

A Bit of Dirt

Spring 2020

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



Native Azaleas by Lisa Klein

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From the Editor's Desk

As your new newsletter editor replacing Ann Langley, I'm asking for your help. I'd like to make "The Bit of Dirt" all about our GCMGA members and committees - who they are, what they're planning, what they do and only you can tell me. Do you have a project you can share with us? Do you have something you'd like to list in the "Coming Events"? Have you received a weird, wild or wacky (or just plain interesting) gardening question recently? What or who do you want to hear about? Let me know: 770-676-7596 or shirley_bohm@hotmail.com.

Help our Master Gardener interns get acquainted with the Master Gardening World. Invite them to come join you on your project so they can learn what we do. There's a capsule sketch of each of our interns below with their major interests and contact information.

The coronavirus is definitely putting a crimp on our Master Gardener style. So many of our projects are on hold while we socially distance ourselves from our friends and colleagues and shelter in place. We can use this time for planning, communicating and attacking those weeds in our own garden though (or am I the only one with weeds?).

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. Be Safe!

The Bit of Dirt Editor,
Shirley Bohm

Message from the President...

Brown Lumps to Blue Beauty

It's a strange time that we're living in. We are collectively holding our breath waiting for deliverance from evil and all around us new life is bursting forth in a palette of Spring colors. But as gardeners we are used to contrast and paradox. We throw rotting vegetable scraps in a compost pile and in a matter of months we have sweet smelling soil ready to anchor lovely new growing things. We cut a stem from a hydrangea, poke it in soil and watch new leaves sprout and roots spread out underneath. We plant little seeds and out of the ground come sunflowers, or corn stalks, or rambling cucumber vines. We coax and coddle precious seedlings only to see them grow scrawny and stunted while inches away despised weeds thrive thick and lush.

In my early days as a Master Gardener I fell in love with a beautiful, blue anemone, 'Lord Lieutenant' by name. As soon as I discovered it, I set about acquiring some for my garden. When the autumn arrived (the proper time for planting this beauty) I eagerly opened my shipment from Brent and Becky and held in my hand what bore a striking resemblance to dried dog poop. I had planted lots of bulbs, fat ones, tiny ones and all sizes in between, and I had planted many seeds – tiny ones and fat ones and all sizes in between, but I had never seen anything quite like this dismal collection of 'things.' Nevertheless, I trusted the source, and I trusted the advice I'd been given, and I planted them according to instruction. But I didn't really believe those brown, uh lumps, could really amount to much, until the following Spring.... There in my garden were the beautiful, blue blossoms of 'Lord Lieutenant.' I was overcome by the miracle of nature and nature's God. Life can come from dormancy and God can indeed bring beauty out of ashes.

Over and over the cycle repeats. Sunshine and Rain. Springtime and Harvest. For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven. Spring is here in the natural world and Spring will come in our society. Scripture tells us weeping may endure for a night, but Joy comes in the morning. Hold on through this night of uncertainty and waiting. We are gardeners, and we are resilient. New life will come. Some things will be lost, but many new blessings will be gained.

Virginia Schofield

GCMGA President

Report from Grants Committee:

Kudos to the Nine Master Gardener Projects Funded this Year!

Imagine conceiving of a garden you would like to create or improve and receiving the money to do it! The mission of the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association includes educating the community about sustainable gardening practices and encouraging good stewardship of our environment. By offering grants for projects that create or enhance gardens in Gwinnett County, we enable Master Gardeners to increase their impact. They reach more Gwinnett residents and share more gardening knowledge. This knowledge is then passed on. We all benefit when gardens are planted, food is grown and we learn more about soil, garden organisms and good cultivation techniques. In addition to the project manager, most projects involve several Master Gardeners.

Grants are awarded for up to \$500. In addition to being in the county, the garden should be accessible to the public. Grant funds can cover a variety of materials including perennial plants and vegetable starts, soil and amendments and materials for building raised beds. Attracting pollinators and educational components such as signs can be included. Guidelines and the application are posted on our website: gwinnettmastergardeners.com.

Applications were due in late January. The Grant Committee read all the submissions and made recommendations for approval. The 2020 committee members are **Erby Daniel, Faith Mann, Becky Wolary, Virginia Schofield** and **Martha Whitman, Committee Chair**. Grants were awarded in early February and must be spent by November 15th. Receipts, a simple report and a poster with some photos of the project to be displayed at the Plant Sale is due by then so others can learn what GCMGA does in Gwinnett.

- At Snellville Community Garden, **Wes Nettleton** heads a project to grow bedding plants in the greenhouse and add a pollinator garden next to the gazebo. Vegetable plants for our GCMGA Plant Sale come from this project which also raises funds for the Garden@Snellville and donates food to SE Gwinnett Co op.
- Creative Enterprises will see the addition of a perennial pollinator and bird garden, raised beds and berry walkway, all with signage. **Beth Arechiga**, a new MG, leads this project which will utilize recycled pallets.
- New raised vegetable beds will be built with donated lumber at Ferguson Elementary, lead by new MG **Victor Ruiz**. Grant funds will pay for the soil, berry bushes, grape vines and signs to identify the plants.
- Extending the project from last year at Georgia Piedmont Land Trust, Mary Kistner Center, **Carol Hassell** directs an expanded restoration of a decades old woodland garden using native plants to create a resilient landscape.
- Grace New Hope Church will benefit by the addition of a perennial and native plant garden emphasizing plants attractive to pollinators. New MG **Tonya Delozier** will add identification signs and use recycled pallets to build the raised beds.

•**Joyce Teel** manages McDaniel Farms' variety of projects which donate many pounds of food to area co-ops from established demonstration gardens. The common area is planted with a 1930s farm theme. Regenerative gardening principles are used and this year they will test grow peanuts and Orange Bulldog Pumpkins.

•At Rebecca Minor Elementary School, a team led by **Abby Lockhart** continues to revitalize an organic garden. They are replacing timbers, building a compost bin and adding a new perennial bed with pollinator plants.

•Southeast Gwinnett Food Co-op Garden continues to increase production with **Jacquelyn Daniells** and team. Funds will be used to purchase plants and seeds, amend soil, repurpose a compost bin into a potato bin and repair current beds. Perennial pollinator plants will be added if possible.

•**Shirley Bohm** leads a team at Vines Gardens where they will refurbish the Butterfly Garden by adding plants and installing an Insect Hotel in time for the August Pollinator Census. A long-lasting information display about solitary bees will be added to educate the public.

Consider getting involved with one of these projects or applying for a grant next year to realize your idea! Submitted by **Martha Whitman**.

Report from Plant Sale Committee:

Happy Spring - GCMGA's Annual Plant and Garden Art Sale is Coming (Soon, I Hope)

The Plant Sale has been OFFICIALLY CANCELLED for April 25th but we are working on a plan B - will let you know ASAP what that plan is to be. Hopefully you can park the plants you've potted up in a shady corner and let them grow happily until we can work out a new sale date. If you can't store in your own yard, let **Lynda Pollock** know and she'll help you find a plant sitter. As usual **Susan Kosenka** and **Lynda Pollock** are so excited to invite everyone to get involved in some way or in many ways! Options are unlimited!!! Bank those MGEV hours early in the year. We even have a GCMGA Plant Sale line in MGLog.

The GCMGA Plant Sale is our major source of income to fund our grants for Gwinnet County garden projects. We need our members to help us create a fabulous sale for our customers. How can I help, you ask? Well, here goes.

- Potting up plants from our own yards is number one! This is mostly a pass along plant sale – what plants do you love to grow and have extra? Beautifully potted plants will help us sell our programs.
- We're hoping several folks will plant up some annual color pots – these sold very well last year. Trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and vegetables - all are welcome.
- This year we are trying to add many more native plants and hope you have some to share as well – we've ordered some Swamp Milkweed from Baker Environmental Nursery. We also have some wonderful climbing hydrangeas from Wilkerson Mill Nursery.
- Volunteering your time and energy: Helping on Plant Digs and potting up donated plants, transporting plants to the sale, pricing plants during set up, cashiers, tally checkers, answering customer questions about plants, helping set up the site, helping to break down the site, sharing posters of your MGEV projects, donating items to sell in the garden art tent, working in the "Ask A Master Gardener" tent, wagon wranglers, watering plants to keep them fresh, and many other activities. We truly need all hands on-deck. And as usual **Sonia Freidus** will keep a list of our volunteers and where they want to work and where they are needed.
- We would also love to borrow your wagons for our shoppers' convenience. If you can save plant trays (cardboard or plastic), we could use these as well.
- We are also planning a raffle this year and are looking for some special items to raffle off. What do you have that someone would take a chance to own? A special planter? A neat tool? A fabulous plant?
- We also need donations for our Garden Art tent – and someone to oversee this area. We have several items left over from last year, but we need more items – things don't have to be handmade – just something you don't want any more and you think someone else might enjoy using to decorate their garden. We include old tools and pots, bird feeders and cute chachkies. And don't forget to donate your extra garden books.



We look forward to seeing your wonderful plants and spending the day together! See you soon!

Lynda Pollock [robert9811 @att.net] and **Susan Kosenka** [slk120@aol.com], **Sonia Freidus** [fds77691@gmail.com]

Report from Trainee Breakfast Committee:

The Breakfast Club.

This is the fourth year that the Trainee Breakfast Committee (**Greg Mauldin, Mary Ann Hindes, Marcia Lambert, Kathy Pittman, Jean Shapiro, Debbie Hoakes, Robert Ayer, Committee Chair**) has provided a breakfast and lunch to Master Gardener Trainees of Gwinnett and the Metro Atlanta Counties. It is also my fourth year of chairing the Gwinnett County Master Gardener

Association Trainee Breakfast/Lunch Committee.

Our 2016 MG Trainee classes ended and we all joined the ranks of “newbies” searching for volunteer hours. **Carole Teja** and I, unknowingly, volunteered for the same activity, a pest management certification class at an Environmental Conference, where we assisted the instructor throughout the day. I also volunteered at the annual Georgia Master Gardeners Association conference, where Carole, a former president of GMGA, was as always, in attendance. She, like most seasoned master gardeners, is always mentoring and teaching anyone with a listening ear, especially MG Trainees. Therefore, she asked if I would be interested in chairing one of our committees and that she'd find someone special to help us get started. That someone was **Debbie Hoakes**, a classmate and fellow 2016 Trainee, who gave us our unofficial name “The Breakfast Club”.

We had the most wonderful group of trainees (most from our 2016 trainee class) volunteer to be a part of this “Breakfast Club”. **Karen McGinty** and her team (the previous Trainee Breakfast Committee) served for many years. They graciously shared their knowledge and wisdom and sent us off to forge our own path. We became one big happy family at our MG Trainee study sessions at **Greg and Mary Ann Hindes’** home. The family then decided to add lunch to our menu. We also mentor our new trainees. **Jean Shapiro**, who shares a few storied words below, took on an additional role, mentoring the 2018 & 2019 MG Trainees by facilitating study sessions at her home.

Our first Trainee Breakfast/Lunch event of 2020 was Wednesday, March 4th. We are enthusiastic about another opportunity to create an event that fills our room with the aroma of great food, smiles, laughter, comfort and conversation! Submitted by **Robert Ayer III**.



Eat, Drink and Be Merry with a Master Gardener Trainee

The breakfast for Master Gardener Trainees has evolved for the committee of seven into a breakfast and lunch event. Using information from the previous committee, we have provided our trainees with some tasty snacks, entrees, and desserts. Our Gwinnett County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, Extension Agents, and Extension Employees have donated numerous supplies like coffee, heavenly desserts such as chess cake, and Greg and Mary Ann's "world famous" chili. Others have contributed egg salad, chicken salad, and pimento cheese sandwiches. Better fare you could not find anywhere!

Set-up is always an interesting event. Since coffee is essential for our trainees, we must arrive at 8:00 a.m. to begin this process because it takes nearly forty-five minutes to perk a large pot of coffee. We then arrange tables in a unique horseshoe configuration and begin decorating with tablecloths, flowers, baskets, and trays. Breakfast items are the usual yogurt, fresh fruit, and pastry items like yummy banana bread. We are looking into the possibility of getting Chik-fil-A chicken biscuits

Lunch is served around noon. It is so interesting to listen to Master Gardener Trainees. Their enthusiasm regarding the lectures is joyful. The committee of seven serves seventy to eighty people. Then, pack-up and clean-up takes about thirty minutes. We leave the temporary "MG Café" in pristine condition...until we begin again the next Wednesday. Submitted by **Jean Shapiro**.

Note from the Editor: *On March 4th, the Trainee Breakfast Committee found to their surprise that the early voting staff as well as early voters themselves were overjoyed to find somewhere they could purchase snacks and lunch. Some emergency phone calls got volunteers to bring in more food so Master Gardener trainees wouldn't be short. Then the final surprise was postponement of the Master Gardener course for an indefinite time because of the corona virus. Resumption date for the course still TBD.*

2020 Great Georgia Pollinator Census on August 21-22.

Becky Griffin, School and Community Garden Coordinator for UGA Cooperative Extension, was the organizer for the first Great Georgia Pollinator Census in August 2019. More than 4,000 people participated in the 2019 census and held 4567 counts in 133 counties. This census provided a needed benchmark for the state's native pollinator population. Future censuses will help track the health of Georgia's pollinators.

Each participant in the census chose one individual blooming plant to watch for 15 minutes. They counted the number and type of pollinator insects such as bumble bees, carpenter bees, honey bees, wasps, flies or butterflies that they saw on that plant, the time of day, weather and the location of the observation. They were provided with pictures of the pollinators to help identify the correct insect.

Even though wasps, flies and bees don't usually give you warm and fuzzy feelings, these pollinators are key to the survival of wild plant species and most of our garden, landscape and field crops. They also help pollinate and control pests that destroy our agricultural crops and landscape. Gathering information about these pollinator populations is vital.

Be a Citizen Scientist! Plan now to take part in the 2nd annual Great Georgia Pollinator Census on August 21-22, 2020. Wouldn't it be great if every Master Gardener project in Gwinnett County took just 15 minutes in August to do a census count? Plant some good pollinator plants this spring and register to take part on the Great Georgia Pollinator Census homepage at ggapc.org.



August 21st & 22nd, 2020

Protecting Georgia pollinators
one count at a time!

Report from Garden Tour Committee:

Down the Garden Path

After a five-year hiatus, the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association will once again present a spring garden tour. **Down the Garden Path will take place on Saturday, May 30th from 9am - 4 pm, rain or shine. WE WILL ANNOUNCE ANY CHANGE IN DATE BECAUSE OF COVID-19.**

As you may know, gardening is the number one hobby in America. Part of GCMGA's mission is to educate the public about horticultural practices that will foster both beautiful gardens and a healthy environment. This year we hope to educate approximately 250 Gwinnettians in the realm of sustainably responsible gardening and provide them with numerous ideas for improving their own "bit of dirt".

We will feature 7 private and 3 public gardens on the tour. All are located along the highway 78 corridor, from Lilburn to Loganville. We made this area the focus of the tour for ease of travelling in our county on a Saturday. As you know traffic can be a nightmare any day of the week in Gwinnett!

For your enjoyment we have selected gardens with varying features.

- Two shade gardens having difficult, steep terrain, have been beautified with lovely, colorful low maintenance plantings.
- We have a wonderful native garden that is also a Certified Wildlife Habitat. This garden teaches us how to structure native plants for interest. The winding paths facilitate serene walks through the garden.
- Several of the gardens have water features, ranging from a bubbling fountain to a koi pond and a waterfall flowing from a granite outcropping.
- Also, in store for our visitors is a formal English style garden, that expands into a natural setting with a splendid summerhouse on a hill overlooking it all.
- I must mention the Charleston style garden that utilizes classic Southern plants to cleverly camouflage a problem spot.
- We also offer a landscaped garden that employs sustainable practices and showcases some lovely focal pieces.

One of the pocket gardeners has hardscaped much of her rear garden since she last participated in our garden tour. By doing this she expanded the usable space allowing her to provide more interest in her garden. Our other pocket gardener has capitalized on the adjacent protected natural area beyond her own garden which she filled with a variety of colors, textures and a privacy wall, thus creating her own personal oasis.

We've chosen to include three public gardens that are tucked away along the garden tour route. There is a demonstration garden, adjacent to a locally owned garden center, geared to educating the gardening public in plant selection and plant placement. Also included is a lovingly maintained church garden tended by Master Gardeners. Then between Grayson and Loganville, we also encourage everyone to visit our beloved Vines Park that Master Gardeners continue to help preserve.

This is a gardener's garden tour. All of our gardens encompass interesting features that can easily be incorporated into your own garden without breaking the bank! ***Tickets go on sale April 1st, 2020! (no fooling). They can be purchased at the May GCMGA meeting, www.gwinnettmastergardeners.com or at Antiques in Old Town, 93 Main Street, Lilburn 30047.*** Prices are: \$16 on-line, \$15 in person or \$20 the day of the tour. Day of Tour tickets may be purchased at garden #1 on the tour, the Varlamoff garden, 3730 Windhurst Drive, Lilburn, 30047. Questions? Email 2020gardentour@gmail.com

We are still in the market for docents, plant label writers (we provide the list and the plant markers), and garden angels to help our tour hosts with last minute garden needs. You may sign up at the April and May GCMGA meetings or call, text, email or snail mail **Linda Bolton**, **Susan Varlamoff** or **Jessica Miller**.

Linda B: 770-855-7580, lynrn47@gmail.com,

Susan V: 770-618-9067, svarlaoff@comcast.net,

Jessica M: 864-593-0160, jessicamiller007@comcast.net.

Please join us May 30th for a lovely day. Submitted by **Linda Bolton**.

Mentoring, Why it's so important

Won't you think about being a mentor to our new Master Gardeners and interns? Being a mentor won't take a lot of time. If you are interested, please reach out to Lisa Klein at UGA Extension Gwinnett at lisa.klein@gwinnettcountry.com or 678-377-4026, you won't regret it! Here's why mentors are so valuable!

1. **Mentors provide information and knowledge.** Benjamin Franklin once said "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." Starting something new is always a little scary, but having a mentor there helps steady you, gives you a wealth of knowledge to tap into and gives you the confidence to flourish. Why should you mentor a MGEV trainee? Let me count the ways.
2. **Mentors can see where we can truly shine, and when we may not.** When we start something new, we often don't know where to start. By developing a relationship with a trainee (or new MGEV), you can help them see things that they themselves might not see.
3. **Mentors can find ways to stimulate personal growth.** There is a delicate balance of mentoring someone, but not creating them in your own image. A

mentor wants that person to create an opportunity for themselves. Maybe you will see a bit of yourself in that trainee? Eager, lots of ideas? Cultivate and guide that energy!

4. **Mentors offer encouragement and help keep us going.** Oprah Winfrey stated, "A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself". They are there no matter what, and offer moral support mixed with cheerleading. New folks really appreciate that and it can be great for the mentor too!
5. **Mentors can educate through boundaries that we may not know to set for ourselves.** Becoming a new master gardener can be daunting to some. They may not know where to start or what to do. Every volunteer opportunity should have an educational component, but there is a lot of flexibility in that. A good mentor can guide them to ideas for projects they may have never thought about.
6. **Mentors are sounding boards for ideas, perfect for an unfiltered opinion.** New master gardeners may have tons of ideas. A mentor can help them see which ones have potential and why others may not.
7. **Mentors are trusted advisers.** A new master gardener usually doesn't know many others in the program when they first start. Everyone has a different personality and while some people make friends easily, some are a bit more reserved. A good mentor can become a friend to a new face in the crowd.
8. **Mentors can help connect.** New master gardeners may not know where to look for projects (other than the newsletters Extension sends out) and they probably won't know of many opportunities within their community if they are new to the business of volunteering. A mentor can help point them in the right direction of new project opportunities and places for them to shine.
9. **Mentors have experience and can help prevent beginners from making mistakes.** Not that there are many mistakes to be made, but why should a trainee get all excited about creating a project only to learn it doesn't fit under the guidelines? A good mentor can be a sounding board for ideas.

10. **Mentors give freely of their time, making them priceless.** A mentor doesn't help because there is money involved, instead they have a giving heart, which is probably why they became a volunteer in the first place! They are paying it forward, maybe from a similar experience they had when they were just starting out in the master gardener program.

What's up with the Community Garden@Snellville?

The Community Garden@Snellville (CG@S) located in Briscoe Park has 48 raised beds rented on an annual basis. Gwinnett County Master Gardeners contribute significant time and support to the success of the Garden. We also manage a 40' X 20' greenhouse with the goal of producing vegetable, flower and herb plants for spring and fall plant sales.

The Food Well Alliance is a collaborative network of local leaders working together to build thriving community gardens and urban farms. Since 2015, the Alliance has invested \$185,000 directly into 90 community gardens across Clayton, Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties through its Community Garden Grant.

Just last week, the CG@S was awarded a \$1,500 Food Well Alliance community garden improvement grant. The beauty of this grant is that it is dedicated to infrastructure expenses, thus we can purchase or replace tools as shovels, hoes, hoses, nozzles and a garden cart. While our greenhouse is wonderful, it also is something of a money pit, and Irrigation system and lighting issues can be addressed. Finally, we plan to add an additional raised bed in the garden for training and demonstration purposes with a focus on family gardening.

We are extremely appreciative to the Food Well Alliance for their financial backing to community gardens throughout the Atlanta metro area. Through this effort we can

support the local area and provide gardening opportunities and fresh vegetables.

For the past 3 years, the CG@S with GCMGA grant funding has produced seedlings in their greenhouse for our plant sale in late April as well as Snellville Days festival in early May. Plant propagation starts in January and really cranks up in early March. Thus, we were well underway when the COVID-19 pandemic came along causing cancellation of both plant sales.

With around 1,000 seedlings already growing the greenhouse and limited opportunities for sales, we worked with the Snellville City Manager and GCMGA to support a drive through Farmers Market at City Hall on April 4th. We took the plants that were large enough for transplanting and made them available to the public. This turned out to be a resounding success as most all our available transplants sold in just 2 hours. Playing up the angle of planting Victory gardens seemed to really strike a chord with local gardeners. Submitted by **Wes Nettleton**, Project Leader.

Enjoy Making Hypertufa!

Making concrete-type garden items is as enjoyable as mixing a cake but a darn site messier so be prepared! Friends and family will be thrilled to receive gifts from you of these very personalized crafted ornaments. So, what is hypertufa? Use your search engine and especially YouTube® and research “hypertufa” and the wide range of options and the flexibility of creating hypertufa. If going onto YouTube®, especially look out for a 79 year old, very entertaining and educational, Helen Wyatt from South Georgia. The recipes can vary slightly you will find.

Hypertufa items are deceptively light-weight and durable. Your project is best done on a garage floor where you can leave the finished items to dry for at least a week. Gather all the equipment that you'll use. Gather your recipe items: Portland cement®, peat moss, Perlite®. The quantities that you use will of course depend on the size of your project but the ratio that I use is 1/3, 1/3, 1/3. The local hardware store sells ingredients in large bags that in the long run

works out as less expensive. If you have a beat-up wheelbarrow, it would be ideal to do the mixing. Have a water supply handy. Dress in clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Wear heavy rubber gloves and a face mask to protect yourself from the Portland cement dust.

The mix will begin to cure the moment water is added so pre-prepare your forms. I have a back-up form ready as there is typically some mixture left over. Think "cake mix" texture: not so wet that it is sloppy yet not too stiff to pour. I cover the garage floor in plastic where I'll be working as it gets messy. A garden trough requires two boxes, one smaller than the other. If using cardboard boxes, wrap them in plastic as they will become misshapen when wet. Visualize how this will happen. Pour a three-inch bottom floor into the large box. Put a couple of empty toilet paper rolls where you wish the drainage holes to be. When trough floor is nearly dry, add the smaller box, sitting it snugly on top of the drainage hole cartons. Put some weight inside this smaller box – stones or sand – to stop it floating up once you add the wall mixture. You should now have a space of at least three inches that will be the walls of the trough. Pour the mixture to create the walls and wait for it to dry. It is possible to remove the outer box form and score the cement to make it rough for a more natural hewn look. You can add shells and do other decorative techniques.



Most of us start our hypertufa journey by making an elephant leaf bird bath. If big leaves are not in season, an upturned bowl will also work but will not be so much fun. Cover the bowl with plastic or you will not be able to remove it in the final step. A large lotus leaf makes an adorable

bowl. Build a mound of sand on a plastic sheet. Place the leaf over the sand mound. The stalk sticking up will become the natural drainage hole. Add water to your ingredient mix, making it stiff enough (cookie dough consistency) to be able to scoop it up in your hands and pack the mix over the leaf to a depth of at least one inch. Use a nail to probe it for thickness. Give it a couple of days to dry then gently flip it. The leaf will naturally decompose so you can pick it off. The veins of the leaf now show as a pattern on the inside of your bowl. The Portland cement contains lime so give the project a good wash by leaving it to cure in the rain before planting. The leaf can be painted with colored concrete paint if you wish.

A mixture of buttermilk, chopped up moss bits and cow manure can be painted onto concrete statues to give it that aged look – again, it's a personal choice. There are more advanced projects that are fun. Explore more options on YouTube® for ideas or attend our Gwinnett County Master Gardener workshop at the end of Summer 2020. Do I need to remind you to wash that wheelbarrow and spade ASAP and clean up dropped mix before it solidifies? Enjoy, experiment and make hypertufa with your friends. Shared by **Carole Teja**.

Report from Weed and Feed Committee:

Weed and Feed Committee

What is a Weed and Feed? It is Master Gardeners supporting other Master Gardeners in their time of need, who for some reason, cannot take care of their gardens because of surgery, illness, etc. The recipient of the Weed and Feed will make a list of the most important items that need to be taken care of in the garden or yard. A date will be set and a call will go out for volunteers. We usually work for 2-3 hours and the recipient provides coffee, drinks and a lunch such as sandwiches. It's a great help to the recipient and a good get together for the Master Gardeners – lots of fun! Fortunately, we have not had many illnesses or hospitalizations recently. If you know of anyone who could use a little help, please contact **Jackie Kujawa** at jackiekuj@bellsouth.net or 770-972-5433.

Master Gardener Intern Profiles:

We have a very diverse group of Gwinnett Master Gardener Interns this year. As you can see, they are interested in all kinds of gardening. If you are a Project Coordinator, invite the Master Gardener Interns out to visit your project so they become more familiar with what we do. Take a few minutes to chat with them at the monthly meeting. Or invite them to participate in a GCMGA committee.

Susan Bacon – I have been a gardener (digger in the dirt) since childhood. My father and our next-door neighbor always put in a garden with tomatoes, beans, etc. We kids (I'm the oldest of 4 siblings) always had our own small plots to dig and plant seeds. As a single mother, I went to gardening as therapy and relaxation. Now that I'm retired, I plan to travel to attend gardening workshops and see the wonderful gardens in various countries. Because of the lay-out of our yard (shade to partial shade) and little open space, I do garden with pots. These pots have everything from tomato plants to herbs to perennials to annuals. I'd like to work with school gardens, answering questions at Farmers Markets, and demonstration gardens. Contact email: smbacon2388@gmail.com.

Kate Foxwell - What prompted me to become a Master Gardener? I've been wanting to do this for a long time and finally now have the time. I've always loved gardening and wanted to combine it with my passion for helping others and this seemed like the perfect way to do just that. My favorite gardening is growing herbs and fragrant plants and flowers. I love growing anything that I can use in cooking or to make my own handmade fragrance oils. I'm most interested in working on projects that involve community gardens and teaching people about permaculture and sustainable gardening. I would like to teach people of all ages how to not only grow a variety of plants but also use those plants in all kinds of novel ways. The best way to contact me is by email at fallawake@yahoo.com.

Toni Graves – Gardening has always touched my soul. I have been gardening for over twenty years. My first few years were at the experimental level where I practiced the basics beginner's skills. After years of trial and error my gardens flourished, grew and multiplied! My hard effort and tenacity paid off. My garden was featured in Garden Walks for five consecutive years. Fast forward to 2016 when I retired from teaching after 31 years and relocated to Loganville, Georgia! So long, Buffalo, New York! Georgia with its average of 177 sunny days blew me away, along with its beautiful Crepe Myrtle, Dogwood, Magnolia, Red Bud and yes, Bradford Pear trees! I fell in love with all of Georgia's magnificent flowers and shrubs. But, I didn't know much about Georgia's planting zone so I practically lived at my computer and at the library. I needed more! That's when a friend sent me a link to the Master Garden Volunteer Program. This was the missing link...it was a path for me to volunteer in the classroom STEM programs, community gardens and continue my education!! It has been a win/win experience! I feel

honored that I was selected to be a part of such a wonderful program! I'm excited to see what my pollinator garden attracts this year and I want to share my surplus of veggies with family and friends. Contact lotusplant1234@icloud.com.

Ron Kersey - My name is Ron Kersey of Lawrenceville. I have had a lifelong interest in nature and plants. My home is filled with a variety of plants that live on the deck in the summer and inside in the winter. Some of them have been with me for over 40 years! I also grow orchids to stay humble and am a member of the Atlanta Orchid Society. I got my forestry degree from UGA and am a licensed forester who has walked many miles in the woods. Now, I am very interested in pollinators and grow mostly plants that attract them to feed my other hobby - photography. I decided to become a Master Gardener because I am just an old guy who wants to learn something new! You can reach me via email: rkersey@callkbs.com.

Diane Krish - The first time I heard the term, "Master Gardener", was at a women's meeting in my subdivision, twenty years ago. Touring her (the Master Gardener's) yard and hearing about the program peaked my interest and I decided then that I would look into it more when I retired. The first year I applied I didn't get in and it took me three years to try again. I was very excited to get in this year and I look forward to many years of learning and growing with the program. My gardening mostly consists of perennials and annuals with a few herbs thrown in, but the more I learn the more I want to try. I plan to expand my herb bed and to try a few vegetables this year. Also, I have ordered three blueberry bushes from the Gwinnett Plant Sale. As for what projects I want to learn more about, my plan is to volunteer at the S.E. Gwinnett co-op garden. I am very interested in learning about community gardens and school gardens. I hope one day I feel knowledgeable enough to speak as well. I hope this is enough info and again thank you. Also, Martha is my first name, but I go by Diane. Contact dikrish@hotmail.com.

Donna Loudermilk - As far back as I remember my mother, uncle and grandmother were always dividing and giving each other flowers. My mother-in-law had a greenhouse attached to her house and loved growing orchids, composting, growing flowers from seeds, roses and had a beautiful backyard. They would divide their flowers and I would bring them to the Georgia clay to get them to grow; however, Tennessee soil is very different for growing plants and shrubs. In Tennessee one weekend, I picked up a magazine and read about a Master Gardener program and thought this is something that I would like to learn more about. I enjoy being outside planting and watching things grow and bloom and have many indoor house plants. I also tried a community garden one year and grew vegetables. I am looking forward to attending upcoming GCMGA meetings and talking with other Master Gardeners.

Amber Malloy – I've always enjoyed being outside especially planting in my Mom's flower garden after she could not manage. Since she so loved gardening and flowers, it became a passion we both shared. Learning more about gardening is a joy and then to be able to share with others and meet folks with the same enthusiasm was the reason I wanted to be a MGEV. I

love perennials, iris, day lilies and hostas. Mostly I love flowering plants and outside gardening. I want to learn more about container vegetable gardening for I have very little sun in the landscape. I am also interested in community gardens, school gardens and farmers markets. I hope to get more hands-on planting and maintenance experience. My contact information is cuznaem@gmail.com.

Sue Menhorn – I just retired from 34 years of teaching. I have always been interested in gardening and now have time to pursue my goal of becoming a master gardener. I love house plants and have a collection of cacti, orchids and violets. I am also interested in raising vegetables, bulbs, flowers and ornamental bushes outside. I participate in my neighborhood's community garden. I would like to learn more about demonstration gardens and school gardens. I am interested in volunteering at the McDaniel Farm gardens. My contact information is menhorns@gmail.com and tel. 770-314-7960.

Robin Porter – Working with the Master Gardeners at McDaniel farm inspired me to become a master gardener. I prefer vegetable and herb gardening. School and community gardens is where I would like to work. My contact information is robinhporter@gmail.com.

Shannon Provost – I wanted to learn as much as possible about growing plants, vegetable and ornamentals. I have had house plants for 20+ years and I had the desire to learn how to grow food for my family, as well as beautiful flowers to enjoy throughout the year. I enjoy vegetable and flower gardening currently. But I would love to grow fruit trees as well! I also want to create beautiful spaces in the downtown Lawrenceville and surrounding areas. Places where people can sit and enjoy the beauty of nature, but in an urban setting. I love the idea of starting community gardens; teaching people how to grow their own food is a skill that can only benefit everyone involved. Also, I love the idea of having more local Farmer's Markets in Gwinnett County. The more we have, the more we can reach the general public and be an example of whole foods in the community. Email is the best way to reach me (shannonbprovost@gmail.com).

Susanne Urban – I love to garden (flowers, houseplants, and some vegetables) and to learn. I like the challenge of propagating plants and cooking with them. My favorite is flower gardening, house plants, and tropical plants. I love to have enough flowers to cut and bring inside and I love to paint them as well. I'm not sure which aspect of Master Gardening interests me most now. I need to explore more. Contact Email: susanneurban@charter.net.

Three of our 2020 interns did not provide information for our profile (**Carlos Banda, Ken Blekley** and **Marilyn Farnsworth**). Hopefully we will be able to introduce them to you in the next issue.



18 Blooming Plants for Your Winter Garden.

Many winter bloomers have a strong fragrance to attract the few pollinators flying at that time of year. Plant them in the spring or fall rather than summer to give the plant time to establish. Plant spring bulbs in the fall and fall bulbs in the spring. Prune winter bloomers immediately after blooming as most bloom on old wood before new spring growth.



Winter Daphne (*Daphne odora*)

This 3 to 5' shrub bears pink-white, very fragrant flowers in mid-winter. Winter Daphne likes acid soil in part sun but needs afternoon shade. It is not drought tolerant and must be kept moist. Mulching heavily around the shrub helps. It does not like to be transplanted. It will do well in a large container.



Vernal Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*)

Vernal Witch Hazel is a native, deciduous, 8-10' tall tree with bright yellow, strappy flowers. It blooms in late winter or early spring with a very spicy scent. It prefers alkaline (higher pH), moist, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. Extract from the leaves and bark is used as an antiseptic and skin toner.



Common Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Common Witch Hazel is a native deciduous, 15-20' tall tree with red or yellow strappy flowers and good fall leaf color. It blooms in late fall/early winter. It likes part shade with a moist, well-drained soil. The night flying owlet moth is its most reliable pollinator and it is the host plant for the Spring Azure Butterfly.



Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*)

This small deciduous shrub grows to about 3-5' tall with white, orange, pink, coral or red blooms appearing in January or February before leaves appear. It grows in full sun to part shade but flowers best in full sun. It makes an excellent barrier planting because of its thorny branches. Prune suckers to prevent its spread.



Christmas Camellia (*Camellia sasanqua* 'Yuletide')

The Christmas Camellia is a small 8-10' evergreen tree with glossy leaves that blooms from November through January. It has single, red flowers with bright yellow stamens. It grows best in filtered sun or part shade in acidic, well-drained soil. They are hardy down to 0-10°F and are extremely drought tolerant.



Chinese Fringe Flower (*Loropetalum chinense*)

Chinese Fringe Flower is a native of China and Japan and has cultivars that range from 3-20' tall. The tall varieties are vigorous growers. It prefers full sun but tolerates shade and grows best in well-drained acidic soil. Its strappy flowers may be pink or white and leaves green or purple.



Fragrant Tea Olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*)

Fragrant Tea Olive is a native small tree that grows from 6-30' tall. It has clusters of tiny, intensely fragrant, cream-colored flowers and blooms several times a year. It prefers full sun but tolerates some shade. It grows best in well-drained, acidic soil. It is slow growing and requires little maintenance.



Autumnalis Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis')

Autumnalis or Higan Cherry, a native of Japan, is a small, deciduous tree that grows to 15-30' tall with single or double, pink flowers. It has a primary bloom period in the spring and 2 or 3 more secondary blooms in the fall and winter. It grows well in full sun to partial shade and is cold and heat tolerant.



Forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*)

This native of Asia is a fast-growing, deciduous shrub with arching branches that grows 6-8' tall if not pruned. Forsythia has 4-petaled, bright yellow blooms that appear in late winter before leaves come out. It prefers full sun, grows in moist, well-drained soil and is not finicky about soil pH.



Rhododendrons (*Rhododendron* spp.)

Rhododendrons are native, evergreen shrubs that grow to 8-30' tall. They prefer dappled shade and well-drained, acid soil. They have red, white, pink or lavender flowers that bloom in early spring. They survive freezing by pumping water from leaves to roots to prevent ice crystals from destroying leaf cells.



Japanese Camellias (*Camellia japonica*)

Japanese Camellias are evergreen shrubs or small trees that grow up to 20' tall. They bloom in late winter or early spring with single or double pink, red or white blooms. They prefer sun or partial shade. Striations in the flower petals are caused by infection from the green peach aphid.



Lenten Rose (*Helleborus orientalis*)

This evergreen perennial, a native of Europe, grows to 12-15" tall. The Lenten Rose's leathery leaves grow in full shade to part sun, tolerate drought conditions and grow in acidic or alkaline soils. The blooms begin in January and last for 4-5 months. Seedlings take 3 years to produce flowers.



Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)

Winter Jasmine, a native of China, is a deciduous, vining shrub that grows up to 15' long with bright green stems. It has bright yellow flowers with 6 petals that appear in January. It needs full sun to bloom. Winter Jasmine grows very rapidly and is tolerant of a wide range of soils and conditions.



Chinese Paperbush (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*)

This deciduous shrub, a native of China, grows to 5-6' tall. It likes full shade to part sun but some sun will help it flower. When the leaves drop in December, they expose the flower buds which will soon bloom. The silvery buds open as a white flower but when fully bloomed, expose a yellow interior.



Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*)

Candytuft is a non-native, ground-hugging, evergreen perennial that is used as a ground cover, edging along a pathway or trailing plant in a container. It grows to 18" tall and 24" wide with tiny white flowers. Candytuft needs sun to bloom but does well under deciduous trees before they leaf out.



Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari* spp.)

This tiny bulb produces highly fragrant, true-blue clusters of blooms on 4-8" stalks that look like bunches of grapes. It prefers full sun and blooms in late winter. Individual blooms may be single, double, drooping or upright. Some increase by divisions and

some proliferate by seed, both naturalizing easily.



Pansy (*Viola tricolor* var. *hortensis*)

Pansies are large-flowered, hybrid plants available as an annual garden flower or bedding plant from most nurseries although they can be grown from seed. They prefer full sun but tolerant part shade and like well-drained soil. Their blooms can be multi-colored white, blue, yellow, purple or orange or solid.



Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)

Snapdragons produce flowers that resemble dragons that open and close their mouths when laterally squeezed on stalks from 6-36" tall. They prefer cool growing conditions and can survive light frost. They bloom in a wide range of colors and heights and prefer full sun. Cut stalks back for a fall rebloom.

Deadlines for Articles in

A Bit of Dirt

Summer 2020 Issue - June 30th

Fall 2020 Issue - September 30th

Winter 2020 Issue - December 31st

Spring 2021 Issue - March 31st

Upcoming Meetings & More

GCMGA meets on the third Monday of each month at Bethesda Senior Center, 225 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30044. The event is free and open to the public. Everyone is welcome to bring a covered dish to share for a potluck dinner at 6:30, or just arrive in time for the program which begins promptly at 7 p.m.

May 18th - GCMGA Photo Contest Winners, Bethesda Senior Center

May 30th - GCMGA Garden Tour, Down the Garden Path

June 15th - GCMGA Meeting, ATL Audubon Society, Bethesda Senior Center

July 20th - GCMGA Meeting, UGA's Becky Griffin, Bethesda Senior Center

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