencalendar.com)

At Nature.Net there is a new forum on camping, among other nature related forums. [www.nature.net/forums/](http://www.nature.net/forums/)

The GardenWeb Directory is divided into categories (membership organizations, arboreta/botanical gardens, etc.) and can be searched or browsed. [www.gardenweb.com/directory/](http://www.gardenweb.com/directory/)

At That Home Site are forums on parenting teens, swimming pools, dieting, crafts and other interests. [www.thathomesite.com/forums](http://www.thathomesite.com/forums)

# SLUGS

Slugs are slimy creatures which can become serious pests in flower beds, home gardens, and greenhouses. They are basically snails without shells, not insects. Damage from slug feeding appears as large irregular holes chewed into leaves, fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables in direct contact with the ground are attacked more frequently than those off the ground.

Because slugs feed mainly at night, they are often difficult to find during the day when examining damaged plants. Look for shiny "slime trails", a sticky secretion left from feeding slugs.

Slug adults and eggs overwinter, and then become active during the warm days of early spring. Slugs usually hide from the sun during the day, and only come out to feed at night and on cloudy days.

Adult slugs are 1/2 to 3 inches in length. They lay their eggs in damp shaded soil, which hatch within three to four weeks. Slugs grow slowly, and may live for over a year. Shaded beds and heavily-mulched gardens are ideal habitats for slugs, as they need high humidity and cool temperatures to survive. Slugs cannot survive for long in direct sunlight. Without hiding places during the day, they will quickly die.

Controls consist of traps, barriers and baits. For best results use a combination of methods, including good, clean gardening practices. Remove boards, rocks and unused pots in your garden to reduce the number of avail-

able hiding places. Sink tuna cans or low dishes into the ground so that they are level with the soil surface. Fill with a mixture of half beer and half water, or 3 teaspoons of yeast per cup of warm water. Slugs are attracted by the smell, then fall in and drown. Lay a piece of lettuce, a board or a cantaloupe rind out in your garden. Check each morning for slugs and destroy them. Diatomaceous earth, a powder dug from the sea, works like microscopic glass shards. Slugs that come in contact with it literally dry up. It is non-toxic to warm-blooded animals and earthworms. Spread a thin layer around affected plants as slugs must crawl through it to make it work. Use agricultural lime like diatomaceous earth; it too will dry out the slugs.

*Little Garden gods,  
Bless the time of sowing,  
Watering and growing;  
Lastly, when our sunflower  
nods,  
And our rambler's red array  
Waits the honey-bee labours,  
Bless our garden that it may  
Beat our next-door neigh-  
bors.*

*Cottage Garden Prayer*

Most frequently used baits contain metaldehyde. Apply according to label directions to soil surface around plants. Do not contaminate edible parts or foliage of vegetable plants. Read all label directions before use. Metaldehyde is toxic to animals.

## Flowers for Fragrance

Although it is true that many modern day hybrid flowers have lost their fragrance, there are still plenty of choices for planning a fragrant garden. Beauty here is definitely in the nose of the beholder!

The following plants have earned their fragrant reputations. Cultivars and varieties of plants may vary in their potency, so be sure to do your homework.

### Annuals

Sweet pea  
Sweet alyssum  
Evening stock  
Nasturtium (some)  
Scented geraniums  
Heliotrope  
Santolina

### Perennials

Hyacinth  
Narcissus  
Artemisia  
Daylily (some)  
Hyssop  
Red Valerian  
Lavender  
Peony  
Thyme  
Lemon Verbena  
Lily-of-the-Valley  
Sweet Rocket  
Iris  
Lily  
Monarda

### Trees, Shrubs, Vines

Rose  
Mock Orange  
Viburnum (some)  
Honeysuckle  
Clethra  
Carolina allspice



# Great Backyard Bird Count

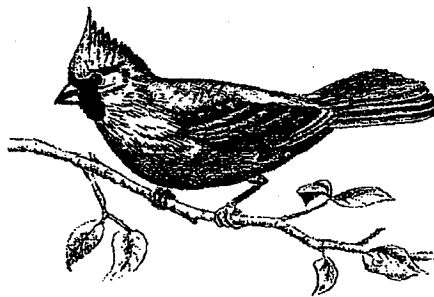
Although the Audubon/Cornell University Great Backyard Bird Count took place in February, results are continuously being analyzed. A letter sent to all participants from Frank Gill, Senior Vice President for Science, National Audubon Society and John Fitzpatrick, Director, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, said, in part:

"We received nearly 42,000 checklists and a total of 416,147 species records. Bird lovers from every North American state and province reported on the status of 350 species at winter's end, 1999. You reported over 3 million individual birds...You were as diverse as the birds you watched. At least 6,000 of you are retired, and at least 1,000 are youngsters. Some of you reported the birds that came to a center-city feeder, while others counted waterfowl by the thousands at a county park.

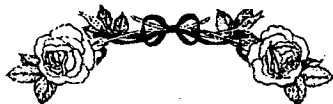
Please revisit the BirdSource website <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu>> to see some emerging results from your efforts. The continental totals are impressive and fascinating, but be sure to look at your individual state or province page. There you'll see a map showing how many of your friends and neighbors participated, and you'll find three lists of the species seen - one based upon the frequency of occurrence, one according to overall abundance, and one for verified write-in species. In the Map Room, browse through the maps of individual species that interest you. You'll see not only the familiar "point maps" but we've added "abundance maps" (computer-generated to show regional abundances averaged across the landscape), and "group size maps" (computer-generated maps of the average number of birds seen when they are present). Some of these can be compared side by side with

last year's maps. Notice the differences between 1998 and 1999 in certain irruptive or nomadic species (e.g., Pine Siskin, Cedar Waxwing and others). Interesting differences may also exist where some eastern sparrows were most abundant during the two years (e.g., Fox Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow), although last year's data are a bit too sparse to be certain.

Some nice patterns are emerging in our early analyses of the 1999 data. You'll find a big map showing relative species diversity around the continent as reported on Count weekend. Also, take a look at our analysis of how the distribution of American Robins in late February compared to snow cover.



We invite you to participate in future citizen science efforts, and BirdSource will continue to offer seasonal projects tailored to bird lovers at all levels of expertise and interest. ...As we head into the winter of 2000, we'll encourage you to participate in winter bird studies - Project Feeder-Watch, Christmas Bird Count, North American Winter Finch Survey ("FinchWatch"), and of course, the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 18-21, 2000."



For the State of Georgia, the top twelve number of species reports from participating birdwatchers were:

Northern Cardinal	773
Tufted Titmouse	745
Carolina Chickadee	744
Mourning Dove	722
Blue Jay	554
Carolina Wren	531
Red-bellied Woodpecker	512
American Crow	448
American Goldfinch	445
House Finch	423
Dark-eyed Junco	375
Downy Woodpecker	334

Again for Georgia, the top twelve number of birds of a particular species reported:

American Goldfinch	4704
Mourning Dove	4049
Common Grackle	3773
Northern Cardinal	3350
Tufted Titmouse	2456
Carolina Chickadee	2395
Red-winged Blackbird	2309
American Robin	2211
Dark-eyed Junco	2073
House Finch	1924
American Crow	1777
Blue Jay	1591

*To gardeners, onion grass is a harbinger not of spring's delights, but of chickweed, bindweed, knotweed, pigweed, plantain, purslane and all the other intruders that will spoil their little Edens - nature's backhanded way, gardeners feel, of making them pay for some original horticultural sin..*

*Anonymous*

*Poor indeed is the garden in which birds find no homes.*

*Abram Linwood Urban*



## New Roses for 1999

Four roses received the coveted All-America Rose Selection (AARS) designation after two to three year evaluations in test gardens across the nation.

One, 'Fourth of July', is the first climbing rose in 23 years chosen to be an AARS winner. The rose has 4 to 5 inch flowers with stripes of red, white and pink. The ultimate height is 10 to 14 ft., and will take at least three years to show its best.

'Betty Boop', named for the 1930's cartoon character, has 4 to 5 inch red-edged yellow flowers fading to white with red edges, all on a 4 to 5 ft. floribunda. It is disease resistant and self-cleaning.

A shrub rose, 'Kaleidoscope', has 3 inch tan and lavender flowers, which fade to lavender pink. The 4 ft. high shrub has glossy, disease resistant foliage.

The fourth winner is 'Candelabra', a coral and orange grandiflora. This 4 ft. tall upright grower has good disease resistance, but it's 4 inch flowers are light on fragrance.

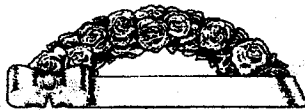
Although the AARS winners aren't notably fragrant, several other new roses are. The Generosa series is like a French version of David Austin's English roses. Plants are smaller than most Austins and offer equal or stronger fragrance and good disease resistance, although black spot is a problem on the East Coast.

'Claudia Cardinale' is an upright shrub, producing old-fashioned yellow flowers that turn coppery red. 'Martine Guillot' is a shrub with arching canes and buds that open as deeply cupped flowers blushed with soft apricot. It's fragrance is similar to a gardenia. 'Sonia Rykiel' produces old fashioned coral pink flow-

ers with a very strong perfume. All three grow to about 4 ft. high.

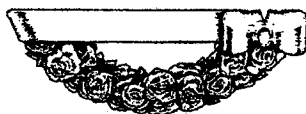
Another notable French series is the Romantica roses, bred to resemble old roses. Technically classified as hybrid teas or floribundas, most have flowers with old-rose form. A few have notable fragrance, but their main virtues are compact growth, good disease resistance and repeat flowering.

This year's choices include 'Leonardo da Vinci', a 3 to 4 ft. floribunda with 2 to 3 inch pink flowers; 'Jean Giono', a 4 to 5 ft. hybrid tea with spicy-fragrant apricot flowers, 'Johann Strauss', 4 ft. plant with 3 inch pearl pink flowers, and 'Traviata', a 4 ft. hybrid tea with 4 inch red flowers.



*I don't know whether nice people tend to grow roses or growing roses makes people nice.*

*Roland A. Browne*



Austin roses from England include 'Emily' with 3 to 4 inch shell pink flowers, and is easier to add to the landscape than many of the larger Austin roses. 'Glamis Castle', white with a myrrh fragrance, is small enough at 3 ft. to thrive in a container. 'Heavenly Rosalind' has soft pink single flowers on a bushy 4-5 ft. shrub that can be used in borders. 'Mistress Quickly' has excellent disease resistance and abundant production of clusters of medium sized pink flowers on upright stems, on a notably heat tolerant 5 ft. shrub. 'Pat

Austin' has semidouble 3-4 inch yellow buds maturing to soft pink flowers with a strong tea fragrance, but is prone to black spot.

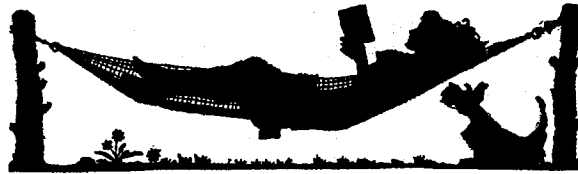
If you are a traditionalist and prefer long-stemmed, large, strongly scented flowers for bouquets, try one of these: 'Cologne', a light lavender grandiflora that grows 6 to 8 feet tall; 'Full Sail', a white hybrid tea that grows 5 feet tall, or 'Melody Parfume', a tall hybrid tea with plum flowers.

There are several roses marketed in memory of Princess Diana., with part of their proceeds going to charity. 'Diana, Princess of Wales', is offered by mail only. The upright-growing hybrid tea has 4 inch pink flowers. Fifteen percent of sales will be donated to the Diana, Princess of Wales Foundation. Two other white roses, also hybrid teas, are associated with the late princess. They are named 'Princess of Wales' and 'Lady Diana'.

Monrovia Nursery of California is reintroducing the Smooth Touch series, developed 20 years ago. As their name implies, these hybrid teas and floribundas are remarkably thornless. Monrovia is growing them as container plants (meaning you'll find them in retail nurseries), and this year brings out 'Smooth Melody', a floribunda with clusters of medium-sized, red-edged flowers with white centers, and 'Smooth Perfume', a hybrid tea with fragrant lavender flowers edged in light pink.



## Books for a Summer Day



### The Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses

Rick Darke

An authoritative and illustrated reference on ornamental grasses. Contains an alphabetical encyclopedia of grasses, sedges, rushes, cat-tails and selected bamboos. Intended for gardeners in a wide range of situations.

\$49.95

### Discovering Annuals

Graham Rice

Annuals are again being used for garden color after a period of neglect. A lavishly illustrated book of the best traditional annuals plus a look at new varieties.

4.95

### The Gardener's Guide to Growing Asters

Paul Picton

This new book on asters is a comprehensive study of these fall bloomers. Book offers detailed descriptions of species and identifies the best ones for garden, container and cut-flower use.

\$29.95

### Daylilies for the Garden

Graeme Grosvenor

This daylily expert provides comprehensive information on these tough and easy to grow perennials. Included is the history of the plant, cultivation, maintenance and propagation details, along with tips on taking pictures of these plants.

\$34.95



### The Gardener's Guide to Growing Salvias

John Sutton

The genus Salvia includes more than 700 species and hundreds of cultivars. This book documents 90 species.

\$29.95

### The Old Rose Adventurer

Brent C. Dickerson

This book is devoted in large part to the classic once-blooming European shrub roses, but includes chapters on old Oriental repeat-blooming shrubs and both European and Oriental climbers. Gives the history of each group as well as cultural directions.

\$69.96

### The Garden Plants of China

Peter Valder

Peonies, camellias, gardenias, azaleas, wisteria, forsythia and a host of other plants came to us from China. Chinese plants with the greatest impact on world gardening came from Chinese gardens and nurseries.

\$49.95

### Treasured Perennials

Graham Stuart Thomas

One of this century's most influential gardeners has selected 100 of his favorite perennials. They are described in the context of their value in the garden and recalled first-hand by the great gardeners who grew them. The author shares tips on cultivation from his more than 70 years of experience.

\$45.00



### Wild Orchids Across North America

Philip E. Keenan

The author has driven more than 100,000 miles in pursuit of orchids in their native habitats. This is a chatty account of his field trips in Canada and the US. He documents most of the 145 American orchid species in remarkable color photographs. He also observes other plants, birds and wildlife.

\$39.95

### The Tropical Look

Robert Lee Riffle

An encyclopedia of lush tropical plants that will tempt adventurous gardeners to try even more to "stretch the zone" and keep them growing in marginally suitable climates.

\$49.95

### Herbs in Bloom

Jo Ann Gardner

Ms Gardner presents 80 of her favorites with some mention of more than 700 related species and cultivars. She states that herbs can be used throughout the garden as beautiful ornamentals with real landscape merit.

\$34.95

### The Merry Hall Trilogy

Beverly Nichols

#### Merry Hall

#### Laughter on the Stairs

#### Sunlight on the Lawn

Delightful garden-related books giving Nichols' accounts of the rescue and renovation of Merry Hall, a run-down Georgian house and its garden. Witty and urbane observations of the world of house and garden - and the characters who inhabit them.

\$24.95 Each







## Uninvited Guests

(that leave unwelcome gifts)



Does your yard belong to you or them? Do you get upset when you see a strange cat or dog in your garden? If you say yes, that means your yard belongs to them.

THEM is your neighbors' dogs and cats.

A little survey in which 25 highly trained volunteers from the Contra Costa (CA) Master Gardeners were asked if they had problems with cats in their garden. Sixty percent said cats used their gardens as litter boxes, killed birds and ruined plants. (The other 40 percent were too busy gardening to notice.)

We all lose our cool when we find a fresh deposit in the garden. Unfortunately, we are still dealing with these little problems on a primal level - by yelling and throwing things.

It is not really the animals' fault. If there is any blame, it belongs to their human owners for allowing them to trespass in your yard. Remember this when pet-proofing your yard, and don't do anything to hurt those pets.

The first thing to do when someone else's pet is causing you grief is go have a friendly chat with the owner. About one-third of the owners are shocked when you tell them about the problem, and immediately deal with it. Case closed. Everybody's happy. One-third is nowhere near the percentage it should be, but is better than nothing. (If you are a do-nothing pet owner, you should be ashamed of yourself.)

If you live next door to a do-nothing pet owner, it is time to haul out the hardware.

Backyards are primarily cat areas because of fences, and the fact that few dogs can penetrate even this

most rudimentary of defenses. That is why front yards have usually gone to the dogs. This is the result of years of wrangling between members of Local Cats 23 and the Fraternal Order of Dogs. Dogs get front yards and cats get the back. The vote wasn't even close. Not wishing to anger either of these powerful unions (ever been picketed by 200 rottweilers?), I say we stick with those divisions.

The major problems with cats in any yard: leaving unwelcome gifts in your flowerbeds. Male cats letting your indoor cat know an outside cat likes your yard. Digging up your garden plants. Killing your birds and leaving feathers on your porch to thank you for your bird feeders. Sitting outside your windows and making faces at your indoor cat to drive it crazy. Fighting your outdoor cat.

If you are tired of yelling and throwing things, try physical barriers. Cat Fence-In is a netting barrier that attaches to existing fences to keep your cat in your yard and stray cats out. A 12-inch strip of chicken wire attached loosely to the top of your existing fence makes an effective, low cost barrier.

There are as many chemical repellent sprays on the market as there are markets. Try the brands at your local pet store, but you'll have to replace it after rain.

Plant catnip in a back corner of your yard. My neighborhood cats sniff the stuff every morning, get harmlessly "drunk", and weave their ways back home, forgetting the business that brought them to my yard.

Electric fencing, properly installed, keeps cats out of your yard. Electric transformers are found at hardware stores.

Backyard dogs. Dogs will usually

keep cats out, but sometimes they won't. Depends on the dog, and how big the cat is.

Chicken wire placed in your flower beds and loosely covered with mulch discourages digging by cats. So will pointy rocks, crushed stone, gravel or cedar chips.

If your front yard has been "going to the dogs", try these: a low ornamental fence keeps dogs from straying into your yard. Most dogs on a leash won't climb over even a minimal barrier. Spray chemical repellents on the sidewalk or curb in front of your lawn. Plant a shrub border (thick and thorny) in front of your yard.

When all else fails, put a garbage can next to a white post with a dispenser of free plastic bags. Neighbors can use them to pick up their doggy deposits, or at least make them think twice before walking their dogs near your house.

With thanks to Gary Bogue

*To a gardener there is nothing more exasperating than a hose that just isn't long enough.*

*Cecil Roberts*



*Whoever said do something right the first time and you won't have to do it again never weeded a garden.*

*Anonymous*





## Gibbs Garden Tour

On Wednesday, May 12th, a group of our master gardeners toured the gardens of Mr. and Mrs. James Gibbs in Ball Ground, Ga. We met at the Indian Trail Park N Ride with lunches and cameras in hand. Once we entered the Gibbs' property the road wound us around passing a pond with a gazebo, surrounded with trees, shrubs and perennial plantings that reflected in the water. There were native azaleas, mountain laurels, dogwoods, native ferns, wildflowers, Japanese maples and crape myrtle (to name a few) planted on the hillsides and along the road. Walking up to the garden, we could see the remnants of hundreds of daffodils that had bloomed.

The Gibbs' home was completed in 1987 and is called Arbor Crest. The terrace view from the house is the majestic pinnacle of Mt. Oglethorpe, Georgia's second highest mountain, which is part of the Allegheny chain of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The gardens feature a European style house, guest house and pool surrounded by 11 levels of plantings. The planted levels consist of an elevation change of 150 ft. creating a different planting and micro-climate for each level.

One level was done in arbors covered with climbing roses. New Dawn was a favorite. It was gorgeous and the smell was heavenly. The pool level consisted of a large terraced stone deck with pool and a waterfall



surrounded by perennials, annuals, trees and shrubs that made it very private. We enjoyed our lunches around the pool area. The mock orange near the pool was in full bloom and spectacular. There was garden art placed throughout the garden along with water features. Different hydrangeas, flowering shrubs, grasses, peonies, iris, poppies and any kind of perennial you would want to see was there. Mr. Gibbs' landscapers were working hard installing many, many annuals throughout the gardens.

If you weren't able to attend, try to see it another time. The gardens were spread out and it wasn't possible to see every part. It is worth the trip just for ideas and to see what native plants and trees grow in this area.

After leaving the Gibbs' garden, many of us ventured out to the Antique Rose Emporium, in Dahlonaga. There we were able to see and smell wonderful roses along with shrubs, trees, vines, perennials, herbs and annuals of all kinds. It wasn't hard to spend money in the gift shop, either. Everyone went home inspired and happy.

Marlene Hedges

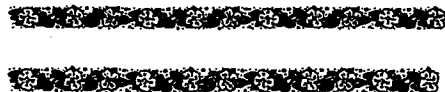
## The National Garden

A botanic garden at the seat of our government was a dream of several of our nation's forefathers, including George Washington. The present U.S. Botanic Garden, adjacent to the U.S. Capitol on the Mall in Washington, D.C., is planning to expand with the addition of a National Garden. It will be built on a 3 acre site next to the Botanic Garden Conservatory.

The National Garden will provide a hands-on, living laboratory for environmental, horticultural and botanical education. The Garden will examine natural habitats and the interrelationships between plants, humans and nature.

Features planned for this garden include: The Environmental Learning Center, a facility for learning and discovery in horticulture, botany and environmental sciences; the Water Garden, dedicated to all First Ladies; the Rose Garden, a showcase of the best historical and current roses, our national flower; the Showcase Garden, displaying the great diversity of American plants that flourish in this region; a Butterfly Garden consisting of plants chosen for their attraction to butterflies; a Lawn Terrace, designed for receptions and special events.

The USBG is the nation's oldest continuously operating public garden and a national treasure. It was inspired by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Since 1820 it has been a source of pleasure, beauty and learning for millions of visitors from around the world. This living museum will be enhanced by the addition of the National Garden.



# Soil Solarization

One sure way to destroy almost every kind of harmful insect egg and larvae in your soil, one that's easy, cheap and beneficial, is soil solarization.

It is a simple 5 step process that kills insects, plant diseases, nematodes, harmful fungi, and weed seeds. At the same time, helpful microorganisms within the soil apparently benefit, possibly from the lack of competition. Soil that has been solarized allows plants to draw on the nutrients, especially nitrogen, calcium and magnesium more readily. Seeds germinate more quickly. Plants grow faster and stronger, often maturing earlier with higher yields.

Solarization works in the same way as a greenhouse, where a transparent covering, in this case 3 or 6 mm plastic sheeting, traps the sun's heat.

After several days of sunshine, soil temperatures rise to as high as 140 degrees at the surface and well over 100 degrees as far down as 18 inches. It takes four to six weeks of sunny weather to pasteurize the soil, which means planning to spread plastic somewhere between the end of June and the first of September.

Any size plot down to a 3 ft. wide bed will retain enough heat to do the job.

1. Prepare the soil; pull any weeds or old crops, turn in any amendments, and rake smooth. Remove stones that might tear the plastic.

2. Water thoroughly. Leave a sprinkler on for several hours or overnight to soak the soil. This will create 100% humidity under the plastic, which acts with the heat to kill all those critters.

3. Dig a trench all around the bed or plot 6-8 inches deep.

4. Lay a clear plastic sheet, 3-6 mm thick, over the area, overlapping the trench on all sides. Fill in the trench, weighing down the plastic while pulling it as tight as possible.

5. Sit back, relax, and wait.

A few weeks of sunshine will improve your soil dramatically, easily, and inexpensively. If you don't want to wait all season, you can speed up the process by adding a second sheet of plastic. The airspace between the sheets acts as a buffer, and will raise the soil temperature 6 more degrees.

*A garden is a friend  
you can visit any time*

## A Bit of Dirt

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