

A BIT OF DIRT

Spring 2021

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

I'm sitting on my sunny back porch looking at the blue, blue sky and listening to the neighborhood murder of crows (that's a flock of crows) talk to each other. What a talkative bunch. It reminds me of how much I miss our pre-meeting social hours and dinner every month. We really do have the best pot lucks in the state. There's still a chance to visit with your friends before the speaker starts on the monthly ZOOM meetings so join the fun the third Monday of the month. Even if we can't sit down and chat with people there, don't be a stranger to all your friends. Give them a call and visit for a few minutes. So many of us are self-isolating because of COVID that it's really nice to hear a cheery voice.

2020 is done and good riddance. It's time to think about how we can get more involved as a Master Gardener this year. There are lots of opportunities even if we are still social distancing. Write something about your project for the newsletter. Volunteer in projects that work outdoors such as Vines Park and McDaniel Farm. Schools are especially desperate for help now (check with **Lisa** or **Kim** at the Extension Office). Answer questions from your neighbors about their gardens and lawns. Volunteer to work on one of the GCMGA Committees (See the list of committees below that **Lynda** provided for

us.) You can have such an impact on the community and make lots of friends. Gardeners are such interesting people.

As always, I'm looking for tips, hints, ideas, etc. for the newsletter. If you think of anything or want to help, let me know. Hope you enjoy the newsletter!

Happy New Year!

Shirley Bohm

Editor, GCMGA "Bit of Dirt"

Let's Keep Our Connection.

We all recognize 2020 was a strange year and it may take a while for 2021 to sort itself out. But we Master Gardeners are known for nurture and growth. **Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association** came through this year in better financial shape than we expected, partly due to our wonderful Garden Tour and our innovative plant sales. BUT, a lot of our funds for awarding grants and scholarships come from our dues. Without in-person meetings it will be easy to forget to join and send in our dues. I really want to encourage everyone to print out the membership form shown under 'Members Only' and mail a check to **Jack** TODAY if you haven't already.

We aren't primarily interested in your \$\$\$\$ (otherwise we'd charge higher dues!) We love to have your commitment and your connection - whether we're in-person or on-line. See you in the garden!

Submitted by **Virginia Schofield**, GCMGA Past President



Garden Myth or Garden Science?

We've all heard it, "throw your seeds in water, the sinkers are good, the floaters are bad." I thought "This is Great! An easy way to tell if my seeds are good." I didn't question it. I did it and tossed the floaters. Then a few years went by and I started gardening with smaller and smaller seeds until I hit cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), the seeds are like dust! There is no way you can use the float/sink test on these. My old science teacher brain kicked in. They are like pepper flakes; they don't have the mass to break the surface tension of the water to sink. So, how big does a seed have to be for the float/sink test to apply?

I put the question to some gardening friends. One said the test is nonsense since it did not apply to coconuts! All coconuts float, good or bad! Another said that all riverbank plants use dispersal by water for their seeds, so their seeds float. Well, you could say these are exceptions because of their dispersal method. I wanted a scientific explanation, that is what Master Gardeners are supposed to give folks, research-based advice. Then I found it on an obscure government website. The National Agricultural Library (www.NAL.USDA.gov)

"Some people think that if seeds are thrown into water, the good ones will sink and the dead seeds will float, but this notion is not supported by facts. When seeds float it is often because an air bubble has become attached to them or because they have not become wet all over the surface. Several experiments were made to test the germination of seeds that sink and those that float. Wheat was used in one set of experiments, and the average of all tests showed

a germination of 68.3 per cent for the sunken seeds and 72 per cent for those that floated. In another set of experiments lentil was used, and it was found that 75.4 per cent of the sunken seeds and 86.7 per cent of those that floated germinated."

YEARBOOK OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. p. 177
<https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/IND23311869/PDF>

What! Wheat and lentils? These are bigger than the seeds that I've been throwing away!! No more water testing for me! Science says the Seed Float/Sink Test is NOT a universal test for all seeds! It is a MYTH! Maybe, when I plant acorns, but only then!

Submitted by **Margaret Molyson**, GCMGA Vice President

Omission in Extension Service Awards.

With many apologies, **Susan Kosenka** was omitted from the UGA Extension Office Awards for MGEVs in the last issue of the Bit of Dirt.

Years of Service Awards.

5 Years - 2015

Susan KosenkaLynda

Submitted by **Lisa Klein**, Extension Office

Get to Know Our New 2021 Executive Committee.

Here's a chance to get to know our new GCMGA Executive Committee a little better since we won't have an opportunity to chat face-to-face for a while at our monthly business meetings. They provided us with these thumbnail sketches to help us learn a little more about them. We also need to thank them for stepping up in these difficult times.

Lynda Pollock, GCMGA President

Welcome to 2021 and a new year with the Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association! I am so excited to have the chance to serve as your President this year. I am following a class act in **Virginia Schofield**. She set an exceedingly high bar. I have been a Master Gardener since 2017 but certainly attended many meetings off and on for several years prior. I retired from being a middle school science teacher in 2014. I have always been a renegade gardener encouraged by a grandmother and parents who tolerated my early efforts. Being retired meant more time to garden and to travel with my husband **Bob**, who now calls himself the Master Gardener's Assistant. He is super supportive of my garden efforts and is always glad to include public gardens in our travel plans. We hit a high point in 2019 with gardens in Canada and the USA especially 15 gardens in the Philadelphia area during the International Master Gardener Conference.

My master gardening activities have included a variety of events and projects, but I have especially enjoyed my time working in the Extension Office and helping with and co-chairing the Plant Sale with **Susan Kosenka**. I learned so much about GCMGA, first volunteering for plant digs and a sale then jumping in and taking on the co-chair position. The Extension Office has provided me with insights into how the Extension service helps our community and I've loved getting to know the wonderful team that keeps the system functioning. A bit of background includes (as many know) I am a native of Knoxville, TN and grew up on the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus as my father was an engineering professor. Born and bred a Tennessee girl. I have to admit I still miss being able to be in the mountains in 45 minutes. I graduated from UT in '77. **Bob** and I married in 1982 and I moved to GA then. **Bob** and I are both teachers, first in DeKalb County and then in Gwinnett County. I taught Life Science and Biology to 8th graders as well as some stints teaching earth science and physical science. While at Five Forks Middle my students and I started an outdoor classroom and nature trail. I have enjoyed being a member of the Speakers Bureau and talking to groups about perennial gardens, native plants, and gardening for the birds. I have also become involved with the Georgia Native Plant Society specifically working at Stone Mountain at their Plant Propagation site. I have learned a lot and have been trying to apply what I have learned by adding native

plants to our own GCMGA plant sale. My own yard is a work in progress trying to follow the leadership of Professor **Doug Tallamy**, author of *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature's Best Hope*. **Bob** and I are working toward a 70% native plant yard. We hope you can all visit sometime in the future. You can contact me at the GCMGA President's email: gwinnettgardener@gmail.com or my personal email: robert9811@att.net. Remember to renew your membership for 2021! We need everyone's support to keep our organization functioning! We also need committee chairs and committee members to keep our organization the premier garden group it has been since 1993. Happy New Year to all! Cheers.

Margaret Molyson, GCMGA Vice-President

Margaret is a native of New Orleans. She grew up playing in the garden with her mother who was an avid gardener and heavily involved in garden clubs. The soil in New Orleans is black and organic as far as your shovel can dig. Anything you stick in the ground grows.

She, her husband and children moved to Warner Robins, GA when she was 40, so her "mid-life crisis" was finding out that gardening life in the Georgia red clay was going to require a lot more skill and knowledge! Her vocation and advocacy was and is teaching. She was a high school biology teacher for 34 years and absolutely loved it. She always felt that plants were overlooked for the more "glamorous" animals, and she loved teaching her students about them. She completed her Master Gardener training in 2016 having just retired from teaching.

She enjoys participating in the program particularly as a volunteer in the speakers' bureau. She and her husband **Joe** moved to Lilburn in December 2017 in anticipation of the birth of their first grandchild, in February 2018. They have spent the last three years trying to restore the native understory plants while removing the invasives; the yard is still a "work in progress." Besides native plants she also tries to grow ferns from spores, not always successfully. The training she received to become a Master Gardener was wonderful. Every topic was presented by a subject matter expert. That kind of training was invaluable.

What she would like to bring to the organization is to develop what this organization can give to itself. "We can strive to maintain our "currency" in our field by ongoing training both through the Advanced Training we choose to take as individuals but also in the guest speakers we invite to our monthly meetings. I only have five years of experience with MG, but I know there are members with 15, 20, 25, or more. Experience is the best teacher. I believe there is a lot of untapped talent right here in our own organization and I want to identify and utilize that wonderful resource."

Virginia Schofield, GCMGA Past President

Virginia is an Atlanta native and a product of city schools and Georgia State University. She's the youngest of six children, the mother of four- boy, girl, boy, girl - and the grandmother (so far) of eight. She married an Englishman, so although she only lives about 20 miles from where she was born, she's travelled quite a bit in Great Britain and Europe.

Virginia became a Master Gardener in 2005 when her youngest child was 15. She learned about the program at a MG plant sale a couple of years before. She was looking for something to do when her last homeschooler went off to college. "I've always been interested in gardening and in my mother's words, I'm a "perpetual student!" So I loved the chance to take the course and learn how much I didn't know! I've always done a lot of volunteering, mostly in church settings, so being involved with Master Gardener volunteers was a good fit." Virginia brings a wealth of experience to to this year's Executive Committee following two years as President.

Jack Bolton, GCMGA Treasurer

Jack is a native of the Atlanta area having grown up in East Atlanta. He and his wife **Meg** have lived in Lilburn for over 35 years. They have one son and three grandchildren who live in Sugar Hill. He is retired from a career in Information Technology and Management. In the past, he served on the Lilburn City Council and as Mayor of Lilburn. He is an avid Do-It-Yourselfer which includes doing his own lawn work and landscaping. He has always enjoyed the outdoors and growing plants. In his younger life, he considered yard work and gardening as therapy. Now that he's retired, it is a great way to occupy his time and keep active.

He is a graduate of the 2017 Master Gardener Class. He has always been interested in gardening and wanted to become a Master Gardener to learn more about growing plants. The Gwinnett County Master Gardener Association gives it members the opportunity to learn from other gardeners and to share gardening experiences. When asked to consider being Treasurer, he saw it as a great opportunity to get to know more of his fellow Master Gardeners. "This will be my third year serving as the Treasurer. Being Treasurer requires some accounting skills and it helps to have a good working knowledge of Excel. Both of these are areas I worked in extensively in my professional career. I look forward to working with the new Executive Committee and Board in the new year."

Karen McGinty, GCMGA Secretary

Karen was born in a little town in northern Ohio. Her parents moved to southern New Jersey when she was 8. She grew up there, went to Rutgers, and majored in computer science. Her first job was with the DOJ in Washington, D.C., where she met her husband. He became an agent and they were transferred to Atlanta area shortly thereafter. They have 2 children, a daughter, **Allyson**, and a son, **Patrick**. And one granddaughter, **Brooklynn**, who stole their hearts about 2 years ago.

She has been a Master Gardener since 2012. Having 4 siblings, her parents had a big backyard garden, which everyone hated weeding. "Once I had my own house, I started working in my yard, and began enjoying it. I became interested in the program when my good friend and I discovered the plants sales and the garden tours. We always said we would go through the program. Alas, she did not take the class with me, but she still enjoys the sales and tours."

"I am hoping GCMGA will continue to bring awesome programs to our members, and I am looking forward to when we can all meet together again!!"

2021 GCMGA Committees and Chairs.

Lynda Pollock, our incoming President, identified the working GCMGA Committees for 2021. Three (3) committees still need chairs: Education, Garden Tour and Workshops. If you're interested in chairing any of these committees or serving as a member on any of them, contact **Lynda** or the committee chair to let them know. Please consider adding a leadership role to your membership!

Education -

Field Trips - **Gervasio Cubenas**

Garden Tour -

Grants - **Martha Whitman**

Historian - **Freda Steward**

Hospitality - **Alice Verner**

Photo Contest - **Ann Langley and Lori Prosser**

Plant Sale - **Lynda Pollock and Susan Kosenka**

Publicity - **Tixie Fowler**

Trainee Breakfast - **Robert Ayers**

Webmaster - **Aaron Tulin**

Assistant Webmaster - **Becky Wolary**

Weed and Feed/Seed Exchange - **Becky Panetta**

Newsletter/Bit of Dirt - **Shirley Bohm**

Workshops -

Facebook/Digital Information - **Ann Langley**



Seeds, Seeds, Seeds!

The Extension office is closed and we are meeting online instead of in person. So how do we get access to the Seed Shutters? Where can we find out what free seeds are available? Where can seed savers find other MGs interested in their packets of saved seeds? The online seed exchange is the answer. It is similar to the online plant sale last spring. A Google spreadsheet will be made available for you to place a seed order. The

spreadsheet will have two tabs. One for edibles (vegetables and herbs), and one for annuals, perennials, etc. Instructions and a link to the spreadsheet will be emailed around January 15th. Anyone ordering will get an email with a pickup location, date and time. If you cannot pick the seeds up, they may be mailed to you. Depending on weight, you may need to mail me a self-addressed stamped envelope.



We have had many generous donations of seeds. As I write this on 12/31, I have seeds from **Susan Hanson, Margaret Molyson, Becky Panetta, Susan Smith, Carole Teja, Becky Wolary** and the shutters at the Extension Office (thanks **Kim and Laura**). Over 700 packets of seeds are available. Commercial seeds are mainly vegetables and annuals. Saved seeds include a lot of native plants and pollinator plants. So, before you order your seeds for spring planting, please check out our online seed exchange. And if you do order, please consider growing a few extras for our plant sale.

Submitter by **Becky Panetta**, Chair, Seed Exchange Committee

2021 Photo Contest.

This year the Photo Contest results will be revealed at our May 2021 meeting so the deadline for submitting photographs will be March 31, 2021. The contest rules are pretty much the same but we have changed up the categories a bit. We have most of our usual favorites, but we did split up one category into two: Gardens & Harvests and Plants & Landscapes. We also kept the Gwinnett County Parks category which we introduced last year. This year our Still Life Challenge is to create and photograph a still life using garden tools. Please read the guidelines for all the details.

Each year our photography gets better and better. Can't wait to see what 2021 brings!

Submitted by Photo Contest Co-Chairs, **Ann Langley** and **Lori Prosser**



2021 Photo Contest Rules

Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association

The deadline for submitting entries to the 2020 GCMGA Photo Contest is March 31, 2021. Winners will be announced at the May 2021 meeting of the Association. Certificates will be awarded for First, Second, and Third Place in each category. At the Judge's discretion, Honorable Mention and "Best in Show" certificates may also be awarded.

Contest Rules:

- All contestants must be Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association members.
- Photographs must have been taken from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021
- Photographs should be nature or garden related and appropriate to the category entered.

- Contest Categories:
 - Birds & Wildlife – At feeders, in garden or natural setting
 - Black & White – Black and white photos of plants or wildlife
 - Close-ups & Macros – Details of plant or wildlife
 - Digital Art – Creative editing, collage, special effects of photos of plants or wildlife.
 - First-Time Submitters – For those who have never entered the GCMGA Photo Contest before.
 - Gardens & Harvests – Whole gardens or sections of gardens with more than one plant, or a harvest of fruits, vegetables, and flowers.
 - Gwinnett County Parks – Plants, landscapes or wildlife found within a Gwinnett County park
 - Plants & Landscapes – Plants or flowers other than close-ups or landscapes
 - Still Life Challenge – Create and photograph a still life with garden tools – rakes, gloves, flowerpots, bags of soil/compost, etc. The picture can be exclusively tools or incorporating tools in a garden setting.
- Submitter retains all rights to photographs with the exception that GCMGA has the right to post the photographs on its web site, display them on screen at meetings or use them in print for publicity or fundraising for the GCMGA.
- Each submitter may enter one (1) photograph in each category.
- GCMGA reserves the right to move a photo to a more appropriate category or to remove a photo that does not meet the above definitions.
- All photographs should be in good taste. GCMGA has final say and may eliminate pictures determined inappropriate for any reason.
- All photos will be displayed on the GCMGA website. If you do not want your name displayed with photo on the website, please let us know.

Submission Guidelines

- Submit photos as attachments via email to gcmgaphotos@gmail.com. Subject should read “GCMGA Photo Contest”. Submit as many photos as you can in one email.
- Format photos as JPEGs (.jpg or .jpeg).
- Name each photo in the form of Category–**Lastname.Firstinitial.jpg**. For example, John A Smith entering the Birds category: **Birds–Smith.J.jpg**.

- In the body of your email include the .jpg file name, title, photographer's name, location where it was taken (i.e., John's yard, park name, etc.), a brief description of each photo. For example:
 - **Birds-Smith.J**
 - **Red!**
 - **John Smith**
 - **John's yard**
 - **Cardinal on my feeder**
- Use the following abbreviations for photo names.
 - Birds & Wildlife – Birds .
 - Black & White – BW .
 - Close-ups & Macros – Macros .
 - Digital Art – Digital .
 - First Time Submitter – First .
 - Gardens & Harvests – Gardens .
 - Gwinnett County Parks – Parks .
 - Plants & Landscapes – Plants .
 - Still Life – Still



Growing Food for the Hungry.

Like so many faiths, the Catholic Church has programs to feed the poor. In his environmental encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis calls on all people of the planet “to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” During this current pandemic, the cry of the poor for food is loud and clear. Master Gardeners at St. John Neumann Catholic Church (SJN) have risen to the challenge by putting in plants to provide fresh vegetables and fruits to augment the fare supplied by the Church food pantry. The pantry contains canned and frozen foods donated by members of the Church.

The SJN Creation Care Team lead by Master Gardener **Susan Varlamoff** sponsored 2 workshops on vegetable and fruit gardening in an area behind the food pantry for fellow parishioners to learn about growing food and to plant raised beds and fruit trees. Gwinnett Master Gardeners **Anne Basile** and **Aida Galarza** attended the workshop and **Anne** helped plant the raised beds. Gwinnett County Extension Agent **Tim Daly** who is a member of the parish conducted the workshops. The raised beds were planted with lettuce, kale, broccoli, cabbage, and peas. Twenty-five bags of lettuce have been harvested so far. A fig tree, blueberry bushes, and a blackberry vine were installed to provide fresh fruit for next year. Each workshop was attended by about a dozen people. The vegetable gardening workshop was videotaped for those unable to attend. During the pandemic, the church has curtailed most activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 but since these workshops took place outside, with social distancing and participants wearing masks, they were considered safe. In addition, they gave Gwinnett Master Gardeners a way to give back to the community.

Submitted by **Susan Varlamoff**, biologist, and author of *Sustainable Gardening for the Southeast*.

The Frugal Gardener.

Being a “Frugal Gardener” is another way to garden in a more sustainable way. Save more and use less. Here are a few tips that might be beneficial to our environment and our wallets too.

- **When ordering shrubs, select bare roots shrubbery**, often much less expensive. Simply soak the roots for an hour or two in water before planting.
- **Plant long-lived perennials.** Buy small perennials as they will get larger each year. Every couple of years, they will need to be divided and you will get even more plants.
- **Shop plant sales from gardening groups** (like GCMGA) and late summer sales at stores and nurseries.
- **Ask friends and neighbors for cuttings of plants you want to grow.** It improves your propagating skills and you end up with free plants.
- Plant fruit trees, berry canes or strawberries which continue to produce for years.
- **When buying plants, look for pots that are overseeded** and have more than one plant per pot. You’ll double your money.
- **Mulch your landscape** to prevent weeds and hold moisture in the soil. Free mulch is available in Lawrenceville at 460 Papermill Rd, Lawrenceville, Wednesdays only from 1:15 to 3:30 pm. Many tree services also have free mulch available but usually in large quantities only.
- **Plant a fall/winter garden to extend your growing season** and the amount of produce you can grow.
- **Make your own potting soil** with equal parts of peat moss, perlite and compost.
- **Look for torn bags.** Often big box stores and nurseries will give discounts for torn bags of potting soil or mulch.
- **At the end of the growing season, stock up on potting mix and mulch** at big box stores. They often mark down prices for a quick sale so they don’t have to store them over the winter.
- **Get or give away free plants (and other stuff) on-line.** Go to [freecycle.org](https://www.freecycle.org) and enter your city and state to check if they is a group in your area.
- **Add used tea bags and coffee grounds to your compost pile or even directly to your garden.** It is a great idea to decrease landfill waste and increase the organic content of your soil.
- **Test your soil** to save on unnecessary fertilizers.

- **Use a soil thermometer** to make sure soil is warm enough to germinate your seeds.
- **Make your own fertilizer (compost tea).**
- **Time how long it takes for water to penetrate the soil at least 6 inches deep.** Set a timer based on this figure for automatic shutoff and you'll never overwater.
- **Set a bowl in the sink to catch the runoff from washing produce,** then use it to water a container or hanging basket. The same for water from a dehumidifier tank.
- **Use drip irrigation when you water your garden.** It places the water where it's most needed and saves on water.
- **Use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway.** It saves water and is good exercise too.
- **Install a rain barrel** for chlorine free drinks for your plants. Add a couple of gold fish for control of those pesky mosquito larvae but give them some fish food every couple of days as well.
- **To keep your birdbath clean** dump all but ¼ cup of water out and then add a handful of sand. Rub the sand around to remove algae and, then rinse it out. Your bird bath will be squeaky clean without buying chemical cleaners.

[Soil3 Fundraiser for 2021.](#)

Soil3 fundraiser in 2021! Coming March 16 - March 30, just in time for your spring garden.

We will be participating in a SOIL3 fundraiser in January and February. You'll be getting more information starting in January, and **our discounted code will be active March 16, 2021 through March 30, 2021.**

There will be a twenty dollar discount on the big yellow bags which you'll order directly from Soil3 and have delivered to your garden. We need to sell at least 20 big bags to qualify for our fundraising benefits. We will **also** be offering substantial discounts on smaller quantities that will have to be pre-ordered through GCMGA and picked up from the Snellville Community Garden. (We will help coordinate pick-up/delivery for those that need it.) Mini-cubes which sell for \$14.99 will be available through GCMGA

for \$11.99 and mini Garden Kits, regularly \$24.99, will be available through GCMGA for \$16.99. The Big Yellow Bag - a cubic yard of garden soil gold retails for \$199. When purchased through GCMGA during our fundraiser it will be \$179, and GCMGA will receive \$15 dollars for every bag purchased *once we have met a 20 bag quota*. I ordered a bag last year through a conference I attended, and I am pleased in every way with this product. I'm ordering two in February! Whether you have a large or small garden, or a large or small budget, there will be a great deal on offer for everyone, so mark your calendar and scour your budget. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity!

Submitted by **Virginia Schofield**, Past President



Bit of Sunshine

A Winter Project.

Heat peanut butter on the stove or in the microwave until it's melted. Then dip pinecones, one at a time, in the peanut butter until they are completely coated. Let the excess peanut butter drip off before placing the pinecone in a plastic bag with birdseed. Shake. Cool the pinecones in a freezer for 15 minutes until the peanut butter hardens. Then tie a loop of yarn to each one so they can be hung from a tree. Hang them outside and let your bird friends enjoy.

Helpful Hints.

Here's how to encourage nuthatches and woodpeckers to come to your suet feeder instead of sparrows and starlings. When you open a package of suet, just remove the packaging from the suet that will face down in your suet feeder and leave the remaining packaging in place. The birds you want to feed such as woodpeckers and nuthatches have no problem hanging upside down as they feed.

Here's a winter "To Do" list when nothing is growing.

- At the end of winter, cut back ornamental grasses to about 6" tall.
- Clean out bird houses.
- Remove dead wood and suckers from trees and shrubs.
- Plant dormant trees and shrubs.
- Scrub clay pots.
- Clean tools.

Wood ashes from your fireplace can do some good but heavy doses year after year can cause a problem. Wood ash is very alkaline and has an acid neutralizing equivalent about half that of limestone. A soil test every few years will tell you if your soil pH is out of line. Generally, wood ash has no nitrogen, about 1-2 percent phosphorus and 4-10 percent potassium.

Some seeds with a thick seed coat need a little help to ensure good germination. Put these seeds in a small jar with a piece of medium grit sandpaper and shake it a few times. Another way to soften up seed coats is to soak them in water for a few hours before planting.

If you are starting seeds inside, here is a tip for watering individual plantlets. Clean out a soy sauce bottle, add water and replace the spout. With just a few shakes, the soil is moistened without knocking over tender seedlings.

Use the following guide for minimum soil temperatures for transplants and seeds:

- 45°F for spinach, radishes, peas, Swiss chard seeds
- 60°F for tomato plants, cucumber and snap bean seeds
- 65°F for sweet corn, mustard greens and lima bean seeds
- 70°F for pepper plants, watermelon, squash and southern pea seeds

- 75°F for okra, cantaloupe and sweet potato seeds or plants

To satisfy your gardening urge in the winter time, plant microgreens, radishes, rosemary, thyme or oregano and keep them on a sunny window that gets at least 6 hours of sunlight. Then enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Keep us laughing!

There's one good thing about snow. It makes your lawn look as nice as your neighbor's.

Why do potatoes make good detectives? Because they keep their eyes peeled.

What do you call a stolen yam? A hot potato.

When all the chores are done, the avid gardener will invent new ones.

What do you call a country where the people drive only pink cars? A pink carnation.

What is small, red and whispers? A hoarse radish.

By the time you find greener pastures you can't climb over the fence.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

Early to bed and early to rise. Work like hell and fertilize!

Gardening is cheaper than therapy and you get lots of tomatoes.

That plant wasn't a mistake, it was an experiment.

Garden Games.

It's time to test your horticultural IQ again with a garden game. Match the term in the first

column with its definition in the second column. The first three people who respond with all ten correct answers will receive a prize. Please send your answers to: gcmgaabod@gmail.com.

Column 1

Column 2

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Cotyledon | a.) a young plantlet on a mature plant that detaches for propagation |
| 2. Friable | b.) the first root that grows from the germinating seed |
| 3. Green manure | c.) a plant that bears both male and female flowers |
| 4. Radicle | d.) a plant hormone that controls plant growth |
| 5. Xylem | e.) an area of the trunk between the tree base and the lowest branch |
| 6. Bale | f.) a crop grown to be plowed back to enrich the soil |
| 7. Bract | g.) part of the plant's vascular system that transports water to the leaves |
| 8. Monoecious | h.) a word to describe soil that is easily crumbled and pulverized |
| 9. Offset | i.) a modified leaf, often highly colored and mistaken for a flower petal |
| 10. Auxin | j.) the first plant seed leaves to appear from seeds as they germinate |

Happy New Year and Stay Safe!

Shirley