

A BIT OF DIRT

Spring 2018

A Newsletter of the
Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association
Promoting Gardening Through Education & Volunteering



2017 GCMGA Photo Contest Winner - 1st Place Plant "Japanese Snowbells" by Lori Prosser

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From the Editor ...

I had hoped to get this to you sooner, however, it seems our articles, though submitted last month, are still relevant thanks to our cool Spring. It's time to get planting! We've past the last frost date for our area and are headed into summer.

Don't forget the GCMGA Plant Sale is this Saturday, April 28. The Plant Sale Committee has worked tirelessly and we all look forward to a successful sale. And there are always seeds to be had at the SEED SAVERS SHUTTERS at the County Extension Office.

I'm pleased to announce that Susan Varlamoff will be a regular contributor to *A Bit Of Dirt*. Her expertise is sustainable gardening, a method that is better on the environment and easier on the gardener.

Many thanks also to Wes Nettleton, Jackie Kujawa, Shirley Bohm, Sharon Cassidy, Becky Wolary, and Allan Armitage for their contributions to this newsletter.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have in putting it together.

Until the summer issue, happy gardening!

- Ann Langley

Project Spotlight ... Community Garden @ Snellville



The cold winter months were challenging for gardeners, but that does not mean we were in hibernation at the Community Garden @ Snellville.

One of our exciting activities is a partnership with South Gwinnett High School. Karla Kosar, who teaches the Nutrition Pathway at the school, worked with her students on a Project Based Learning project. The goal was to build and maintain a small organic garden at the school. Students researched plant selection, the cost of garden supplies, organic pest control, composting, as well as local companies willing to donate items for the construction of a garden bed at the school. Engineering students also researched building techniques and determined a location for the 4' x 8' structure at the school. They presented their ideas to Principal Monique Lee for approval.

Last fall Ms. Kosar contacted the Community Garden for assistance with the project and master gardeners Wes Nettleton and Ileen Meggison were eager to help. Wes and Ileen taught 28 juniors and seniors in the Food Science class about gardening and helped plant cool-season vegetables such as kale, cabbage, mustard, lettuce, broccoli and carrots. Most of the plants starts came from the greenhouse at the Community Garden. The harvested vegetables are being used in the school's culinary lab.

"Students see how growing your own food can be a cost effective way to feed themselves or their family," Ms. Kosar said. "Working with the Snellville Community Garden also teaches the students the importance of community. Having thoughtful, dedicated and knowledgeable neighbors lend a hand makes a better environment for all of us. We are grateful for the partnership."

Another piece of exciting Community Garden news is that for the third consecutive year we received a \$500 grant for greenhouse operations from the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association. The money will be dedicated to the purchase of greenhouse supplies, including potting soil, fertilizer, flats, vegetable and flower seeds, and rooting hormone.

Other bits of garden news:

- The Community Garden will have a booth at Snellville Days, May 5-6 at Briscoe Park. Vegetables and flowers grown in the garden's greenhouse will be available and proceeds will benefit the garden.



[GCMGA Plant Sale, April 27-28](#)

Lilburn Library, 4817 Church St., NW, Lilburn, GA 30047

After months of digging and dividing plants, planning logistics and creating one-of-a-kind yard art, we are in the homestretch of the annual GCMGA Plant Sale. Once again, here are some last minute reminders.



- *Water your plants thoroughly Friday morning* so they are fresh and happy when you deliver them Friday Lilburn Library parking lot between 4 and 6 PM.
- *MG Volunteers should check in at the MG Volunteer tent both days* to sign in and find out where they are working. You can also stow your chair, water, and snacks here.
- *Saturday April 28 8-9AM is when MG Volunteers may shop* before the sale to the public starts at 9AM. NO sales on Friday afternoon.

Friday, April 27, 2 PM - 6 PM Set up and Plant Intake

- *2 PM - 4 PM* Bring items you are sharing such as tables, tents, wagons, and MG volunteer project posters.
- We could also use lots of gallon jugs of water. We'll recycle after the sale for you.
- *4 PM - 6 PM* Drive through plant drop off. Please be sure your plants have labels and have been watered.
- We could use some extra hands with plant pricing as well which may go on until 7pm.

Saturday April 28, 8 AM - 12 PM and 11 AM - 3 PM Plant Sale

- If you are volunteering Saturday, please remember to wear your MG t-shirt and badge and apron (optional). You'll definitely want to wear sunscreen and a hat. Bring a chair if you need to sit, a cool drink/water bottle, a snack if you need to

eat. There will be a volunteer cool down tent to stow your stuff and sit down as needed.

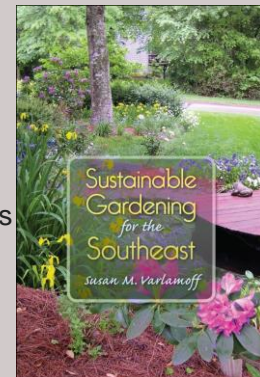
- If you are a project leader for an MG Garden project, be at the Plant Sale area by 2 PM Saturday afternoon with transportation to pick up any leftover plants you want for your project. First come, first serve.
- Remember to create a poster advertisement/information about your MG project. Let's crow about all the wonderful work our MG volunteers do for Gwinnett County. Poster size foam board would be great. Name of project and pictures and/or lists of what is happening with your project.

Contact Sonia Freidus (fds77691@gmail.com) to get on the volunteer list.

Questions: Lynda Pollock (robert9811@att.net) and Susan Kosenka (slk120@aol.com)

Sustainable Gardening for the Southeast

As environmental stewards, we strive each day to reduce our carbon foot prints by doing the many things experts recommend such as recycling, turning down the thermostats, shutting off the lights, driving fuel efficient cars, and eating lower on the food chain. But what about the landscape? The answer is easy – by using sustainable gardening practices, we can enhance local ecosystems. If it sounds overwhelming, it is not. By mimicking nature, we can cultivate a garden that can draw down the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, restore biodiversity with native plants, renew our soils with homemade compost, minimize irrigation with a water wise landscape, reduce pollutants using vegetation, and attract pollinators and wildlife to doorsteps with a variety of native plants and trees. Essentially, when we team up with Mother Nature, she does the heavy lifting. That translates to less work for the gardener including less time and energy spent dragging around hoses to water the lawn and flower beds and trying to figure out what spray to use on insects devouring our favorite plant. When you plant a landscape of



diverse native plants, pests become food for predators that you attract to your yard.

[Sustainable Gardening for the Southeast](#) is a step by step guide for gardeners – from professionals to weekend warriors – who want to do their part to give back to the earth while creating an oasis of calm and beauty for themselves and their families. The book is written simply, vividly illustrated and based on scientific research. In the upcoming months, I will use this space to outline some of the most important practices for creating an earth friendly landscape. Stay tuned!

- Susan Varlamoff

Susan Varlamoff is a biologist, an environmental activist, the former Director of the Office of Environmental Sciences of the University of Georgia and a lifetime Gwinnett Master Gardener.

[History of Tree Huggers](#)

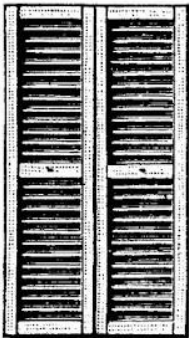


The first tree huggers were 294 men and 69 women belonging to the Bishnois branch of Hinduism, who, in 1730, died while trying to protect their village trees from being turned into the raw material for a palace. They clung to the trees, while being slaughtered by the foresters. But their action led to a royal decree prohibiting the cutting of trees in any Bishnoi village. And now those villages are virtual wooded oases amidst an otherwise desert landscape. Not only that,

the Bishnois inspired the Chipko movement (which means “to cling”) that started in the 1970s, when a group of peasant women in Northeast India threw their arms around trees designated to be cut down. Within a few years, this tactic, also known as tree satyagraha, had spread across India, ultimately forcing reforms in forestry and a moratorium on tree felling in Himalayan regions.

- Susan Varlamoff

Check out the **FREE SEEDS** at the [SEED SAVER SHUTTERS](#)



Veggies: lettuce, radish, butternut squash, coco peas, broccoli, swish chard, paste tomato, black butter beans

Flowers: gray head coneflower, gallardia, cherokee spirit coneflower, amsonia (blue), butterfly weed, purple bee balm, jewels of opar (a Felder Rushing favorite), swamp hibiscus, purple coneflower, helebore, cosmos, moonflower vine, cypress vine, castor bean, cleome

Herbs: giants of Italy parsley, broadleaf sage

The SEED SAVER SHUTTERS are at the County Extension Office, 750 South Perry Street, Suite 400, Lawrenceville, GA 30046.

TV Filming at Vines Park



If you have Comcast Cable with the On Demand feature, you can watch "Kevin (Probably) Saves the World," Episode 12, Caught White Handed, which was filmed at Vines Park, 3500 Oak Grove Rd, Loganville. The park was closed to the public during filming on December 6-12. Watch for scenes at Vines: the trailer scenes (in the wild area above the Butterfly Garden), scenes where the "Acorn Fairy" is picking up trash for community service (several beautiful scenes on the lake bank with Vines Lake as a backdrop) and where Kevin gets dunked in the water (in the Mermaid Fountain near the Rose Garden). Peggy Moss, MG who works for Parks and Rec at Vines Park, provided the picture. If you recognize any of the other settings, please let us know. There might be a scene

on the main street of Winder and maybe one of the shops in Conyers. Come out to Vines and see if you recognize the location shots.

by Shirley Bohm, Vines MG Volunteer Coordinator

Of Naked Ladies and Forget-Me-Nots

How Ladies Came To Be Wallflowers

Wallflowers seem to have gone out of fashion. Fortunately, a good deal of interest is being shown by plant breeders to enhance its vigor and show, so I am hoping that wall flowers come back in vogue.

While the original wallflowers are somewhat shy and unassuming, they never lacked for tenacity. They have been well know for hundreds of years for growing in chinks of stone walls. The herbalist and botanist Gerard wrote in 1596, "The wallflower groweth on bricke and stone walls, in the corners of churches, as also among rubbish and other such stony places everywhere." This likely explains the common name.

A rather undignified term has also arisen based on this plant. The term "wallflower" refers to a person who has no one to dance with, or feels shy, awkward, or excluded at a function. Today, the term seems to have morphed into describing a female but that was not always the case - young men may certainly be included in this shy group. Regardless, the term refers to those shy and unassuming people sitting against a wall, as far away from the proceedings as possible. How I recall those tortuous dances as a teenager, the wall could not be far enough away.

Erysimum

Their history as a wall plant makes two care tips obvious. Plant in full sun and provide excellent drainage. As a garden plant, breeding has been going on for years resulting in stunning colors and vigorous plants. Their somewhat rambling habit and colorful flowers are excellent for the cottage garden look.

A few species are cold hardy to about USDA zone 7, but most should be treated as annuals almost everywhere in the United States and Canada.



- Dr. Allan Armitage, Professor Emeritus of Horticulture, University of Georgia

Newsletter readers can receive a 10% discount on any of Dr. Armitage's books on his website (www.allanarmitage.net). Just type GCMG in the space for discount code and the price will automatically be reduced by 10%.

And speaking of Allan Armitage ...

The Athens Garden Tour

I had no idea when I signed up for the Allan Armitage Garden Tour that it would expand into a tour of other famous Athens gardens and Goodness Grows nursery. Twenty-nine of us carpooled from all over Gwinnett County to Athens, Georgia.

Our first stop was Allan Armitage's garden. He and his lovely wife, Susan, have downsized, indoors and out, but he has still managed to plant hundreds of plants in the margins of his half-acre lot - beautiful Japanese maples, hydrangeas, hellebores,



roses, Solomon's Seal, hostas, and native azaleas. One of Allan's favorite tricks is to run climbing roses up into neighboring trees. His Lady Banks rose in full bloom that day stole the show. Allan also showed us his "vegetable garden". The less than two square feet patio container and an equally small in-ground plot is just big enough to grow his favorite cool season vegetables in the winter and tomatoes in the summer.

We all ate our brown bag lunches on his back porch - well, most of us did. The Schofields have a motto, "Have blanket. Will picnic."



After lunch we drove a couple of miles to Ann Frierson's beautifully manicured garden rooms where we met her full-time gardener. Once upon a time, according to Allan, Ann's husband asked her what she wanted for her birthday. She asked for the next-door neighbor's house. Why did she need another house? Turns out she didn't want the house just the land to vent her garden mania. We entered Ann's gardens through the bricked courtyard with its outdoor shower. Passing through we walked across the upper lawn which overlooked the renovated tennis-court-turned-lawn. A short wooded pathway took us to yet another courtyard, cool and shady, a perfect place to relax on a hot, summer afternoon. On the next terrace up, sixteen raised beds flanked an arrow-shaped fountain and off that plaza there are small garden rooms with sculptural focal points. UGA Hort students with an interest in landscape design would do well to study

Ann's gardens.

Vince Dooley is another Athens resident famous for his long, successful tenure as the Dawgs head football coach. Allan says when Dooley retired from coaching and became UGA's Athletic Director, the Coach signed up for one of Allan's horticultural classes. Yes, Coach Dooley LOVES plants - all kinds of plants - and his home which sits on 2-3 acres is full of them. Even the poolside patio is full of groupings of potted plants. I am not much of a native azalea fan, but in his backyard we came upon one which had grown to the size of a small tree. The afternoon sun shone through the yellow flowers and they glowed. Now I'm scouting my property for the perfect place to plant my native azalea.

Since Lexington, Georgia, is not that much farther east of Athens, many of us decided to visit Goodness Grows nursery. ([Click here to visit their website.](#)) If you've never been, you must go. The nursery was one of the first in the South to offer container-grown perennials year-round and to use display gardens for marketing and educational purposes. The nursery's propagation and protection methods have set an industry-wide standard for perennial plant production. In fact, the GCMGA has been invited to come back with a brown bag lunch and tour the gardens and their six-acre production fields. I'm in. Who's with me?

- Ann Langley

Many thanks to Susan Varlamoff for planning a great trip and many thanks to Laurie Wakefield. Your photos of our field trip are beautiful. I hope you plan to enter some of them in our 2019 Photo Contest!

And another Spring and Summer are appearing ...

When I volunteered to write an article for the newsletter, I gave it a lot of thought about a subject. Well, we all have read the articles about HOW to make your plants

grow, and we all have read the articles on WHAT we need to do to make our plants survive, but when it comes down to it we walk out in the yard and walk with our head hung low and say, "I'll never get all these weeds out of the garden spot or in my beds." Now confess, if you are like me, my yard at this point could be the poster child for UGA on what weeds grow in your yard. Mindful, my front yard is cared and manicured, but the side yard has issues that my lawnmower and I take care of one at a time.

I wanted this article to be just a good laugh or two at what we overlook so we can hurry to the next plant sale, help with another MG project, or just go to nurseries and look at the new fresh plants that have arrived for spring. I am so guilty of this. I stop and have this vivid imagination of my yard that will someday be featured on the Home and Garden Show. Yeah, right!

Plans in my yard should be in full swing at this point. I retired back in December and said to myself that there is no reason why I should have a weed anywhere on my property. I have all the time in the world to do the weeding and feeding for the perfect place. WOW, was that a joke. I can find ten projects the minute I raise the carport door and never make it out to the yard on some days.

To make a short article, I give myself a big applause for keeping up this big place. No, all the flower beds are not perfect, and there is always something new to do, but at least it is an ongoing project that puts me out in the morning sun, the quiet time to reflect on my soul, and if nothing else goes right the whole day, I have murdered several weeds and made one thing look better.

Find time to laugh at your garden and landscape. Sometimes you are the only one to laugh! Experiment with new ideas, some will work and others will not, but at least you tried. They will come and take me to the crazy house someday for the times I have laughed at myself and trust me, there is no one around. Thank goodness I have my dogs to pretend they did something funny. God gave us talents as gardeners that vary in a lot of different ways. I'm still looking for mine, how about you?

Happy Gardening!

Sharon Cassidy – MG 1988



GCMGA Website

Most of us rely on email and meeting announcements for our information about GCMGA and forget to visit the website. You're missing out if you don't open your browser to <http://gwinnettmastergardeners.com> We have uploaded candid meeting, field trip, and workshop pictures to the website. All the photo contest entry pictures are there. Did you know all the "A Bit of Dirt" newsletters are there? Plus of course, speaker information for the next three meetings so you can plan ahead.

For those of you that have the option in your email account, you can also set the RSS feed to our website to alert you via email when new content is added. Ask me how.

As a member, you have access to the directory which give phone numbers and addresses. Grant guidelines and apps, field trip and workshop information is there too as well as our entire Board Members list... so have a look and don't miss out.

- Becky Wolary

We Give Scholarships!

As part of our mission to share knowledge within our community and foster advanced education, the GCMGA awards \$500 scholarships to students in the horticultural program at Gwinnett Tech. The only additional requirement is that the student must be a Gwinnett County resident. For 2018, the GCMGA is honored to provide \$2,500, that is \$500 scholarships to five students. Aaron Poulsen, the Horticulture Program Director at Gwinnett Tech, leads the awards panel.

- Becky Wolary

GCMGA PHOTO CONTEST

The deadline for the submission of photographs is midnight **Sunday June 3, 2018**. All contestants must be **2018 Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association members** and the photographs must have been taken in 2017.

Photographs should all be nature or garden related and appropriate to the category entered. The categories are Birds, Close-ups and Macros, Digital Art, First-Time Submitters, Gardens, Harvest, Landscapes, Plants, Still Life, and Wildlife (other than birds). Each submitter may enter one (1) photograph in each category. [Click here](#) for more details.

Deadlines for A Bit of Dirt

Summer 2018 - June 21 (summer solstice)

Fall 2018 - September 22 (fall equinox)

Winter 2019 - January 11

Spring 2019 - March 20 (spring equinox)

Upcoming Meetings

May 21 Eleanor Craig “The Fern Lady”

Based out of Cedar Bluff, Alabama, her small specialty nursery known as “Fern Ridge Farms” ships all over the country.

Her presentation will include insight into growing many familiar and new garden ferns, including managing the impacts of climate change, identifying location needs and plant care. Beware, her love for ferns is contagious!

June 18 The Artful Container Garden, Judy Peacock

Container gardens are perfect for small spaces and for adding dimension to a landscaped space. Master Gardener Judy Peacock will share her secrets for eye-catching compositions.



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