

# A BIT OF DIRT

Fall 2017

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A Newsletter of the  
Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association

*Promoting Gardening Through Education & Volunteering*



2017 GCMGA Photo Contest Winner - 1st Place Macro Wildlife - "Red-Eye" by Becky Panetta

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### **From the Editor ...**

What a hurricane season we've had! Harvey and Irma left such devastation throughout the South. I hope you and your family weathered the storms with minimal damage. Personally, my family and I didn't lose power or any significant trees during Irma, but the bonfire pit is fully loaded and waiting for a crisp, cool day to burn.

The media has supplied a wealth of photos of the unbelievable destruction from the hurricanes. Of all the photos I have seen, however, my favorite is of the line of trucks towing flat-bottomed boats into Houston to help with the rescue effort. Many of them came from Louisiana, and are often called "The Cajun Navy".

It would be nice if our governments could take care of us fully, but storms of these magnitudes discount that notion. Sometimes there are catastrophes which go beyond the resources of any government. That's when America demonstrates her greatness. People voluntarily give up their time and resources to help.

While we may never get the media coverage of the Cajun Navy, I think Master Gardeners are the best *everyday* examples of volunteers and education and government working hand-in-hand-in-hand to help. And it is my honor to be a part of one of the best MGA's in the state. Let's keep up the good work!

- Ann Langley

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**Project Spotlight ...** Vines Park 3500 Oak Grove Rd, Loganville



Vines Park started life as a private botanical garden before it was donated in 1990 to Gwinnett County for use as a county park. It has no ball fields, playgrounds or other athletic facilities and depends on its innate beauty and walking paths to attract and serve the community. With only one Parks and Rec Officer for over 30 acres of landscaped parkland, Gwinnett Master Gardeners provide vital support in maintaining the park.

A group of 5-8 Master Gardeners volunteer at Vines for 3 hours each Tuesday morning except when it is raining. The group weeds, prunes, transplants, cleans up, waters and provides educational opportunities for the community. Working with Parks and Rec on Global Volunteer Youth Services Day and the Girl Scouts have become annual events.

Members of GCMGA and GMGA in the working group apply for organizational grants each year to cover costs of various projects such as creation of a Pollinator and Butterfly Garden, renovation of the Brook Garden and Asian Garden, adding botanical tags to plants in the park, replacing trees taken down by the beavers and adding heritage roses to the Rose Garden.

Each quarter, the Master Gardeners develop and present a “walk and talk” demonstration to park visitors, averaging 35-45 visitors each time. The target audience includes home gardeners, home schoolers, people who walk in the park and others who visit. Recent “walk and talks” include: Unusual Plants at Vines, Pruning and Caring for Roses, A Butterfly Garden for Kids, the Asian Garden Strolling Path and Propagating Plants.

Master Gardeners have also taken on individual projects to enhance the park. We put on a plant sale with plants from our own gardens in conjunction with the annual Koi Club exposition to raise money for Vines’ projects. We’re recreating the Whimsical Garden at Vines. Some of our first efforts include a Birdhouse Tree and Vinnie, the Gnome. One of our members has also created signs for each of the individual gardens at Vines.



The latest project, ready to “go live” in the next few weeks, will help highlight new botanical events each week at Vines. A one-page insert will be available in an InfoBox at the park entrance for visitors to use on a self-guided tour. These handouts will be changed weekly to focus on what is blooming, unusual plants and wildlife (beavers, egrets and blue herons) or whatever is of interest at Vines that week.

Our group of volunteers provide a valuable service to the residents of Gwinnett County as well as enjoy a unique sense of camaraderie with fellow Master Gardeners. Anyone interested in joining the volunteer group at Vines Park should contact Shirley Bohm, Vines Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator ([shirley\\_bohm@hotmail.com](mailto:shirley_bohm@hotmail.com)).

- Shirley Bohm

## Chemicals in your garden? Some are necessary!

Many people choose to garden without chemicals. Protecting soil microorganisms and beneficial insects are important considerations in balancing our native eco-systems, and even preserving our planet! Still, eschewing all chemicals in the garden puts one of the key players at risk – YOU!

Disease is carried by some of the insects that garden alongside us. Mosquitoes, fleas, and ticks are just a few notorious garden “helpers” who can actually hurt us. Most people think of these pests only when traveling to certain parts of the world. That’s when we pack DEET and use it regularly! We prepare for mosquitoes

carrying exotic diseases like dengue and malaria; ticks spreading encephalitis and hemorrhagic diseases. But we have our own diseases to worry about right here in the US of A.

In Georgia, we need to be aware of ticks carrying Lyme disease, Heartland virus, and Rock Mountain spotted fever; mosquitoes with West Nile virus and Zika; and even fleas carrying typhus! Yes, the chances of getting one of these diseases remain thankfully low, but it's still important to protect yourself when outside. Fortunately, it's not hard to do. And while you are probably familiar with the precautions, use this as a reminder.

Protect yourself while gardening – every time:

- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, closed shoe, and hats. Tuck shirts into pants and pants into boots or socks. Light colors make it easier to see ticks.
- Check for ticks. Inspect your clothes and your entire body at the end of the day.
- Dump out any standing water outside around your house. Mosquitoes can breed in it in just a few days.
- Clear out brush and debris to keep ticks and fleas from moving in.

Try to make these steps part of your regular gardening habits. And remember the chemical that every gardener needs to know about -- an EPA-approved insect repellent. Apply it liberally to your clothes and any exposed skin. And, while we're talking chemicals, let's not forget sunscreen, too! For the best protection, apply sunscreen to all exposed skin, and then use insect repellent. Always follow product labels, and don't forget to wash repellent-treated skin with soap and water when you go back inside. [Click here](#) to find the insect repellent that's right for you.

- Kimberly Stump-Sutliff

*Kimberly is an oncology nurse and has worked with the CDC on the Zika virus response.*

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## **Dr. Mary M. Black**

**Administration Family and Consumer Sciences FACS  
County Extension Agent/Coordinator**



Gwinnett County would like to introduce you to our new Family and Consumer Sciences County Extension Agent/Coordinator, Dr. Mary M. Black.

Mary was born in Washington, DC and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. Her introduction to gardening started early. "My mother was an avid gardener. She had a beautiful rock garden on the side of a hill in our backyard. Whenever I was with her, no matter where we went – school, church, grocery store, or library, my mom would always point out the beautiful flowers she saw along the way. I learned to see the world through her eyes, always noticing the beautiful trees and flowers. She and my dad grew tomatoes and corn in our small side yard where we got a lot of sunshine. We grew grapes to make grape jelly for my brother's peanut butter and jelly sandwiches."

Her early training influenced Mary to become a master gardener, "which finally happened later in life rather than

earlier."

Mary attended Mars Hill College in the mountains of North Carolina near Asheville and received a B.S. in Home Economics with a concentration in Nutrition.

"Once I took my 1<sup>st</sup> nutrition class, I knew I wanted to be a dietitian and work in the hospital setting."

Being a dietitian required Mary to get a M.S. degree in Nutrition, so she continued her education at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. A couple of years later Mary thought she might like teaching nutrition at the University level and again continued her education at the University of NC in Greensboro to get her PhD in Nutrition.

"After graduating I had an opportunity to work with the Diabetes Treatment of Centers of America to serve as a diabetes educator/case manager in a Diabetes Center established at a local hospital. This was one of my very favorite jobs since I was able to teach nutrition to patients with diabetes and, therefore, reach those in need."

Mary Black's last position prior to moving to Georgia and working in Extension was serving as a department director of a community outreach and diabetes education center within a regional health system.

"I thoroughly enjoyed planning and developing disease management and prevention programs designed to meet the health needs of the community. I was able to fulfill my dream of starting up and directing a diabetes education center. I always enjoyed teaching people how to live healthier to prevent or manage diabetes and other chronic diseases."

The decision to become an Extension Agent began with the Georgia Master Gardening training. As she volunteered, she saw the wonderful collaboration of UGA Extension and Gwinnett County employees and volunteers.

"I saw the capacity to improve the everyday lives of Gwinnett County residents through education and training programs as well as the services offered through extension. Although the programs and services are a bit different from my work in the hospital setting, the community outreach aspect is the same as well as the potential to impact the community in a big way."

Regarding her new position Mary says, "I really enjoy working with so many dedicated employees and volunteers. I enjoy the fact that our programs and services reach so many different settings in the community - schools, day care centers, libraries, garden clubs, parks and recreation centers, etc."

Although her background is in nutrition, and she is a Family and Consumer Sciences Agent (not an Ag or 4-H agent), she has enjoyed learning about both the Ag and 4-H program areas, in addition to the Family and Consumer Sciences components of Extension.

"I would like to know more about forestry, water conservation, and wild animal habitats. I also want to learn more about the 4-H Youth Development program because I have seen what a positive impact it has made on our 4-H youth."

When asked what would make 2017 and her first year as Family and Consumer Sciences County Extension Agent/Coordinator at Gwinnett County Extension successful, Mary replied: "At this point in time, since I am so new to Extension, I will consider 2017 a successful year when I see and hear Extension staff and our volunteers get excited about their work, seek to grow where they can and feel a sense of accomplishment."

No doubt, Mary Black's enthusiasm is spreading among the staff and certainly among volunteers both as an Extension leader and as a Gwinnett County Master Gardener! She regularly attends monthly GCMGA meetings while maintaining her busy schedule at Extension. Hard to imagine Mary has any free time, but when she is not working, "I love to walk in the park – not only for exercise but to de-stress, think and pray. I also like to read, drink coffee and listen to music. There is such little "alone time" in my life these days but I need it to recharge my batteries. I also have a new, and of course adorable, grandson who is the light of my life. He is my first grandchild so of course I enjoy spoiling him. When he gets a little older (he is 7 months old now), I plan to introduce him to the world of gardening, encourage him to eat healthy, play outdoors and perhaps one day become a 4-H'er."

Mary's door is always open and you may contact her at [mblack01@uga.edu](mailto:mblack01@uga.edu).

- Jessica Miller

## 2017 Georgia Master Gardeners Conference

Dear Gwinnett Master Gardeners,

As President of GMGA, I want to thank each of you for all you have done to make the 2017 GMGA Conference a huge success. As a Gwinnett Master Gardener, I want to say that I am so proud to be a member of GCMGA and truly appreciate all you do.

The team spirit and many volunteer hours dedicated to this event are truly amazing. The gracious hospitality you offered all the participants throughout the conference made it really special. Thank you for the generous donation of delicious food and fabulous decorations for the conference reception.

You made it an event that will be remembered as "the best," and you set the goal high for future conferences.

On behalf of all of GMGA, thank you!

Sincerely,

Margaret Bergeron

GMGA President 2017

### **AND THIS FROM CAROLE TEJA**

THANK YOU, Gwinnett County Master Gardeners, for hosting a very successful, fun and educational Georgia Master Gardener Association (GMGA) state-wide conference this past weekend (Oct. 6-7). Over 200 MGs from Gwinnett and across Georgia gathered at Bogan Park Center and the Gwinnett Environment & Heritage Center in Buford for the workshops and conference.

My appreciation and thanks to the Extension Office staff and GCMGA Board for their continuing support, to co-chairs Linda Bolton and Jack Bolton especially, and to the many volunteers it took to stage a huge event such as this. A full report will be made at the October 16 meeting by which time we

should have some preliminary numbers available. A great showcase for Gwinnett. You made us proud.  
Thank You!

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## **2018 Photo Contest - New Categories**

Just a heads up. The categories for the 2018 Photo Contest have changed and they are ...

- Birds – At feeders, in garden or natural setting
- Close-ups and Macros – Details of plant or wildlife
- Digital Art – Creative editing, collage, special effects of photos of plants or wildlife.
- First-Time Submitters
- Garden – Gardens or portions of gardens but not close-ups of small features.
- Harvest – Harvested flowers, vegetables, and grasses or the act of harvesting them
- Landscapes – All the visible features of an area – from countryside to urban – but must include plant or wildlife
- Plants – Plants or flowers taken in garden or natural setting
- Still life – Fresh or dried, flower or vegetable arrangements
- Wildlife (other than birds) – In garden or natural setting

There are still a few months left if you would like to try your hand in one of these new categories. Full contest rules for 2018 can be found on the GCMGA website.

- Ann Langley

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READERS' POLL: Hopefully, we will not have another Snowpocalypse this January, but still it's a good time to make plans for the new year. So what is your 2018 New Year gardening resolution? Send your responses to [ann.langley@comcast.net](mailto:ann.langley@comcast.net) by January 2, 2018.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS ...

*GCMGA meets the third Monday of each month at the Bethesda Senior Center (225 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30044). Potluck supper at 6:30pm. Bring a dish to share or come for just the program at 7:00pm.*

**OCTOBER 16 - "Naked Ladies and Forget-Me-Nots" Dr. Allan Armitage** As our final speaker for this year, we welcome Dr. Allan Armitage to share his garden wit and wisdom. Emeritus Professor of Horticulture at the University of Georgia, "Dr. A" started the world-renowned Trial Gardens at UGA with fellow professor, Dr. Michael Dirr, in 1982. Together they changed the horticultural world and focused international attention on Georgia. An author of more than 14 books, Dr. A will bring books to sign and share his latest book, *Naked Ladies and Forget-Me-Nots*.

**November 20, 6:30 PM - Annual Holiday Party**