

# A Bit of Dirt

Summer 2021

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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 hope you all had a wonderful 4<sup>th</sup> of July with lots of friends and family and fun and food. What more could you want (especially after the past COVID year)?

I thought I would give you an update on one of my personal projects this year – raised beds. I actually have three of them. I put two together along the side of my house and one is at the Community Gardens at Vines. If you're interested in renting a plot in a community garden, they are newly available at Graves Park, Vines Park, Peachtree Ridge Park, E.E. Robinson Park, Dacula Park, J.B. Williams Park, Lawrenceville and Lenora Park. Applications are available at each community garden from Harvest Gwinnett (\$35/yr.). Each gardener is also expected to volunteer 12 hours each year taking care of the beds that raise produce that is donated to the Southeast Coop.

It's a real learning experience using a raised bed. I used my Big Yellow Bag of Soil<sup>3</sup> from the GCMGA fundraiser here at home with something similar to compost at Vines Park. This is not soil, folks! It requires lots of amendments, worms and mulch on top to keep it from drying out. That said, everything is growing like gangbusters as long as it's watered every 2-3 days (no worries about good drainage here). I've already picked 2 big batches of beans, lots of swiss chard, even more cucumbers and cherry

tomatoes. I can see that I'll have to get out my favorite canned pickle recipes or start having cucumbers for breakfast.

**If you are not a member of GCMGA and have been receiving this newsletter, this will be the FINAL ISSUE you will receive without renewing your membership. The membership is still only \$15 per year so click here (<http://gwinnettmastergardeners.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2021-Membership-Form.pdf>) for a copy of the membership form. Complete and send it along with your membership fee to Jack Bolton, GCMGA Treasurer, (address on the form) to continue receiving the newsletter along with other membership benefits.**

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you face-to-face at the August monthly meeting! I hope you'll be able to make it.

**Shirley Bohm**, MGEV

Editor, *Bit of Dirt*

### **Message from the President**

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 Gardeners 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](mailto:gwinnettgardener@gmail.com) or my personal email: [robert9811@att.net](mailto: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. Please consider adding a leadership role to your membership.

Cheers!

**Lynda Pollock, MGEV**, President GCMGA

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### **2021 GCMGA Grant Recipients.**

- Project Leader: **Barbara Geier**. Berkeley Lake Elementary, Berkeley Lake. Creating a Pollinator Garden which can be used as an extension of science classes.
- Project Leader: **Victor Ruiz**. Ferguson Elementary, Duluth. They will create 3 raised beds with focus on sensory stimulation for taste, touch, vision and smell.
- Project Leader: **Carol Hassell**. Georgia Piedmont Land Trust at the Mary Kistner Center. Snellville. The project focuses on fostering blue birds by

building several blue bird boxes to install at the site and making additional boxes available to other GCMGA Projects.

- Project Leader, **Pat Kahn.** Ladybug Garden Club Project on Camp Creek Greenway, Lilburn. The Garden Club is restoring three gardens which were lost to flooding in October 2020. Plants will be labeled as an added benefit for walkers on the trail.
- Project Leader: **Joyce Teel.** McDaniel Farm Park, Gwinnett County Park in Duluth. Rejuvenation and year-round planting of Archie's Vegetable Garden, a Demonstration Garden. This project raises a lot of produce which is donated to local food banks.
- Project Leader: **Marilyn Whitmer.** Peachtree Elementary, Peachtree Corners. Grant supports building a raised herb garden to enhance science and social studies curricula and replacing perennials as needed in established gardens.
- Project Leader: **Sue Menhorn.** Riverside Elementary School, Suwanee. They are partnering with a local Girl Scout Troop to extend an Outdoor Classroom with a Native Pollinator Garden plus creating outdoor lessons and games to use in the garden.
- Project Leader: **Bonnie Smolinski.** St. John Neumann Church, Lilburn. Committee is beautifying the grounds by planting existing beds with perennials and shrubs, prioritizing native plants and those that attract pollinators and birds.
- Project Leader: **Jacquelyn Daniell.** SE Gwinnett Food Coop Garden, Grayson. Funds will help amend beds and plant vegetables to provide fresh vegetables to the Food Coop. They use intensive planting practices and crop rotation.
- Project Leader: **Wes Nettleton.** Snellville Community Garden Greenhouse, Snellville. Grant will fund planting of bedding plants sold at low cost to local gardeners and further development of a pollinator garden around the gazebo using native shrubs and perennials.
- Project Leader: **Susan Kosenka.** Vines Garden, County Park in Loganville. Grant funds will help beautify area around Rose Garden statues with ground covers and a clematis on an existing arbor to add color to the garden when roses aren't blooming..

Submitted by **Martha Whitman**, MGEV, Grants Committee Chair

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**[New Staff at the Extension Office - Cindy Lubowicki.](#)**

As a native Gwinnett County resident, with roots reaching to the inception of the county, it's an honor to be accepted into a long-established and well-respected organization like the UGA Extension Service, Gwinnett. Coming from families of Gwinnett County farmers, I'm sure that many of my ancestors have utilized services of the extension office over the past 100 + years and I'm excited to now be a part of this tradition as an employee.

After spending 30+ years in corporate America, my career was ultimately put on hold as my last position as a staff accountant was eliminated. Gardening has always served as a channel for peace throughout my life, and as I sought reprieve from the corporate chaos I had been released from, I began classes at Gwinnett Technical College in the Environmental Horticulture program. I was the grateful recipient of the 2019 GCMGA scholarship at Gwinnett Tech. Finding much joy in the engaging environment at GTC, as well as the expansion of my horticultural knowledge, I spent the next 3-1/2 years there, taking as many classes as possible, ultimately graduating May 2021 with an Associates in Applied Science degree.

I am married and the mother of two children, an adult son and teenage daughter, as well as a grandmother to a beautiful elementary aged girl. Animals hold a precious place in my heart and is evidenced through the 6 kitties and 2 dogs that are also part of my family. Gardening, both ornamental and vegetable, remain a favorite past-time of mine in addition to outdoor activities such as hiking and camping. As part of the UGA Extension Service, I will be assisting in responding to gardening questions and submission of soil samples, supporting ANR agents and Program Assistants in educational events, as well as working with the Master Gardener Extension Volunteers. It is such privilege to be a part of this family and I look forward to meeting each of you and getting to know you all better. ([cynthia.lubowicki@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:cynthia.lubowicki@gwinnettcountry.com)).

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**[2021 Plant Sale Update.](#)**

Glad we were able to have our spring plant sale but hopefully we won't have to ever

do the online ordering again – I really missed talking to people wandering through the plant tables and talking about what might work well for each customer. **Susan Kosenka**'s efforts at the spread sheet and getting the orders sorted were amazing. Looking forward, we plan to return to our usual plant sale which will be April 30th, 2022.

I'm working on growing several things from seed and cuttings as I work on the garden. I am hoping to have some new things for next year's plant sale and hoping our members will also start thinking now about what you'd like to have to donate to the sale. Are you thinning plants or growing things from seed? If so, it would be great if you did a few extras that could be grown on for the sale. We may also investigate having some fall plant digs. Start marking things that might be great to donate.

We are also looking for someone to take on the Garden Art booth. Co-chairs make the job easier. Starting this fall will make any gathering or creating less stressful. Garden art can be whatever the chair(s?) decides to make it. It would also be great to have two or three folks that would like to work alongside the co-chairs and learn the ropes to take over for 2023. **Susan** and I have found that dividing the jobs makes it doable. Susan concentrates on the plant lists and pricing while I work on the communication end such as writing advertisements, ordering tables, and securing the sight. But new co-chairs can sort things how however they wish. Please contact **Susan Kosenka** ([slk120@aol.com](mailto:slk120@aol.com)) or **Lynda Pollock** ([sciencelollock@gmail.com](mailto:sciencelollock@gmail.com)) if interested.



I want to thank everyone who donated plants and helped with the sale. We even got some of the leftover plants into demo gardens. Let's start planning for a 2022 altogether Plant Sale!!! Cheers!



Submitted by **Lynda Pollock, MGEV, Plant Sale Committee Co-Chair**

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**Some facts you might not know about roses.**

This is not a complete guide to growing roses. It's just some interesting facts about roses that you might not know.

- "Old-fashioned" roses, those introduced before 1867, do have some advantages over newer varieties and cultivars. Many old rose varieties have natural disease resistance not found in newer hybrids although many newer roses are being bred for disease resistance. They are often more fragrant with more complex and interesting blooms. Many modern roses will only live six to ten years unless given exceptional care but many old-fashioned roses live 50 years or more.
- When planting your rose, bury the knot (or graft union – many commercial rose bushes are grafted) at the base of the stem. It doesn't matter how deep the plant was in its nursery container, the knot should just barely be covered by the soil when you transplant it.
- Roses like potassium so if you occasionally bury pieces of banana skin nearby, they will enjoy the feed.
- Suckers on rose bushes, canes that usually grow straight upward, are shoots produced from the rootstock of a grafted rose. It will develop from below ground level and its leaves are often different from the rest of the plant, for example, a different number of leaflets or different shade of green. Dig down below the ground level and pull it away rather than cutting it off to prevent it from regrowing.





- If you have rose bushes that don't bloom, check these out:
  - Roses need a minimum of 6-8 hours of direct sun. The more sun they have, the more flowers they will produce. Morning sun is especially important because it dries the leaves which helps prevent disease.
  - Some climbing roses bloom on buds formed the previous season on old wood. Heavy pruning at the wrong time (early spring when you prune most other roses) may remove their buds.
  - If you do not deadhead your roses especially rebloomers, they will not produce as many new flowers when old blooms are allowed to go to seed.
    - Roses that are diseased or infected do not flower well.
- Good companion plants for roses are ones that hide their bare legs or lower parts of their canes (lavender, catmint, tall-growing pinks) or that make living mulches which suppress weeds and shade the roots (creeping phlox, yarrow, lady's mantle). Remember that any additional under-plantings draw more nutrients from the soil so keep up your routine fertilizing routine.
- Unpruned roses grow tall and gangly. Crowding or too much shade can also contribute. This not only looks unattractive but the long stems are weaker and more vulnerable to being caught by the wind and causing the whole plant to rock and loosen the soil. Pruning can remove dead and diseased parts and encourage flowering. Note that you shouldn't trim your roses during their first year in your garden.
- Don't prune your roses too much in the fall or winter or it could stimulate growth in a winter warm snap. Leave rose hips on the plant through fall and winter; they tell the rose that it is time for dormancy. The major pruning for

most roses should be done in February or March just as they start to bud or leaf out.

Submitted by **Shirley Bohm**, MGEV

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### **Return to Vegetable Gardening.**

I cannot tell you the last time I was able to have a vegetable garden. Tiny yard – not enough sun – not worth the effort with a great local produce stand, a CSA and local community markets on Saturday..... I was covered up with available produce.

As a master gardener, I'd focused on perennials, shrubs and annuals, in the right place, blooming at the right time for my own pleasure and enjoyment ---- but I had forgotten the satisfaction of growing your own vegetables.

When Gwinnett County Harvest Gwinnett opened community gardens at a nominal \$35 per year for a 4 x 8 bed, I jumped on the opportunity – why not?!?!? I plotted out my square foot garden, bought seeds and Bonnie plants for starters and had at it in mid-April. I helped my neighbors who also rented beds plant theirs. I gathered tips from long time veggie gardeners **Loretta** and **Shirley**. And I watched my garden grow.

I've harvested more zucchini than I thought could come from one plant and found new recipes to use them – my Black Krim tomatoes are the best tasting tomatoes I've put in my mouth in a long time. And green onions, cukes and good old-fashioned radishes.... yum. And there's more to come.

To see the fruits of your labor in 45 – 60 days – to taste that veg straight from the garden – cannot be beat! I'm already plotting this fall/winter garden in my small plot.

Submitted by **Becky Wolary**, MGEV

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### **Winners of the GCMGA 2021 Photo Contest.**

## Birds & Wildlife

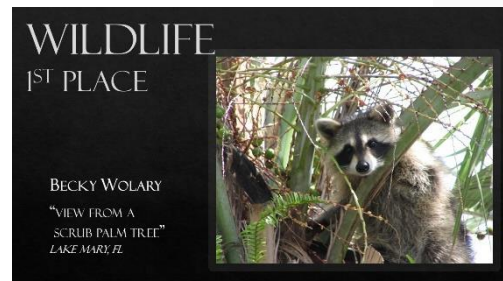
1<sup>st</sup> – **Becky Wolary** "View From a Scrub Palm Tree"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Winnie White** "Male Monarch Fenced In"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Ivan Varlamoff** "Eyeing Lunch"

Honorable Mention – **Inday Bauer** "Japanese Beetle"

Honorable Mention – **Barbara Geier** "Spring Peeper"



## Black & White

1<sup>st</sup> – **Karen McGinty** "Gardenia"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Ivan Varlamoff** "Don't Mess With Me"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Ron Kersey** "Coneflower"

Honorable Mention – **Marilyn Whitmer** "Caterpillar Feasting"



## Close-Up & Macro

1<sup>st</sup> – **Barbara Geier** "Refreshingly Pink"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Karen McGinty** "Trillium From Down Under"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Margaret Molyson** "A Bee-Sized Bed"

Honorable Mention – **Jane Czeciuk** "Bee-Utiful"

Honorable Mention – **Ivan Varlamoff** "Love"



## Digital Art

1<sup>st</sup> – **Ivan Varlamoff** "It's A Bird"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Marilyn Whitmer** "Sunflower And Visitor"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Tixie Fowler** "Freshly Picked Persimmons"

Honorable Mention – **Winnie White** "Temptation"



### First-Time Submitters

1<sup>st</sup> – **Kathy Pittman** "Swallowtails"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Diane Krish** "Green Stinker"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Inday Bauer** "Dish Hibiscus"

Honorable Mention – **Delores Stewart** "Seedling"

Honorable Mention – **Betsy Farmer** "Pink Beauty"



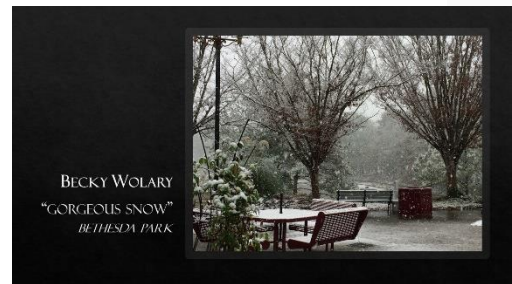
### Gwinnett County Parks

1<sup>st</sup> – **Becky Wolary** "Gorgeous Snow"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Deb Duello** "'Fall Twins"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Martha Whitman** "Monarch Feast"

Honorable Mention – **Ron Kersey** "Robber Fly"



### Gardens & Harvests

1<sup>st</sup> – **Barbara Geier** "Dancing Carrots"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Margaret Molyson** "A Polinators Fall"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Dolores Stewart** "Our Harvest"

Honorable Mention – **Sharon Cassidy** "Morning Dew"

Honorable Mention – **Debbie Dupont** "First Harvest of 2020"



### Plants & Landscapes

1<sup>st</sup> – **Martha Whitman** "Cerro Hornocal"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Ron Kersey** "Lonely Sentinel"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Ivan Varlamoff** "African Sunset"

Honorable Mention – **Dorothy Harwell** "Fall Colors"

Honorable Mention – **Joanie Dominick** "Magnificent Magnolia"



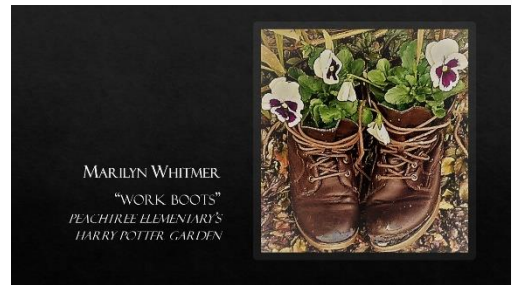
**Still Life**

1<sup>st</sup> – **Marilyn Whitmer** "Work Boots"

2<sup>nd</sup> – **Diane Krish** "Garden Tools"

3<sup>rd</sup> – **Ivan Varlamoff** "Master Gardener in Waiting"

Honorable Mention – **Karen McGinty** "Time For A Pot of Tea"



**Best of Show**

**Barbara Geier** "Dancing Carrots"



Submitted by **Lori Prosser**, MGEV, & **Ann Langley**, MGEV, Co-Chairs of Photo Contest Committee

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**Coming Events**

**July 19 – GCMGA Meeting (Zoom), Katy Ross, "Natives in the Landscape"**

**August 16 – GCMGA Meeting, Bethesda Sr. Center, Trecia Neal, "Worms in My Kitchen"**

**August 20-21 – Great Georgia Pollinator Census, (set one up or check with the Extension Office for location)**

**August 25 – New Gwinnett Master Gardener Class starts**

**September 9 - State Botanical Garden Tour, contact Extension Office**

**September 12-17 – International Master Gardener Conference (Zoom)**

**September 24-25 – Hall County Master Gardener Plant Sale, Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center, Gainesville**

**September 30 – deadline to submit information/articles for Fall issue of *Bit of Dirt***

**October 1-2 – Georgia Master Gardener Association Annual Conference, Augusta**

**October 15 – GCMGA newsletter, *Bit of Dirt*, publishes**

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***Bit of Sunshine***

**Summer Bounty!**

Summer Bounty. If you have a garden, it's probably growing full speed ahead about now and you have to decide what to do with all those cucumbers. How about making some refrigerator pickles. They're quick and great for snacks and condiments. Try this easy recipe.

**Refrigerator Pickles**

**6 c. cucumbers, sliced**

**1 c. green peppers, sliced**

**1 c. onions, sliced**

**1/2 c. cider vinegar**

**1/2 c. white vinegar**

**1 c white sugar**

**1 t. celery seed**

**1 t. dill seed**

**2 T. salt**

Slice veggies into two quart jars. Mix other ingredients together in a large measuring cup. Pour over sliced veggies. Finish by filling jars with cold water and screwing on the lids. Shake the jars several times in the first 24 hours. Keep refrigerated. Ready in 2-3 days and keeps for several months in the fridge.

Make **Herb Vinegar** to preserve the subtle flavor of summer herbs. Gather your herbs, making sure they are clean and dry. Dark purple 'Opal' basil is an example. Boil one gallon of white vinegar, saving the bottle. Stuff the clean basil leaves into the container and then pour in the hot vinegar. Within minutes, the vinegar should begin turning color. Cap it and let the vinegar and herbs mingle for about a month. You can strain it and pour into a separate jar if you like. Chives and tarragon also make excellent vinegars.

**Blackberry popsicles.** These creamy but dairy free blackberry popsicles contain only 4 ingredients and are so easy to make. Add 4 cups fresh or frozen blackberries, 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice, one-fourth cup maple syrup and one-half cup unsweetened coconut milk in a blender and process until smooth and creamy. Pour the blackberry mixture into popsicle molds and freeze then enjoy.

### **Helpful Hints!**

- When mosquito larvae become a problem in your rain barrel, add a couple of goldfish to keep them under control. You still need to give them fish food every day or so but this creates its own ecosystem and the fish waste may even add some natural fertilizer to your plant water.
- If you are creating a water feature, koi pond or bog garden, place an old piece of carpet in the hole first before you put in the liner to prevent stones and roots from piercing it.



- Are you having an insect infestation in your garden and want to identify that bug or did you just see a gorgeous insect and want to know what it is? Here is a good reference that not only has great pictures but gives you target plants and preventive actions.
  - Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America by Eric R Eaton and Kenn Kaufman.

### **Did You Know?**

- If you have a poinsettia still alive from last year and want it to bloom (turn red) for the Christmas season, September is the time to start the process. (Mark your calendar!) Here's what to do: Cut the plant back about 6 inches from the ground then bring it indoors to the coolest part of the house. In October, give the plant complete darkness at night and a sunny window by day. Stop the darkness treatment the last week of November. In December, let the plant remain in a sunny spot. Water only when the soil feels dry to the touch. Don't overwater.
- Plants do more than communicate with each other. They send out warning signals when danger is near with the help of mycorrhizal fungi which act as the transmitter. This harmless fungus in turn gets nutrients from the host plant. For example, when the first plant in a group senses aphid infestation, a chemical is released which repels the pests. It's the fungus though that returns the favor and makes sure the rest of the plants in the area get the message through their mycelium that has grown from the roots of one plant to another. This signal that repels the pests also attracts wasps, aphid predators, instead.

### **Keep Us Laughing.**

- Money can't buy happiness except at the garden center.
- The philosopher who said "work well done never needs doing over" never weeded a garden.
- It's only when you look at a flower really close up that you can truly appreciate how beautiful it is – and how many creepy crawlies live on it.

- The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now.
- A new business was opening and one of the owner's friends wanted to send him flowers for the occasion. The flowers arrived at the new business site and the owner read the card: "Rest in Peace." The owner was annoyed and called the florist to complain. "Sir, I'm really sorry for the mistake and sorry you were offended," said the florist. "But even worse, somewhere there is a funeral taking place today and they have flowers with a note that says 'Congratulations on your new location.'"
- What vegetable do you need a plumber for? A leek.
- Gardening is the slowest of the performing arts.
- Gardeners know the best dirt.
- Gardening is a way of showing you believe in tomorrow.
- Don't wear perfume in the garden unless you want to be pollinated by bees

### Plant Recognition Challenge!

Take a plant recognition challenge. Identify the photographs of the plants below. Answers can be found at the bottom of the challenge.





E.



F.



G.



H.

**Answers to the Photo Challenge:**

- A. Passionflower vine
- B. Kohlrabi
- C. Red Hot Poker plant
- D. Tuberous Begonia
- E. Quince
- F. Spiderwort
- G. Witch Hazel
- H. Stokes' Aster

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**Deadlines for Future Articles in**  
***A Bit of Dirt***

**Fall 2021 Issue - September 30th**  
**Winter 2022 Issue - December 31st**  
**Spring 2022 Issue - March 31st**  
**Summer 2022 Issue - June 30th**

**Upcoming Meetings & More**

*GCMGA normally meets on the third Monday of each month at Bethesda Senior Center, 225 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA 30044. Face-to-face meetings will resume for the August 16th meeting. Once we resume, 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.*

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