

# A Bit of Dirt

Volume 9, Issue 2

Spring, 2001

## The Newsletter of the Gwinnett Master Gardeners



### Message from Our President

Nothing is so wonderful as spotting my first bloodroot and trout lily blooms. The little wonders were dormant, then all at once they screamed Spring! Nature makes our hearts feel special.

Speaking of special, our February Love Auction was a super success. Thanks to members and guests who donated items and made purchases, we earned \$610. Thanks also to our wonderfully energetic auctioneer, Glen Armstrong, and to Kathy Parent for handling the financial portion of the event.

Start dividing, potting, rooting, and planting seeds! Plans for our PLANT SALE is in the works. Please offer you support and make it a colossal success again this year.

Happy Spring and happy gardening!

Karen Brandon

### Upcoming Meeting Dates

May 21st  
June 18th  
July 16th

**REMINDER**  
Final opportunity to  
pay your 2001  
Gwinnett  
Master Gardener Dues!!!



### Something of Interest

#### The Results of the Great Backyard Bird Count

<u>Species</u>	<u>Sightings</u>
Mourning Dove	28051
Northern Cardinal	26289
Dark-eyed Junco	25502
American Crow	22375
Blue Jay	21297
House Finch	21486
Downy Woodpecker	20327
American Goldfinch	19951
Black-capped Chickadee	18992
Tufted Titmouse	18481



*A Bit of Dirt* is published quarterly. Send your news articles to:

Editor: Marlene Gillman  
770-867-0426  
gardensgreen@mindspring.com



### Annual Plant Sale

Friday, May 4th  
(9:00 AM to 2:00 PM)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED BETWEEN  
7:30 AM and 2:30 PM

Call: Shannon Pable @ 770-271-4438  
or Gayle Hayes @ 770-932-8706



### Attention: Road Trip

April 22, 2001

Pickett's Mill Nursery  
Silver Comet Nature Walk  
R.S.V.P. Sharon Matthews  
770-736-3928

Our next meeting will be  
on April 16th.

Robert Browder will  
be the guest speaker.



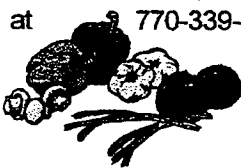
He is an expert on pruning and it  
is sure to be an informative  
evening.

## Plant a Row for the Hungry

The Latin American Association in Lawrenceville is requesting your help in their quest to feed hungry families. By planting an extra row of potatoes, corn, tomatoes, onions or beans this season, you will be able to contribute to those who have difficulty in meeting those basic needs.

They maintain very close ties with the Hispanic community and can ensure that your contributions will be given to those who most need it. They will also gladly arrange transportation to collect the produce.

You may leave your food items at the Gwinnett Extension Service to be picked up by the Latin American Association or do not hesitate to contact Marie-Claire Webber at 770-339-4335



with any  
questions.

## Give Something Out of Our Abundance

Once again the women and children of abuse need our help. The Battered Women's Shelter of Gwinnett County needs items donated all year long. Please donate bar soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, slippers, school supplies, and small toys for all ages. The sample size toiletries you get when traveling are perfect. Please bring the items to any of the meetings and we'll be sure they are delivered. Thanks!

## Did you know?

Gwinnett County Master Gardeners submitted 4505 volunteer hours. At \$14.30 per hour this equals \$64,421.50. Way to go, Gwinnett!!!

## Message from Our Vice President

As the weather gets warmer and we look to the wonderful blooming season ahead of us, I am excited to report that I have invited some very special guests to talk to us at our upcoming meetings.

**April** — Robert Browder will discuss pruning. (He's professional at this )

**May** — Artist, Mary Booth Cabot,

Don't miss these wonderful personalities.

Speaking of wonderful people, I hope you will all join me in thanking the following members who furthered the name of the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners. Each donated their time and put forth great effort by volunteering to help with the hospitality arrangements for this year's Master Gardener class.

### Thank you:

Karen Brandon, Mary Lou Dykes, Anne Ficken, Marlene Gillman, Judy Hoffman, Mark Joseph, and Michele Templeton

Sharon gives you a "Big Thanks". Remember, the green side goes up!

Sharon Matthews

"A friend is someone  
who knows  
the song in our heart  
and  
can sing it back to you  
when you have  
forgotten the words."

... unknown

## Want to increase your knowledge?

### International Master Gardener's Conference

May 28-June 1, 2001 Orlando, FL



## Something of Interest

**Daylily Meeting & Sale**  
Greater Atlanta  
Hemerocallis Society  
April 22nd - 2 P.M.  
Atlanta Botanical Garden

**Daylily Auction & Companion Plant Sale**  
(For free admission into ABG, tell ticket attendant that you're attending meeting.)

**35th Annual Daylily Show**  
June 9th - 10 A.M.-5 P.M.  
North DeKalb Mall

**Judged Competition & Plant Sale**  
Be sure to pick up a map  
for June 10th  
Tour of Local Daylily Gardens

For more information, please call  
Michele Templeton 770-925-3291

Michele Templeton



The Southeastern Flower Show was very successful once again with proceeds going to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. The show is the "largest annual juried gardening experience in the Southeast" with 2,000 judged competitive entries. This fame is due mainly to the many volunteer hours by Master Gardeners, garden club members, judges, and others.

Karen Brandon

# Meet Your Master Gardeners

by Karen Brandon

## Sharon Matthews

Sharon received her Master Gardener certification in 1998. As she fulfills her duties as Vice President this year, we look forward to seeing what she has in store for our programs and garden tours.

Both last year and this year the

Gwinnett Master Gardeners were recognized as having the "best spread" at the Atlanta Botanical Garden Intern Classes. This reputation is due to Sharon's very capable talents with creating interesting themes and assembling outstanding arrays of enticing foods for the Interns enjoyment.

Sharon's gardening roots are from Denver, Colorado where her grandmother loved to grow roses and vegetables. She says there is a definite trickle down effect because now her college age sons, Jason and Kris, love landscaping and gardening. Thanks to their help, her own gardens are quite cheerful



## Michele Templeton

Michele received her Master Gardener certification in 1999. She has a true love of nature and enjoys shade and sun gardening, bird watching, bugs, and bumblebees. Her other hobbies include cross stitch, reading, cooking. She and her husband, Jack, share their home and gardens with their cats and admit they are softies "because we can't turn away a homeless kitty".

Michele loves growing native plants, hostas, herbs, and coneflowers but most of all daylilies. In fact, she enjoys daylilies so much she was the Greater Atlanta Hemerocallis Society newsletter editor from 1997 thru 2000. She is this year's annual Hemerocallis Show chairman being held this year at DeKalb. In prior years it was held at ABC and pulled in more people than any other flower show held there. Hemerocallis is Greek and means "beauty for a day" hence the length of time each bloom lasts.)

She and her husband have the United Kingdom. She recalls the green pastures and whitewashed cottages of Ireland and the smells of peat burning. Michele recommends a trip to the gardens of Ireland and Wales.

## Bonnie Smolinski

Bonnie certified as a Master Gardener in 1998. Her love of gardening has developed since coming to Georgia from Michigan. She realized that education is the key and was encouraged by another intern to take the course.

Please welcome Bonnie as our association's Secretary this year. She enjoys volunteering at our Extension Service's annual plant sale, plant clinics, Georgia Perimeter College's fern sale (among the largest fern sale in the world!), and does home garden consultations. She also volunteers answering the consumer phones at the extension office.

She enjoys gardening in both sun and shade but prefers sun gardening. Bonnie is growing Camellias for the first time and has replaced her builder-chosen shrubs with more suitable varieties. One of her favorite plants is the 'Natchez' crape myrtle.



She collects suns, is a self-proclaimed crafter, and enjoys cooking, sewing, and knitting. Bonnie and her husband, Dave, have a son, Brian, and a daughter, Dana. Bonnie's two cats, Millie and Max, enjoy a good walk in the garden

## Ed Saubvester

Ed certified as a Master Gardener in 2000; however, he is not new to gardening. He grew up in mid-Iowa, the son of a wholesale grower, and spent summers working on relatives' farms. His father grew roses, carnations, and gladiolus for the florist trade.

Ed serves on the Board of Directors for Gwinnett Habitat for Humanity. He is involved in the family selection process. Ed has developed a required course on lawn and garden care designed to educate the new homeowners.

He readily admits that his volunteer time at the extension office has been just as valuable toward his education as his training at the Atlanta Botanical Garden classes. Ed especially enjoys using the microscope and sending the data to UGA for evaluation. Little did he know that his work experiences would qualify him to evaluate bugs!



How Ed has the time for all he does is remarkable. He and his wife, Susan, train and show dogs.





## Our Wild Edible Landscapes

by Shannon Pable

Since 1992 it has been my hobby to study and take classes dealing with living off the Earth. Sometimes referred to as Nature and Survivalist classes (or as my friends would call these "Tree Hugger and Pine Cone Eating Classes"). These classes have continued to teach me much in the area of identification for edible and medicinal plants, as well as utilitarian uses. Everything from trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous plants have something wonderful to offer. What I have found is that we have a magnificent buffet (and medicine chest) just waiting for us in our own backyards! Most of these wonderful plants are referred to as "WEEDS".

To begin with, I would like to discuss only the herbaceous edibles. Here are a few things to take into consideration.

Correct identification of the plant. This is a must!!

Make sure you are not allergic to the plant.

Do not gather from an area that has been treated with pesticides or any chemicals.

If collecting near the road, be sure the area is at least 50 feet away.

Be sure that the soil (water in a wet area) is not contaminated.

Caretaker's attitude while collecting.

First, correct identification is the most important consideration. Many plants have similar looking relatives that might be extremely toxic! You can never be too careful. I will never forget the time last year when I picked up my 5 year-old son from a summer day camp. He was one of the last children still pasting leaves he had collected into his nature book. The camp counselors were looking over his shoulders and assisting him. I took a peak and quickly realized that my son's lovely book was a wonderful collection of poison ivy! The counselors didn't have a clue. One of the most fundamental steps before gathering plants is *know your plants!* Watch out for Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans*) and Poison Sumac (*Rhus vernix*). Please know that there are many sumacs that are non-poisonous, but will cause severe dermatitis. Also, Laurels (*Kalmia*), Azaleas (*Rhododendron*), Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*, often confused with Angelica), Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculata*, often confused with Queen Anne's Lace or wild carrot) are very toxic if ingested.

Even though I will be discussing common herbaceous plants that you probably already know, it is important that you know how to identify a "wild" plant correctly. Wouldn't it be wonderful to go on a hike in the wilderness and be able to key-out just about any plant you come across? I use many guides. For herbaceous plants (and some woody shrubs and vines), I use *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*, by Lawrence Newcomb, to initially key-out the plant and in conjunction with *Peterson Field Guides for Edible Wild Plants, Medicinal Plants and Wildflowers*. Newcomb's has a wonderfully ingenious key, but the only disadvantage to using this book is the plant needs to be in flower to key it out. For trees and shrubs, I use *The Tree Identification Book* and *The Shrub Identification Book*, both by George W. D. Symonds. These books show actual photos of leaves, and leaf arrangement, twigs, buds, bark, flowers, and fruit. If you still need additional information on keying-out a tree/shrub, especially in winter, then I would recommend *Winter Botany* by William Trelease. His book identifies trees/shrubs by closely examining the buds, pith, bud arrangement, leaf scars, stipule scars, bundle traces, lenticels, and more (this will require a magnifying glass!). If you have children, use their eyeballs for this! Also, a great book for an introduction into this wild edible world is *Tom Brown's Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants*. This book is not a plant key but has great information on uses of plants, proper collection, preparation, storage and much more.

Before you gather a plant (that has been positively identified) and decide to make a huge super size salad bowl of greens



eat a small sample first. Make sure you are not allergic to it. Also, see if you even like the taste! Thoroughly investigate the area. Is there a toxic waste dump up stream? Did a helicopter fly over and dump Malathion to kill mosquitoes yesterday? Does your dog do his business there? Remember, you are planning to eat this stuff!

While collecting, always make sure that you are not eradicating the entire area of this plant. If you only need leaves, don't dig the whole plant up (unless you are on a plant rescue!). Only take what you need. Collect non-diseased plants. Oh, and remember to thank the plant. They do have feelings!

- Cattail** (*Typha spp.*) - Young shoots and stalks, immature flower spikes, pollen, sprouts, rootstock
- Chickweed** (*Stellaria spp. And Cerastium spp.*) - Tender leaves and stems. Mouse-ear Chickweed's hairy leaves should be cooked.
- Clovers** (*Trifolium spp.*) - Flowers and tender young leaves.
- Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*) - Tender young leaves, flower, and roots.
- Elderberry** (*Sambucus Canadensis*) - Flowers and berries.
- Evening Primrose** (*Oenothera biennis*) - Tender young leaves and first year root stalk (note this is a biennial).
- Ginger** (*Asarum spp.*) - Leaves and rootstock.
- Goldenrod** (*Solidago odora*) - Leaves and flowers.
- Greenbrier** (*Smilax spp.*) - Young shoots, leaves, and tendrils.
- Lamb's Quarters** (*Chenopodium album*) - Tender leaves, tips and seeds.
- Mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*) - Leaves (note this is a biennial).
- Plantain** (*Plantago spp.*) - Young tender leaves.
- Purslane** (*Portulaca Oleracea*) - Stems, leaves, and seeds.
- Queen Anne's Lace** (*Daucus carota*) - First year roots (note this is a biennial). Caution: similar is Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) and stalks are hairless.
- Sicklepod** (*Cassia tora*) - Young shoots and seeds. Caution: similar poisonous plant is Goat's Rue (*Tephrosia virginiana*).
- Sumac** (*Rhus copallina, R. glabra, R. typhina -winged, smooth, & staghorn sumacs*) - Red berries. Caution: Poison Sumac (*Rhus vernix*) has white berries, toothless leaflets, twigs and buds are hairless, and wingless.
- Thistle** (*Sonchus spp.*) - Young leaves.
- Violet** (*Viola spp.*) - Young leaves and flowers.
- Wild Onion/Garlic** (*Allium vineale L.*) - Leaves and bulbs.
- Wood Sorrel** (*Oxalis spp.*) - Leaves, stems, flowers. Warning: Excessive consumption over an extended period of time may inhibit the absorption of calcium by the body and thus, the possibility of kidney stones since it contains oxalic acid.



For the next newsletter, I will discuss more details on the actual uses of these plants (salads, teas, soups, flours, cooked greens, etc), nutritional value, and the harvest time. So who needs goats? Gather your family and neighbors around your yard and have a great grazing feast!

Until next time, happy feasting!

Look for part two of *Our Wild Edible Landscapes* in the *Summer edition of A Bit of Dirt*.

# DROUGHT - GET USED TO IT

Robert Brannen, Gwinnett Extension Agent



I have used my umbrella four times in the past week. Like many of you I had to dig way back under the seat of my car to find it. It seems as if it has been a long time since I had to trudge around in the rain and experience the feeling of wet socks again.

Time for a reality check. It's amazing how quickly we forget that we are still in the middle of a pretty serious drought. Last week, while sitting through a day of training for Extension Agents, Dr. Gary Wade was reviewing the update he had on our Xeriscape materials and reminded us of the long term dry conditions that still exist. Many experts feel that the outdoor watering restrictions from last summer can probably be classified as permanent. Some feel that sooner or later we will experience total bans on all outdoor watering. That is a pretty tough pill for avid gardeners to swallow.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit the wonderful gardens of one of our own Master Gardeners, Dolores Wyland. She has dozens of neat little beds tucked into a very natural environment with tons of different plants living in competitive harmony. One gets the impression that the multitude of plants are individually showing off so they can win attention from their neighbors. They seem to thrive on the competition.

Dolores has several areas that she calls "dry beds". They are rich in sand and organic matter and exist almost entirely on the limited rain that nature provides. Some of the plants include: *iris reticulata*, wild cyclamen, several sedums, iberis, zephyranthes, erodium, salvia, ground phlox, an assortment of dianthus. There are daylilies, lambs ear, perennial lantana, and crocosmia which she describes as beautiful in the July heat but a little invasive. Herbs germander, lavender and rosemary, epimedium, and some woody things like red honeysuckle, nandina, and flowering almond all share the area.

She didn't intentionally set out to create dry beds but when she found areas that were naturally dry, she added suitable plants rather than choosing to water those areas. There was trial and error involved. Things that languished in moister areas were moved to where they would be happier. Grouping plants based on their water needs is one of the basic principles of Xeriscape gardening. It's a great idea and one that I think will become more popular as this dry weather continues.



## A selection of Drought Tolerant Plants

<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> Ginkgo	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> Southern Magnolia	<i>Vitex agnus-castus</i> Vitex
<i>Chanoemeles speciosa</i> Flowering Quince	<i>Cotoneaster spp.</i> Cotoneaster	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i> Dwarf Youpon 'Nana'
<i>Jasminum nudiflorum</i> Winter Jasmine	<i>Phlox subulata</i> Moss Phlox (Creeping Phlox)	<i>Akebia quinata</i> Five-leaf Akebia
<i>Epimedium x rubrum</i> Red Barrenwort	<i>Gaura lindheimeri</i> Gaura	<i>Knipfonia uvaria</i> Red Hot Poker
<i>Dyssodia tenuiloba</i> Dahlburg Daisy	<i>Lantana camara</i> Lantana	<i>Zinnia linearis</i> Creeping Zinnia

*And the Winners are...*

# 2001 Georgia Gold Medal Winners



## **Inkberry (*Ilex glabra*)**

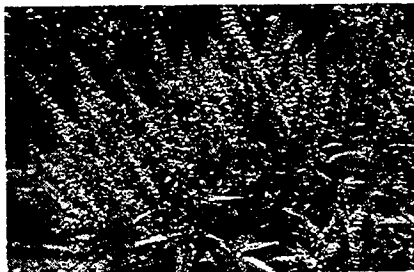
Inkberry, also called gallberry, is an evergreen native shrub. It thrives in moist, shady sites.

Inkberry is a fine alternative to boxwood because boxwood doesn't like wet feet.



## **Ornamental Sweet Potatoes**

The sensational Blackie sweet potato, with dark purple leaves, was the first to be offered. It was soon followed by Margarite, with chartreuse foliage that glows in the landscape. Tricolor, with shades of pink, green and magenta all in the same leaf, is also available.



## **Chastetree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)**

This small tree is heat tolerant and cold hardy with good pest resistance and excellent drought tolerance. The Chastetree flowers consistently in May and June with little care. Although dark blue to lavender flowers are most common, white and pink-flowering forms can also be found.



## **Autumn Fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*)**

Unlike other woodland ferns that die down in winter, autumn fern stays green. The new fronds emerge a bright, coppery red in the spring and provide a striking contrast to surrounding green foliage.

For further information on the Georgia Gold Medal Winners see the University of Georgia website at <http://www.ect.uga.edu/goldmedal/index.htm>

## Welcome Master Gardener class of 2001

We would like to welcome our new Master Gardener Interns. They studied hard to earn the title and were the highest scoring class we ever had. All scored 90 points or above! Congratulations.



Patricia Bell	Mary Brown
Lisa Cargo	Bill Dickey
Julie Foster	Ava Harvey
Gayle Hayes	Betty Maftley
Shannon Pable	Mitzi Yaussy
Bet Ramsey	Gloria Weck
Patricia Pritchard	Susan Wood

### Plant or Seed Swap List



If you have plants or seeds to share, send your name, address, or phone number along with your plant or seed information and we will print it in *A Bit of Dirt's* summer edition.



*A Bit of Dirt* is holding a contest.

*Can you name this plant?*

Graceful, twining tender threadlike, self-twining stems with dark-green, ovate leaves.

1/2- to 3/4-inch, waxy, single, tubular, bright-yellow flowers.

The yellow base of the flower tubes are densely covered with red bristles,

Be the first to identify this perennial by both its Latin and common names. Fax, mail, e-mail or call in your answer. You must attend the meeting in May to receive a nice prize. In case of a tie, a winner will be chosen at random at the meeting.

Contact Kathy Parent or Marlene Gillman  
 Phone Number: 678-377-4010 Fax Number: 678-377-4030  
 E-mail: [gardensgreen@mindspring.com](mailto:gardensgreen@mindspring.com)  
 Address: Gwinnett County Extension Service  
 750 S. Perry Street, Suite 400  
 Lawrenceville, GA 30045

## A Bit of Dirt

Gwinnett Master Gardeners  
 Marlene Gillman  
 156 Johns Bluff  
 Auburn, Georgia 30011



*April showers bring  
 May flowers!*