

A Bit of Dirt

Volume 9, Issue 3

Summer, 2001

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GWINNETT MASTER GARDENERS



Message
from Our President

Oakleaves, Annabelles and Mopheads, oh my! What a glorious Spring!

Well ya'll have done it again. Thanks to all who contributed to our most successful plant sale. Another record breaker at \$1600 net and goodness did we ever have fun. Thanks to our co-chairs, Shannon Pable and Gayle Hayes for a job well done. Thanks to LaDonna Benedict for sharing her guidance and knowledge from her previous experience as chair. Thanks to Gail and Tommy Holli-mon for hosting two potting days and baby-sitting several hundred plants. Thanks to our treasurer, Bobbie Higginbotham who worked non-stop and Sharon Matthews for providing goodies. There are too many to name but it was evident that our master gardeners participated with such enthusiasm.

Because of such wonderful fund-raisers as this plant sale and our "Love Auction" last February, our treasury is larger than ever and with that comes new challenges. Let's plan the best use of the funds.

Our May meeting included a successful vote to mark the Georgia Champion Tree, Horsechestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum.*) at Stonehedge, a special events home in Buford owned by our own Gwinnett Master Gardener, Maria Turk and her husband, Alan. Be creative and let's come up with additional worthy uses for our treasury.

The Gwinnett Master Gardeners are hosting the Georgia Master Gardener Winter Conference on January 12, 2002. Preliminaries have been discussed and volunteer opportunity details will follow. Let's meet this challenge and shine.

Thanks again to all and keep praying for RAIN!!
Karen Brandon

Volunteers Opportunities

Creative Enterprises, a non-profit organization in Lawrenceville, needs volunteers to help in their greenhouse and nursery. Creative Enterprises provides training to people with disabilities.

Vines Botanical Gardens has volunteer

Monday through Fridays
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Contact: Jo Anna Cox
770-962-3908
701 High Hope Lane
Lawrenceville, GA

opportunities for large and small groups:

- * Debris removal – Mulching
- * Cut back ivy – Paint bridges
- * Dead-head flowers - Pruning
- * Pine straw removal
- * Cut back perennials and grasses

Individual opportunities include:

- * Learn hands-on irrigation repairs, design, and problem solving.
- * Greenhouse management including orchids.
- * Work with the Director of Gardens to strengthen the volunteer base and memberships.
- * Floriculture design, bed preparation, installation, and maintenance.
- * Rose maintenance, renovation of beds, and installing replacement roses

Contact:
Aaron Poulsen
Director of Gardens
770-466-7532 ext. 22

Vines Botanical Gardens Summer Field Trips for Children

Habitat Classes
Native Americans
Discovery Walk

Each program includes hands-on activities inside and outside as well as a tour of the gardens. There is a charge for the children but adults attend free. Reservations in advance are required. For information contact:

Martha Whitman
770-736-0188

If you prefer a self-guided tour, please contact:

Aaron Poulsen
Director of Gardens
770-466-7532

Gwinnett MG's Featured in Recent Newspaper Articles

Congratulations to the following MG's:

Shelia Wilbur "At home in
a Victorian Garden"

Theresa Schrum for her letter to
Walter Reeves

Theresa Schrum and Shannon Pable
for their treks rescuing endangered
native plants

Dolores Wyland with her garden filled
with native GA plants



Reminders

The Latin American Association in Lawrenceville is requesting your help by planting a row for the hungry. Contact the Gwinnett Extension Service for info.

The Battered Women's Shelter of Gwinnett County needs items donated all year long. Please bring the items to any of the meetings and we'll be sure they are delivered.

Habitat for Humanity needs your help setting landscape plants. Contact Master Gardener, Ed Saulvester for more info.

The Native Plant Society invites you to their next meeting held July 10th, 2001, 7:30 PM Day Hall, Atlanta Botanical Gardens.

The tour that was planned at Mary Booth Cabot's home has been changed to June 23rd. Guests are asked to bring a covered dish for a pot luck dinner. A carpool will form at GJAC at 9:30 AM. If interested in carpooling, please be on time. For more information contact Sharon Matthews.

FOOD FOR

THOUGHT - About 70 years ago, Georgia began raising bees to ship to bee-keepers, and has since become one of the nation's top suppliers of bees.



Message from Our Vice President

Summer is coming and we have three excellent programs to help us get through the drought.

Saturday, June 16th - We will tour Michelle Templeton's garden and have a program on caring for lilies. . Map with directions enclosed. For those who wish to carpool, meet fellow MG's at GJAC at 9:30 AM on Saturday. Call me for details.

Monday, July 16th - Elizabeth Dean from Wilkerson Mill will be our speaker. Wilkerson Mill is renowned for its vast and unusual inventory of native plant life.



Monday, August 20th - Robert Keller will be our speaker. Robert has propagated Foxglove all over the world and is a walking encyclopedia on plant identification. I am sure that he would help identify any specimen you bring to the meeting.

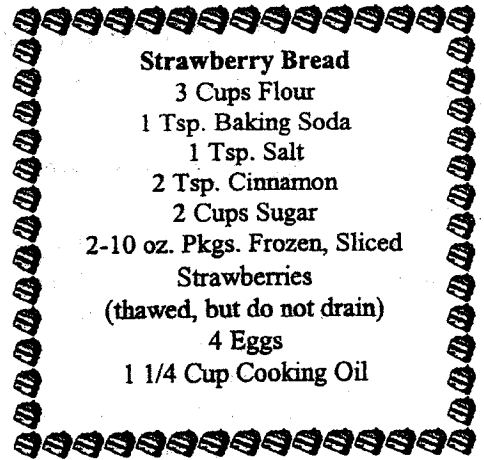
I would like to acknowledge and thank our last speaker, Mary Booth Cabot, for an extremely interesting presentation on art and composition. We left with an enlightened appreciation for the amount of work that goes into each piece of quality art.

In an effort to keep our programs interesting to everyone, if you have any suggestions for future programs, please call Sharon Matthews at (770) 736-3928, email address (correction) RJConsulting@MediaOne.net.

Hope to see at the meetings.
Sharon Matthews.

Terrific Recipe...

For those who were not able to enjoy the to at Shannon Pable's home on Tuesday, May 26, we have included this special goodie for you to enjoy. It was baked by Gayle Hayes for the occasion. She baked one for the Extension Office. It was devoured in a matter of minutes. Yummy!!



Strawberry Bread
3 Cups Flour
1 Tsp. Baking Soda
1 Tsp. Salt
2 Tsp. Cinnamon
2 Cups Sugar
2-10 oz. Pkgs. Frozen, Sliced Strawberries
(thawed, but do not drain)
4 Eggs
1 1/4 Cup Cooking Oil

Mix dry ingredients together. Mix remaining ingredients and add to dry ingredients. Stir carefully. Pour batter into two greased loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour and 15 minutes. Cool and enjoy.

Gayle states that this bread is best served at room temperature. We found it to be extra tasty when we slathered it strawberry cream cheese. Thanks Gayle for sharing this recipe with us.

What do different rose colors mean?

- Red.....Love
- White.....Innocence
- Yellow.....Friendship
- Coral.....Desire
- Light Pink.....Joy
- Dark Pink.....Thankfulness
- Lavender.....Enchantment
- Orange.....Fascination

Good Plants for Hot Places !!!

- Creeping Thymes - *Thymus spp*
- Ribbon Grass - *Phalaris arundinacea 'Picta'*
- Northern Sea Oates - *Chasmanthium latifolium*
- Cast Iron Plant - *Aspidistra elatior*
- Japanese Black Pine - *Pinus thunbergiana*

- Lacebark Elm - *Ulmus parvifolia*
- Bracken Fern - *Pteridium aquilinum*
- Blue Daze - *Evolvulus glomeratus*
- Joseph's Coat - *Amaranthus tricolor*
- Snowbank Boltonia - *Boltonia asteroides 'Snowbank'*



Meet Your Master Gardeners

by Marlene Gillman

Theresa Schrum

Native plant enthusiast, Theresa Schrum relates her background as follows:

"I was born in Texas, but grew up in California. Both my parents and their parents, etc. etc. were native Georgians (Savannah). I spent many summers in Georgia, so when my husband was offered a job here, we decided to leave California and move to Atlanta."

Theresa states that several factors helped her to decide to become a Master Gardener. "I come from a long line of garden-ers (through my mom's side). I think it's in the blood. I wanted to have some type of official recognition for my gardening knowledge and work. I also wanted to help other gardeners and non-gardeners and have an organization that allowed me to network with fellow enthusiasts. I like the phone duty (at the Extension Service) and plant clinics. These let you interact with a broad range of people on a wide range of topics."

What MG projects is she looking forward to? "Right now, I am working on a native plant garden as part of the outdoor classroom at Suwanee Elementary. The drought has made things very difficult. I'm looking forward to the fall when the kids will be back in school and we can continue working on this project. We will be starting a bog of endangered native plants through the Georgia Endangered Plant Stewardship Network."

Does Theresa have a favorite plant or garden area? "I can't say that I have a favorite plant. That would be like asking me to choose a favorite child. I am definitely partial to those plants that are native to Georgia, especially those that are vital to the survival of our butterflies. My favorite area of the garden changes from season to season. Any place where I can watch wild-life in action is my favorite part of the garden." (Continued on page 7)

Shannon Pable

Shannon Pable co-chaired the recent Master Gardener Annual Plant Sale with Gayle Hayes. Here is her story:

"I was born in Southern California and raised in San Jose. At the age of 19, I moved to Melbourne, Florida and attended the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. When graduated (BSEE, BSCP), I moved to Atlanta for a career in engineering in 1987.

Ever since I was a small child I loved to plant things and watch them grow. Remember the beans grown in a jar on a wet piece of paper towel? I thought this was very cool when I was 5...still do! I started propagating and taking care of my mother's house plants. Soon my plants outgrew my room and the outside patio area. On my 12th birthday, my parents gave me a mini greenhouse. Before I knew it, I was caring for a neighbor's sick house plants and propagating plants for family and friends. Also, as a child, I loved to build mini landscapes in terrariums and collect cactus and succulents."

What made Shannon decide to become a Master Gardener? "The desire to learn more about gardening and to be sure that what I learned was accurate information, not only for my benefit but also for others as well. I have always loved to share the information I learned with others so they can enjoy their gardens as much as I enjoy mine."

Shannon "really enjoyed working in the Extension Office because I learn so much from staff and the callers. I also enjoyed the plant sale because I got to meet so many other club members."

She would "love to be involved in the new Gainesville Botanical Gardens project. Also, the outdoor classroom at my children's school. I love to take the children on (Continued on page 7)

Gayle Hayes

Gayle is an energetic, new intern. After reading her interview, I think you will find her as delightful as we do.

"I visited Atlanta in the spring time when I was set to graduate from Ohio State. The beauty of the azaleas and dogwoods (as well as escaping Ohio winters) lured me here.

I am a third generation Polish farmer. My parents loved to grow things and taught me to respect nature and also the land. We grew most of our food and had "fresh-squeezed" milk every day. Grandma could plant a stick and make it become a beautiful plant. Mom loved flowers and being in a garden club. My sisters are both Master Gardeners and my brother still farms our homeplace.

My first gardening experience in Georgia involved planting an azalea using a pick-ax to prepare the soil (quite a change from Ohio loam). I spent many years imposing the death sentence on my familiar "Ohio" plants before I realized they do not do well here! By becoming a Master Gardener, I hope others will benefit from my experience. I love to learn. I also love to teach and I look forward to opportunities in both areas."

When queried about Master Gardener projects that she enjoyed working on, Gayle had this response. "Call me crazy, but the plant sale was actually fun! It was a lot of work, but everyone gave their heart and soul and it was a beautiful thing. The people who bought the plants were in awe of the nice plants and the knowledge of our club members."

Gayle says she is "drawn to "old-timey" plants. Perhaps they remind me of my grandmother's garden. I appreciate their strength and long life no matter what nature dishes out.

(Continued on page 7)



Our Wild, Edible Landscapes – Part 2

by Shannon Pable

Since the last issue of *A Bit of Dirt*, how many of you were caught face down in your yard (or your neighbor's) grazing on wild onions? What...none of you! Well, I guess this calls for some innovative and mouth watering recipes. Let's set out on a gathering and dining adventure...

Today's menu will include:

Salad – Lamb's quarters, purslane, violet, wood sorrel, chickweed, clover, Rumex spp., and wild lettuce spp.

Stir Fry – Cattail root, wild carrot root, lamb's quarters, daylily flower buds, young redbud pods, wild onion, and ginger root.

Drink – Sassafras root tea

Dessert – Clover and elderberry flower fritters

Preparation instructions:

General note: when collecting wild edibles that are going to be used fresh, I collect in the early morning while dew is present and plants are sturdy and crisp. When collecting plants to dry, I always wait until the dew has dried so that they don't mildew in the process.

Salad – Collect young pest-free leaves and flowers of violets, sorrel, clover. Wash and pat dry.

The dressing I like to make is:

1/2 cup Balsamic Vinegar

1/2 cup Kikkoman's Teriyaki,

1 tablespoon crushed fresh garlic (or wild onion)

1 teaspoon grated ginger root

1 tablespoon sesame oil



Stir Fry – Peel and rinse the outer layer of all ingredients listed in the menu above. Finely grate the ginger root. Cut the remaining roots into 1/4 slices. Keep the flower buds, young redbud pods, and Lamb's Quarter leaves whole. Finely cut up the wild onion. Place a couple of tablespoons of sesame oil in a frypan and heat to medium high. Saute roots, flower buds, pods, and onion for 5 minutes. Add the Lamb's Quarter and saute another 3 minutes. Add Kikkoman Teriyaki marinade and continue to heat 1 minute.

Drink – Clean roots and cut into one-inch pieces. Boil approximately 10 minutes. The water will turn a brownish-orange. Let cool. Add honey to taste and pour over ice.

Dessert – Collect whole flower clusters and rinse.

The following recipe is from *The Joy of Cooking*.

1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon butter, melted

2 egg yolks, beaten



Put all ingredients into a bowl and mix well.

Gradually add 3/4 cup of flat beer while stirring constantly.

Cover batter and allow to rest. Refrigerate 3-12 hours.

Place oil in a deep pot and heat to 375 degrees.

Dip flowers into powdered sugar then into batter. Deep fry until golden brown (approximately 3-5 min.)

Drain on paper towels and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

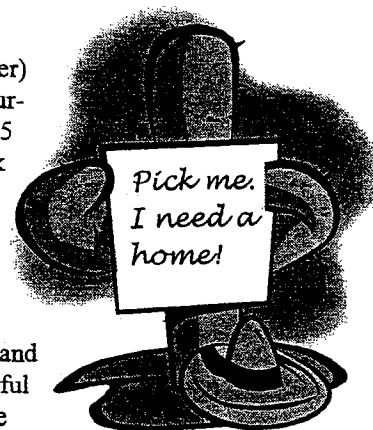
Enjoy your wild, edible plant gathering. Oh,... if this gives you a touch of indigestion, try some wild mountain mint tea. Until next time, happy feasting!!!

Spring Plant Sale Success... THANK YOU!!!!

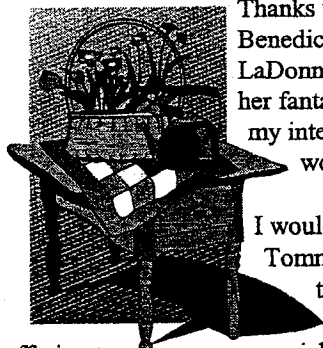
Our Spring Plant Sale was a GREAT SUCCESS, thanks to YOU! This year we had only 5 weeks to plan our sale and we still cleared \$1608.

We started arriving at 7:30 AM (some earlier) and immediately started selling (amongst ourselves, of course!). GJAC already had the 15 tables out and ready for us (super job, thank you to Kathy Parent, Robert Brannen, and GJAC.) By 8:00 AM, sales were going strong and donated plants kept rolling in. How could the public resist all the wonder-

derful plants, sales volunteers, and especially Gayle Hayes in her grand ladybug hat! Around 10:00 AM it was starting to heat up (the weather and sales) but you, the volunteers, kept going, and going, and going...like energizer bunnies! Thank goodness for Sharon Matthews and her wonderful catering services. She kept our tummies full and our thirst quenched. Thank you, Sharon! Bobbie Higginbotham did a fantastic job running the cash register...and she did not even use a calculator! Thank you, Bobbie! By 1:00 PM, we were down to 3 tables of plants. Sales began to slow down but that didn't stop Glen Armstrong and his savvy sales style. By 2:30 PM, we divided up the remaining plants to donate. Habitat for Humanity received 1/3, Bethesda Senior Citizens Center received 1/3, and Collins Hill Library received 1/3.



So much goes into the "behind the scenes" preparation of a sale like this. There are so many people to thank. No one's contribution went unnoticed! When Karen Brandon asked if I could chair the plant sale, I was not sure if I could pull it off and recreate the success of last year's sale. It was just days before my Master Gardener final exam and so needless to say I was a bit overwhelmed at first.



Thanks to Karen and her support steering me in the right direction in the beginning. I first contacted LaDonna Benedict. Thanks to the tremendous help of LaDonna! The plant sale could not have been a success without her support, coordinating the advertising, and her fantastic notes from last year. I quickly realized that I needed a co-chair to assist me. I asked Gayle Hayes, my intern buddy, and of course, like myself, she could not say "no". Many thanks to Gayle and her super-woman energy. She helped to coordinate the activities for the day of the sale.

I would have been a "basket case" if it was not for her. Also, many thanks to Gail Hollimon and her husband, Tommy, who sponsored both of the "potting days" and babysat plants for weeks. Tommy and Gail opened their home to us, helped to pot, label, water, and deliver plants. "Thank you" to Michele Templeton for creating the signs, laminating, donating plants (wonderful daylilies!), and delivering plants...and just pick up any loose ends. "Thank you" Kathy Parent, Marlene Gillman, and Robert Brannen for taking care of printing and distributing the flyers, and reserving the tables for the sale. "Thank you" to our wonderful phone people, Fran Robbins, Mary Brown, Bonnie Smolinski, Betty Mastly, and Lisa Cargo. A huge "Thank you" to the people who donated plants, helped with the potting days, delivered plants, and helped with the day of the sale. Also, thanks to Pikes, Home Depot, Lowes of Buford, and Parson's Ace Hardware.

No matter how small you think your contribution was, this sale could not have been a success without each and everyone of you. Everyone so graciously gave of their time and donations when asked to help.

Shannon Pable
Plant Sale Co-chairperson

New Notes on Daylily Rust

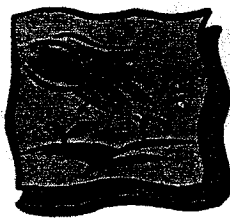
This disease has been found to be Asian based and brought in on plants that were propagated overseas. It has an alternate host, the perennial *Patrinia* although it does not need a host plant to be present on Daylilies. Measures include removing infected foliage, spraying routinely with the fungicides Daconil, Banner, Heritage or Contact. Identify this disease by the presence of pustules.

Leaf Streak is another disease problem that you will find on Daylilies. The infected foliage needs to be removed. There aren't any sprays for Leaf Streak. No pustules are found with this disease.

For more information call the Gwinnett County Extension Service at 678-377-4010

The First Gardeners

by Marjorie Claybrook



Ten thousand years ago in the foothills north of the Mesopotamian Plain, western man traded his nomadic life for one of agronomy. Later Sumerian tribes moved south into the delta, constructing canals to drain the swamps of giant reeds and bring water to the fertile but more desert-like regions. The royal city of Ur lay west of the lower Euphrates, which like the Nile flooded annually. As agricultural skills were honed, man began to experiment with plants not native to the region.

The epic poem Gilgamesh (2000BC) describes Ur as 1/3 garden, 1/3 city, and 1/3 sacred precinct. While no written descriptions of gardens of this period have come down to us, archaeological evidence show that plantings were rather formal—even inside the walls of fortified cities. Ancient gardeners had learned the value of solar exchange. These enclosed gardens were given the name *pairidazea* from which 'paradise' is derived. Figs, dates, as well as other flowers were among the first garden plants.

With expanding trade came an exchange of plants for agriculture, medicine and pleasure. By 2000 BC gardens for pleasure and religious significance were depicted in wall carvings. One of the most famous gardens of all time was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. King Nebuchanezar II built them for his wife, Amytis, who missed the green hills and meadows of her native Media. The gardens were designated as one of the ancient Seven Wonders of the World. The complicated irrigation system that lifted water from the river to the top of the garden remains a major mystery. The historian Deodorus wrote an extensive description of the gardens. It is thought that a mechanical device based on the screw was used to lift the enormous amount of water needed to sustain the terraced garden.



As the Middle East entered the age of empire, plant collection became a part of conquest. Cuneiform records from Ur and other cities include plant lists and herbals. At Nineveh (founded in 700 BC) a royal park was planted by Sennacherib as a pleasure ground and nature reserve. The park contained figs, pomegranates and vines as well as cotton, which he introduced from Khorsabad. This area was expanded by his successor Sargon II in 710 BC to contain trees for lumber, fruit and shade. Among the plants listed in the inventory are oak, tamarisk, willow, poplar, ash, cedar, cypress and juniper as well as olives, dates, almond, apple, pear, quinces, figs and grapes. Among the flowers and shrubs are lilies, tulip, crocus, lotus, daisy, box and cornflower.

The first mention of a celebrity gardener comes from an account by the Spartan envoy Lysander to the Greek general Xenophon. In his letter he describes his visit to the gardens of King Cyrus the Younger of Persia in detail. The garden paradise was formally planted and filled with hundreds of trees and flowers. He states that Cyrus himself planned the garden and grew many of the plants from seeds which he "tended with his own hand". The garden must have been splendid indeed—Persia was situated on the major trade route between Egypt and China. Plants and seed had long been among the most valued items of trade.



The Greeks who were never interested in gardens in the horticultural sense were impressed. A hundred years later Alexander the Great and his armies marveled at the sophisticated gardens of Persia and the glorious wildflowers of the high plateau. Over the course of several thousand years the inhabitants of Asia Minor had transformed the hostile environment of a high altitude desert plateau with extremes of temperature and less than 10 inches of rain a year into a legendary garden spot. Their secret was massive engineering projects such as the drainage of swamps and construction of a system of underground aqueducts. They also collected and experimented with thousands of plants from the far reaches of their known world.

By trial and error and forced adaptation they selected many of the plants that we enjoy today.

Notes on Dollar Spot on Bermuda

Dollar Spot is now being noticed on Bermuda lawns. It can be recognized by the elongated, purple banded lesions on the leaf blades. Although unsightly, this particular disease does NOT injure the Bermuda lawn. The condition is environmentally induced and may be corrected by good cultural practices. Add nitrogen fertilizers to stimulate the Bermuda grasses to grow. Standard applications of nitrogen should be sufficient. Remember to apply adequate water to lawns that are showing signs of Dollar Spot.

Meet Your Master Gardeners (Continued from page 3)

Theresa Schrum con't.

Theresa recently "attended a talk given by Dr. Kim Coder on native trees. I learned a lot about the needs of our native trees and why it is so important to promote their use and protect their habitats." She continues by stating that "Anyone who knows me knows that my gardening passions/obsessions are saving and promoting native plants and trying to stop the use of non-native invasive plants. So many non-gardeners (and some gardeners) don't realize the beauty that exists right here in Georgia and the harm that is being done by planting things like Privet, Japanese honeysuckle, etc."

To conclude Theresa's interview, she says that being a Master Gardener "has given me an opportunity to expand my knowledge, help others and meet obsessed gardeners, like myself, people like me, who will gather around a bag of compost like miners around gold, will talk with unbridled enthusiasm about mulch or aphids or some other topic and who can never have enough plants to satisfy them. It's like being among family or a support group where everyone understands and shares your passion (or obsession) for gardening."

Favorites: "My favorite garden tool is my Felco pruners. I always have them in my pocket. I have several gardening books I like, but the one most used is *The American Horticultural Society A to Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. It's falling apart!"



Shannon Pable con't.

plant walks. When they quiet themselves, they truly start to enjoy and be fascinated by nature.

Shannon's favorite plant area is "the wild area." There is always a new surprise popping up out there for me to learn about.

When asked about an inspiring lecture or seminar that she attended, Shannon responded with "My Master Gardener classes, of course! Also, about 10 years ago, I started taking classes from Tom Brown (Tracker Inc. in Asbury, New Jersey) in nature, tracking, and survival skills. This has led the way to many other classes in wild plants by instructors such as Mark Warren (Medicine Bow in Dahlonega, GA) and Richard Cleaveland (Earth School in North Carolina). These classes have helped me to have a much closer and thus balanced relationship with nature." She especially enjoys sharing information on wild edible and medicinal plants with others.

What has being a Master Gardener meant to her? "...well, I am still an intern" she replies with a smiling face.

Favorites: Her favorite tool is "my short handled Kodiak shovel; great for digging up sod! My favorite book...hmmm... *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide* by Lawrence Newcomb and *The American Horticulture Society A to Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. (It seems as though this may be a book to investigate as we have two interns that are impressed with it's contents.)



Gayle Hayes con't.

Perhaps my favorite plant is the common violet. After a long, cold Ohio winter, it was a promise that Spring had finally arrived."

Gayle enjoys her Master Gardener status. She says that "being a Master Gardener is the fulfillment of a goal for me. It ranks up there with the day I became an R.N."

As far as horticultural events are concerned, she states that "the ABG "Gardens for Connoisseurs" tour was heartwarming to me. I had the opportunity to work at the Halle Garden, 18 acres of woods and native plants near the heart of Atlanta. It was wonderful to see the guests respond to the garden. Many came to realize they could use something other than pansies or Bradford pears in their own yards."

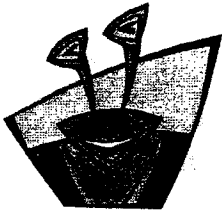
When asked about her unusual headwear, her response was "Where do I get the ideas for my crazy hats? I have always enjoyed entertaining others. I am not afraid to be different. I took a sabbatical from being a nurse in the 1980's and ran a singing telegram service. I was anything from a bag lady to Mae West!"

Favorites: "My favorite tool would have to be a tie. I have a True-Temper shovel that has an extra wide top lip that does not bruise the arch of my foot and it also has a padded handle. My other favorite is an ensilage fork that is perfect for mulching."



Master Gardeners are "plant-aholics" and as such are always searching for anything that will give them plant cultural information, identification, landscape designing, or whatever piques their fancy at any given time. An interactive CD by Dr. Michael Dirr is now available. *The Interactive Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* includes descriptions of 9,470 plant species and cultivars, over 1,100 line-drawings, over 2,100 photographs of trees, shrubs, vines, and groundcovers.

There are approximately 1,225 printed pages of text and line-drawings. A search engine allows you to find the "just right" plant for your landscape requirements. Included are a glossary, a zone map, a section on plant nomenclature/classification, and diagrams to clarify terms used to identify plant shapes. This product costs \$79.95 and can be purchased through www.plantamerica.com/.



SPACE ALIENS OR SPRING DEAD SPOT

Robert Brannen, Gwinnett Extension Agent

Each spring we get many calls about strange circles of dead grass in bermuda grasses. They usually are described as inverted trash can lids where the grass has sort of melted down. More than one person has implied that they suspect a spaceship has landed and left the spots. I am open to lots of things, but I suspect that these are more likely a problem we call spring dead spot (SDS). Our homeowner IPM expert, Taft Eaker, has recently researched the problem and shared a more technical explanation of the situation. I thought this information might be helpful when you are trying to make a diagnosis in the Extension Office or out at someone's lawn.

Taft writes: "In Georgia this disease is caused by the soil-borne pathogen *Leptosphaeria*. Symptoms are circular, bleached and sunken spots of grass that fail to green up in the spring. The disease appears on bermuda grasses that are intensively managed and 3-5 years or older. The disease is most prevalent in areas that are over-fertilized (particularly in the fall), as well as those with excessive thatch, poor drainage, and/or highly compacted soil.

Symptoms first appear in April as the turf begins to grow. Diseased areas are identifiable as circular dead patches of bermuda grass ranging from 3 inches to several feet in diameter. These areas can overlap to affect a much larger area. Spots can recur in the same area each year and appear ring-like as old patches expand and grass in the center recovers. Weeds may grow in the center of the affected areas. Symptoms of SDS can be separated from winter injury by the circular, whitish and matted appearance. Winter injury typically is straw colored and irregular in shape.

The pathogen produces toxins that are destructive to bermuda grass and interfere with root growth. The fungus attacks the roots, crowns, stolons and rhizomes of bermuda grass primarily in the fall and again in the spring, even though symptoms of infection are not always apparent above ground. The pathogen grows best during these times when temperatures are cooler and moisture is present. Unfortunately the SDS fungus cannot be reliably detected using typical compound microscope diagnostic techniques. In situations where SDS is suspected, cultural practices are important. Bermuda grass can be encouraged to grow over dead areas by raking and removing dead grass from the affected areas which facilitates rooting of nearby stolons. In very large patches, plugs of healthy turf can help speed coverage. Removal and replacement of soil is generally not recommended or effective because the fungus is soil-borne and widespread. Core aeration of compacted sites may help to reduce the severity of the disease by improving root growth and drainage. Dethatching can also produce a favorable growth response when the thatch layer exceeds 1/2 inch, and is best done just prior to green-up in late winter or after green-up but before the hot and dry period of summer.

Adequate fertility is important for high quality bermuda grass and for recovery from SDS. Severity of the disease can be reduced by avoiding heavy late season fertilization with quick release sources of nitrogen such as ammonium nitrate or urea. It is best to avoid nitrogen applications after August and to raise the mowing height beginning in September until the grass goes dormant where SDS has been a problem. Advise a soil test to see that adequate levels of potassium and phosphorous are present. Applications of chelated iron can improve color in the fall without the potential disease enhancing effects of a nitrogen application.



Systemic fungicides if used for SDS control must be applied in autumn to reduce root and stolon rot in the autumn and winter. They are of no benefit at this time of year. Begin around late August making 2-3 monthly applications depending on historical severity of the disease. If only one application is made, do so around September 15th. The fungicides azoxystrobin, propiconazole, fenarimol and myclobutanil are labeled for control of this disease. You can find this on page 479 of the Pest Control Handbook in the Extension office." You may also find this information on the UGA website at entomology.ent.uga.edu under Publications then locate IPM. The www. is not required for this section of the website.



Editors note:

Azoxystrobin is found under the brand names Heritage, Quadris, and Abound
 Propiconazole is found under the brand names Orbit, Banner, Tilt, and Immunex
 Fenarimol is found under the brand names Rubigan and Patchwork
 Myclobutanil is found under the brand names Nova, Systane, Eagle, Immunox
 (this is not a typo, just another fungicide)



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**.

Ground covers for dry sites

Creeping Thymes – *Thymus spp*
 Ribbon Grass – *Phalaris arundinacea*
 'Picta' or
 Prostrate Abelia – *Abelia xgrandiflora*
 'Prostrata'

A Bit of Dirt is published quarterly. Send your news articles to:
 Editor: Marlene Gillman
 gardensgreen@mindspring.com
 770-867-0426

Thank 's to all who contributed to this issue!!! You are greatly appreciated.



Can you name this plant?

Hardy, full sun, perennial grown from rhizomatous roots.

Flowers: Funnel-shaped lilac pink with deeper colored veination. Blackish red spots at base of each of 5 petals.

Winter to spring bloomer.

Pretty, gray-green leaves that are divided into many heart-shaped leaflets.

Good in a rock garden, raised bed, or containers..

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 June 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

Shannon Pable correctly identified the Mystery Plant in the April Newsletter. It was identified as *Manietta inflata*, Candy Corn Vine. Kathy Parent has reported seeing it the garden centers since she has become aware of the plant through the April issue of ABOD.

A Bit of Dirt

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