

# ◆ A Bit of Dirt ◆

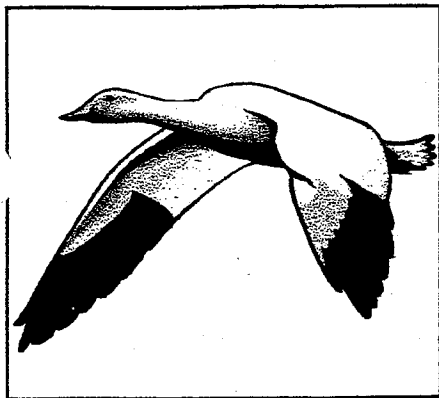
Volume 8 Issue 3

Fall 2000

## The Newsletter of the Gwinnett Master Gardeners



A Bit of Dirt is published quarterly. The 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 GailTMartin@compuserve.com



*In the valley once so green  
leaves are leaving trees behind  
Grey geese heading south are seen  
a certain Autumn sign.  
Though darkness falls and winter's  
near  
and summer's far away,  
I can say be of good cheer;  
it will return some day.*

*Anonymous*



### Future Meetings

#### Georgia Native Plant Society

Saturday, September 16, 2000  
1:00 pm Georgia Perimeter College South Campus  
Dr. George Sanko will conduct a workshop on native plants.

Saturday, October 7, 2000  
8:30 am to 4:30 pm  
So. Polytechnic State U, Marietta  
Symposium on Native Habitat Gardening  
Members \$35.00  
Non-members \$40.00  
Call 770-343-6000 for information

#### Georgia Perennial Plant Assoc.

Thursday, September 21, 2000  
7:30 pm - Atlanta History Center  
Gardening in a Small Space  
Lecture by Dean Riddle

### *A Message from our President*

What a wonderful evening! I know those of you who were at the July meeting enjoyed it as much as I did. We had all of the past Presidents, Steve Brady and Robert Brannen together under one roof. And who can forget the special cake with the past Presidents' picture on it!

I want to thank Sharon Matthews and her team for the special decorations and Diane Devore did a wonderful job handcrafting the plaques for the past Presidents.

Wonderful news...a 168 acre botanical garden in our neck of the woods! Some of you may have already seen the article in Friday's paper. The Smithgall family of Gainesville have donated the property and development plans are underway. The Atlanta Botanical Garden will oversee the property with an endowment. As I get more information on the developments I will keep you posted.

I hope each of you had a wonderful summer. See you at the next meeting. Remember your name tags.

Judy

*Autumn is a season followed immediately by looking forward to spring.*

Doug Larson



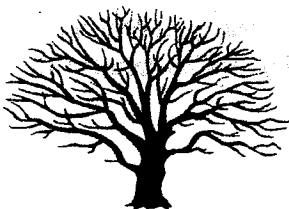
# Notes from the Extension Office

## Next year or three or five years from now...

What kind of topic is that, you may wonder? There is little doubt in my mind that the phone will be ringing and samples brought in with the same bewildered question "Why did this die...it looked good last year???" I am not talking about bug damage or disease problems. I am addressing heat and drought stress in trees. You know what I am talking about because there was some kind of heat and drought stress on us gardeners, too.

Trees can tolerate heat and drought to some degree and then given a chance may fully recover. Unfortunately for some such stress continues to accumulate and sets up what arborculturally is known as a "Death Spiral". This condition may take one season or more...that is what makes it so difficult to explain to people. Most people want to spray something or even worse fertilize to make the tree all better. Good thorough watering every two weeks during drought is the ticket. Soaker hoses are great for this because they are very efficient and you can usually get two inches of water out without runoff. Mulching will indeed aid in reducing stress. And if watering is limited there will be the unpleasant task of prioritizing which trees get water and which ones are left unaided. After that it is up to nature.

Steve Brady



One of our Gwinnett Master Gardeners, Bobbie Higginbotham, recently entered her daylily blooms in the Greater Atlanta Hemerocallis Society's Annual Daylily Show last June 17th. There were close to 400 entries that day.

She was the top winner in the "Best Off-Scape Bloom" category (one out of 61 entries in that division). She received a beautiful etched award for her bloom, 'Missouri Memories'. The funny part of this is that she accidentally knocked this particular bloom off the plant at home and wasn't going to use it for an entry. But with the coaxing of her husband, she entered it in this class not knowing she actually had a grand winner! You never know.

Our Michele Templeton had 17 daylilies entered in the show and came home with 9 Blue and 1 Purple ribbon for her entries.

Congratulations to both of these Gwinnett Master Gardeners.



The International Master Gardener Conference, "The Magic of Gardening", will be held in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on May 29th through June 1st, 2001. The conference location will be at the Hilton in the Walt Disney World Resort, 18 miles from Orlando International Airport.

The program for the conference will contain nationally recognized speakers, hands-on clinics, a trade show and the Épcot International Flower Festival Tour.

For information, visit the website at <http://hort.ufl.edu/mg/interconf.htm> or contact Tom Wichman, Master

Gardener Coordinator at (352)329-8836 or email to [twichman@ufl.edu](mailto:twichman@ufl.edu)

A hint for free and legal water to use in the garden — install a rain barrel to collect rain water from your roof, and collect the water from your air-conditioner. You can get 3 to 4 buckets of water a day from the A/C during the hot summer months.

Root cuttings of woody shrubs and evergreens, such as azaleas, holly and hydrangea at this time of year.

Order peony roots now for planting in the fall. Plant about a month before the average first killing frost occurs.

The best time to buy chrysanthemums is in late summer. For a longer blooming period choose plants that are just coming into bud instead of those already in full bloom.

2000 "Maggie" Master Gardener Project award applications are now available on the web. We want to recognize those outstanding projects.

Please allow at least 3 weeks for delivery of MG Handbooks. No pickups in Athens.

For Master Gardener replacement badges, the cost is \$3.00 and you may contact Krissy Slagle to order. [Kslagle@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu](mailto:Kslagle@gaes.griffin.peachnet.edu)



*Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns.*

George Eliot

# Keep Fit and Healthy with Your Garden

Dr. Diane Relf, professor of horticulture at Virginia Tech says, "There's scientific evidence that proves gardening is good for you. It uses every muscle group. It's a form of moderate exercise."

Gardening burns a surprising 300 to 400 calories an hour. It is also beneficial for your mental health by giving a sense of peace. It connects you to nature.

Gardening teaches new skills, gives back a state of wonder and excitement, forces you to become more observant. Gardening is actually a multi-sensory experience, requiring sight, touch, smell, taste (sometimes), motion and balance.

The exercise you get from gardening helps reduce the risk of osteoporosis, high blood pressure, cancer, depression, anxiety and stress, according to experts at Johns Hopkins University.

Want some specific exercises you can do while working in your garden? Here are some we can do and have fun doing.

The two-handed wheelbarrow relay, the weed squat and pull, and the compost shovel shuffle are things we all do each year as we whip our gardens into shape in the spring. Gardening challenges the body with resistance training for muscular development and endurance.

## Upper Body Training

Turning the compost pile, pulling weeds, hauling the hose around the yard, raking and hoeing effectively train the upper body muscles. The muscles worked by these activities include the biceps, triceps, deltoids, trapezius and latissimus dorsi, which translated means upper arms, shoul-

ders and back.

## Lower Body Training

Digging with a shovel and repetitive squatting to move, lift or plant will quickly shape your lower body. These activities will shape your thighs as well.

## Cardiovascular Training

Pushing a push mower around the yard or a loaded wheel barrow from compost pile to flowerbed targets the entire body and gives you a heart-pumping workout.



Now for a few training tips. As in all other endeavors, prevention is the best medicine to use in avoiding muscle soreness. The most common complaint voiced by gardeners is an aching back. A short 10 minute warm-up and stretch helps the body prepare for the exercise.

Use good posture and positioning to avoid injury. Always try to keep your body in its natural alignment. If you feel uncomfortable, change your position.

Balance both sides of your body. If pulling weeds, use both right and left hands, and alternate feet on the shovel when digging. Don't always

kneel on one knee, but use both or at least alternate knees. A knee pad or cushion will help protect your knees.

Always flex your knees when lifting a heavy object like a wheelbarrow. Locking knees will cause you to life from your back, not your legs.

When digging, don't twist your back. Lift your front foot, point it in the direction you need to go and then turn your body.

Don't hold your breath when lifting or moving heavy objects. If you find you are holding your breath or gritting your teeth, that pot is too heavy. Exhale as you lift, inhale as you lower the object.

Gardening is not only a primitive need in a society where we have minimal contact with nature, it allows you to exercise in the nicest way.



*All those golden autumn days the sky was full of wings. Wings beating low over the blue water of Silver Lake, wings beating high in the blue air far above it...bearing them all away to the green fields in the South.*

*Laura Ingalls Wilder*

# BASK IN THE SUNSHINE



As I reflect over the GMG Year 2000, I realize it has been busy, exciting and prosperous and we still have months ahead. Thanks to everyone's determination and great ideas we have met challenges and surpassed goals. Our two fund raisers, the annual plant sale and peddling Armitage's Garden Perennials have earned record setting funds (\$1450)! Let's not forget membership dues (\$840) and the ABG refreshments for interns \$(106). Best of all we have shared our prosperity with our community!

Our many thanks to the City of Norcross for saving the American Elm, a Georgia Champion Tree. We marked this beautiful and historic tree with a bronze plaque (\$458) from GMG, 2000. We continue to provide the landscape design and planning for the Habitat for Humanity Project. Recently we donated 15 Crape Myrtles (\$60). We were recognized along with the Southern Wings bird club for our volunteer involvement in landscaping the Gwinnett Senior Center on Bethesda Church Road. Efforts by members have produced a new garden at the Collins Hill Library. Plants remaining from our plant sale were shared among the senior center, habitat properties and the library. Our donation (\$250) to the National Botanical Gardens through the Garden Club of Georgia shows tremendous support to our nation's gardens.

Our enthusiasm has been nurtured and fed by wonderful speakers and garden tours. In June we toured fellow Forsyth County Master Gardeners Frances and Charlie Tidd's Railroad Garden. What a treat! Our Rainbow Fund donation (\$50) to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in their name will aid children in need. Our finest tour was Margaret Mose-

ley's gardens in May. Her gardens were featured in Southern Living magazine that same month. Margaret, at 84, is proof gardening keeps one young. Bet her eyes sparkled as she headed to Pike's with her gift certificate (\$50).

Let's remember we all have "sweat equity" in our endeavors. Our hands-on accomplishments are something which each and every one of us can be proud to be a part. **Eighty-four members and still growing!**

Karen Brandon

## Reminders from Karen

LOVE AUCTION! Kick off 2001 by donating your hand crafted goodies to be auctioned as a fund raiser at our February meeting.

Remember to LOG your volunteer hours!

Master Gardeners - make sure the Extension Office has your name and address (678-377-4010). An annual report provides justification for the continuation of the program. Let's not go unnoticed.

Wear your name badges. We're a large group (84 paid members!), so please remember your badges. Blank badges are available for Friends and Guests. Please have your guests put phone numbers on the sign-up sheet.

Please give suggestions for a Spring bus tour to Karen Brandon. There is not enough time to plan it for this fall.

Let's restart the "Plants to Share" column. Let Gail Martin know what plants you want and what you have extra. (Karen wants Hellebores and any natives you have to share.

Armitage's Garden Perennials are available at meetings for \$40 while supplies last. Only 3 remaining!

FUTURE MEETINGS NEW TIMES  
6:30 p.m.

Monday, September 18, 6:30 p.m., GJAC. Guest Speaker Susan Varlamoff, Georgia Station Research & Education Garden Editor on "Inside the Garden".

Monday, November 20, 6:30 p.m. Let's party with our own comedian! Featuring Judy Pitts and Christmas presents.

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The Georgia Flower Growers have extended an invitation to Master Gardeners to join their association. For around \$20.00 Master Gardeners would become members for one year and receive the Southeastern Floriculture magazine. In addition, they would be eligible to attend floriculture update trainings and conferences throughout Georgia. Master Gardeners would receive inside information on new plant varieties from wholesalers.

The information is on our Master Gardener website, or call Bob Westfield in Griffin.

Georgia MG's returned over 100,000 hours of volunteer service last year. This equates to a value of almost \$1.5 million of service. We traveled over 400,000 miles and made over 220,000 contacts in the state.

# Helping Others

# FROM THE ARCHIVES WINTER 1994

That is what Master Gardeners do! There is something more we can do for others that does not have anything to do with gardening. Unless you consider planting a seed of caring and kindness gardening.

The Battered Women's Shelter of Gwinnett County takes donations all year long for the women that seek shelter there, some with small children. We all have little problems in our lives, but as a group of people we are all so blessed. To give almost anything to a cause like this is a joy.

Just think of leaving your home in the middle of the night and taking almost nothing. Maybe because you don't know where you are going or how long you will be gone. So many things are needed and appreciated. For example:

soap, powder, tooth brushes and tooth paste, combs, sox, slippers, hand cream, mouth wash, any kind of skin care. The children, especially at this time of the year need school supplies, pencils, pens, notebook paper, spiral notebooks, color crayons, scotch tape - you think of it and they can use it.

We all live in such abundance. If you are interested in giving anything toward this group of people in need, let's call it Giving Something out of our Abundance. There will be a box at each meeting. If you have any questions just give me a call.

Shelia Wilbur

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*Youth is like spring, on over-praised season more remarkable for biting winds than genial breezes. Autumn is the mellow season, and what we lose in flowers we more gain in fruits.*

Samuel Butler

On September 20, 1993, the first official meeting of Gwinnett Master Gardeners was held at the Gwinnett Justice & Administration Center. Don Freidus was instrumental in drawing the people together. As a result of Don's initial call, we now have a strong group of Master Gardeners dedicated to contributing to and maintaining an organization in which we can communicate and interact on a regular basis.

The first officers were not elected by the usual manner (testimony to our inexperience) but either volunteered or were appointed by the president. President was Don Freidus; Vice President: Gail Martin; Secretary: Maria Turk and Treasurer: Brenda Adams. I nominated myself and Faye Harwell to be the programs committee. Brenda Adams and Gail Martin started up and produced our quarterly newsletter A Bit of Dirt which started with the Winter Issue 1993. Gail Hollimon volunteered to coordinate the communications phone tree.

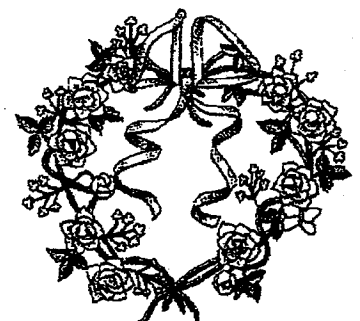
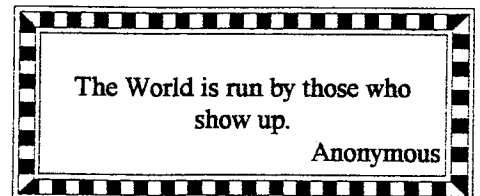
During the first 15 months, we have managed four big projects - three plant sales and the writing and adoption of a constitution and by-laws. The first pansy sale in October 1993 was a success. The Snellville Days plant sale was a nightmare of logistics and a pitiful producer, but all the members threw in their support. We learned what not to do! The fall 1994 pansy sale in October was a great success.

When we elected our 1995 officers in October, the constitution and by-laws gave us methods and order. The new officers for 1995 are Gail Hollimon as President, Beverly Howerton as Vice-President, Glenda Patterson as Secretary and Brenda Adams as Treasurer.

Faye and I had a good time finding programs and working together. We received excellent suggestions and support from club members. The '94 programs were as follows: January - GMGA Annual Conference at ABG; February - Steve Brady/pruning; March - Gary Gleason/perennials; April - Randy Kucera/ponds; May - Garden Tour at Ryan Gainey's; June - Phil Maresca/growing and using herbs; July - Robert Belcher/daylilies; August - Kathy Parent/xeriscaping; September - Chuck Zdeb/hostas; October - business meeting; November - Kathy Henderson.

Kathy Henderson concluded our year with an inspirational and entertaining talk. Her topic was Master Gardeners - listen and learn from all your sources, then promote and share all that you have gleaned.

Exchanging plants, how to's, where to find, and what to read are just a few of the benefits we enjoy as a result of this year's efforts to set in place a working structure for Gwinnett Master Gardeners. Now that we have "planted" ourselves, we can set off across Gwinnett planting the seeds and joys of gardening and see what 1995 brings.



# Meet Your Master Gardener

## Kathy Parent

Kathy is known to all of us as the Program Assistant at the Extension Office, assisting Steve and Robert in their work.

She attended Master Gardener classes in 1988, and received her lifetime pin in 1998. She saw an advertisement in the paper about the program, and was accepted in DeKalb County, but moved away before she could take the course. Later she was accepted as a Gwinnett student.

Kathy has 3 daughters, 2 of them still in college.

At home, and away from the Extension Office, Kathy enjoys perennial gardening, woody plants and landscape design. She has no specific favorites, but especially enjoys container gardening.

As a Master Gardener, Kathy has spoken to garden clubs, been on the Board of Directors for the State association, helped with a conference in Athens, has written newspaper articles and of course, manned the telephones.

She was active as President of Parkview High School Track and Field when her daughters attended high school.

Kathy, her husband, and cat, Chuck, have moved to a new house, and she is excited to begin planning a new garden. She is starting with a bare fescue lawn, and lots of large pines.

She enjoys visiting Botanic Gardens, and loves the gardens in Charleston.

## Brenda Adams

Brenda took her Master Gardener course in 1993. She became an MG because of her love of gardening, and found many new friends who shared this love.

Brenda has two grown daughters, Cindy and Kim.

She particularly loves perennials, and in her new home has planted many of her old favorites. Her special favorites are Japanese iris, and any kind of trillium. Brenda has plants and feeders for hummingbirds, as well as feeders for song birds.

Her volunteer duties for Master Gardeners have included the telephones, the blueberry sale, working on school habitat programs, plant sales, working at Creative Enterprises, and she has been Treasurer for our GMG club two years, and Secretary for one.

Other volunteer activities have included working at the Holiday Clearing House since 1991, making telephone calls for the Red Cross, and assisting in computer classes at the Gwinnett SeniorNet Learning Center.

Brenda loves to travel. Anywhere. She enjoys camping and hiking, and visiting gardens. Her favorite gardens are Longwood in Pennsylvania, and Sissinghurst in England. She also enjoyed the San Antonio Bot Garden, and Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina.

She loves to paint with watercolors, surfs the internet, follows her investments, and plays with her little dog, Little Bit.

## LaDonna Benedict

LaDonna qualified as a Master Gardener in 1996. She enjoyed good garden times with other MGs, and was impressed with the work done in the program.

At home LaDonna has a step-son, Clay (14) and 2 geriatric Havana Brown cats, Bomber and Buster.

Her back yard is a certified habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. It is full of native plants, rescued by LaDonna and her husband on trips sponsored by the Native Plant Society. At last count, she had 75 or more species that she had rescued.

Her front yard is more of a cottage garden, with a variety of perennials. Some of her favorites are butterfly weed, Phlox paniculata, verbena and partridgeberry.

As a Master Gardener, she has helped with blueberry sales, pruned in the Georgia State Arboretum, and given talks on container gardening at such places as Tribble Mill Park and the Gwinnett Fine Arts Center.

LaDonna has participated in reading for the blind in Athens, and worked in the Media Center at Creekland Middle School.

She enjoys off-loom bead weaving, metalsmithing and is taking pottery classes.

The Benedicts enjoy collecting art, from fine art to folk art, in all media. They have painting, pottery and sculpture in their collection.

A Sudan plated lizard, the Lizard o Oz, also makes her home with LaDonna's family.

# BITS AND PIECES, THIS AND THAT

The official opening of the Colonial Coast Birding Trail was last October. The trail is a self-drive road going to 18 historical and beautiful sites around freshwater marshes and the ocean.

A large variety of shorebirds, wading birds and songbirds can be seen, depending on the season and time of day. More than 300 bird species inhabit the Georgia coast at some season of the year, among them such rare and endangered species as wood storks, bald eagles, peregrine falcons and red-cockaded woodpeckers.

The sites include many parks and recreational areas and historic sites such as Fort McAllister State Historical Park. It includes Cumberland Island National Seashore and the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge as well as Fort Pulaski, Skidaway and Tybee Islands, St. Simons Island and the Hofwyl-Broadfield Plantation State Historic site.

Trail maps are available at stores, motels and other business establishments along the coast.

## Internet Bird Watching

Cloud Forest Alive: Links for the "HummingbirdCam" and the "QuetzalCam" show images of a nesting quetzal and hummingbirds visiting a feeder in Costa Rica. [www.quetzalcam.org](http://www.quetzalcam.org)

Birdcast: A new site integrating weather radar, audio monitoring of bird calls and reports from birders tracing migrations. The purpose is to alert officials and the public to bird migrations, so that humans can get out of the way of migrating songbirds, raptors and waterfowl. [www.birdcast.org](http://www.birdcast.org)

FeederCam: The site for the Wild Birds Unlimited retail chain offers visitors a view of backyard feeders in a wooded area. The picture is updated every 45 seconds during daylight.

## National Peace Garden

A teacher from Berkeley, California visited Washington, DC and watched thousands of children visiting monuments to war heroes, but noticed that there was no corresponding monument to the nation's peace heroes. Land has been set aside by the federal government for the garden, and it will be maintained by the National Park Service. This will be the only monument in Washington to celebrate peacemaker and peace initiatives.

The National Peace Garden analyzes aspects of war, reflects upon them, and then proceeds with the knowledge of past mistakes into a hopeful future. There are pivotal points where one pauses to reflect upon the event before continuing onward to the next segment. These contemplation points are a key to the design of the site, because peace must be a collective effort of all people.

## Tree Peonies

Shen Huang was born in Beijing and moved to Atlanta in 1995. In the fall of 1998 he moved to Lawrenceville. Four years ago Huang wanted to plant some peonies in his garden, and using his connections in China he got the name of a company that sold tree peonies. This company suggested that Huang import plants and sell them to gardeners in the United States. It took a long time to launch this project due to the stringent requirements of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture in importing plants. Once this was done, Huang was

ready to start up Golden Port International.

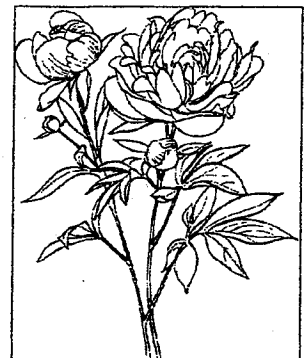
Huang wants to make these tree peonies available to Southern gardeners at fair prices, and to show them that tree peonies can be grown here after all.

He was extremely fortunate in finding the land that he did in that rather than typical Georgia red clay his new garden has deep, sandy loam that drains well. He is developing a large peony garden which includes a water feature and gazebo.

Imported plants are 3 to 4 years old but can be only 18 inches high. Some varieties must be 5 to 6 years old before they can bloom. Blooms range from 5 to 12 inches in diameter on strong woody stems. Tree peonies have attractive foliage that produces fall color, and only the leaves die in winter.

Tree peonies have few insect or disease problems, and deer do not eat the leaves or blooms.

Golden Port International is located at 2255 Cedars Road, Lawrenceville. Most herbaceous peonies are \$20 to \$30, while his tree peonies are \$48 to \$100. You can call him at 770-513-1013 or visit his website at [goldenport.com/peony](http://goldenport.com/peony).



# Dig, Divide and Conquer

The Autumn, with its cool nights and pleasantly warm days, is the best of all times to divide and share your perennials. You will need a sharp spade, a watering can, a couple of gardening forks, maybe a sharp knife. And gloves.

Perennials need to be divided when the flowers are smaller than normal, the center of the clump is hollow and dead, the bottom foliage is sparse and poor, and they just are taking up too much room in the garden.

After two or three years in a garden, many perennials will perform better when they are divided. If you don't need more of a plant, share with your gardening friends. Phlox, for instance, will show you when it wants some repair work by blooming less and looking less healthy. A few species, such as chrysanthemum,

monarda and anemone do best if divided every spring. And some plants, like peonies and baptisia, resent being disturbed, and don't ever want to be touched.

In this dry summer, be sure to water the plants to be divided very very well the day before the work begins. If possible, choose a cloudy day to move plants. Just divide your plants before it gets too cold for the roots to re-establish themselves before frost. Replant the divisions as soon as you can.

Using a garden fork or spade, loosen the soil and dig a circle around the plant. Lift the plant, being careful of the roots. Water the roots well to wash off the soil so you can clearly see where you want to divide them. Remove any rotten pieces or dried leaves. Force your garden fork

you want to divide the plant. You may need to use a sharp knife (an old serrated bread knife does well) if the plant has fleshy or fibrous roots.

Separate the forked-apart sections with your hands. Repeat the process as needed with very large clumps. Remove and discard any roots that look diseased or damaged, leaving as many roots as possible on each division.

Plant each division separately, watering generously afterward. Keep up the watering until the plant seems to have adjusted and no longer wilts



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