

# A Bit of Dirt

Winter 2022

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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.**

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season.

Did you make any New Year's resolutions this year? It's never too late so I'm challenging you to increase your skills and knowledge as a Master Gardener this year. Here are some suggestions for you to try. Take a 6 hour Georgia MGEV Program Advanced Training Program for a Silver (5 modules) or Gold Star (6 modules). Be a MG volunteer at a new project. (Lisa Klein keeps us posted on new volunteer opportunities each week.) Propagate some of your plants for your friends or the GCMGA Plant Sale. You can start simply with doing plant divisions or leaf/stem cuttings or get more ambitious with air layering. Participate in a GCMGA committee if you don't already. I'm working on learning more about winter vegetable gardening and propagation.

I thought I would give you a little update on our Harvest Gwinnett community garden at Vines Park. This has been a real learning experience for me, especially gardening year around. At the end of December/beginning of January, we're picking collards, romaine, broccoli, kale, lettuce, radishes, green onions, sugar snap peas, carrots and cabbage for the Gwinnett County

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Southeast Coop in Grayson. The cold weather, snow and ice this weekend is likely to kill off a lot of the winter garden though. A newly rototilled, 30 ft. x 50 ft. area will definitely help us increase production too. Come out and visit some time.

Be well! Shirley

Shirley Bohm, Editor, *Bit of Dirt*

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## Message from the President

Happy New Year to all GCMGA Members

I'm looking forward to so many events this year. Exciting speakers and meeting together at Bethesda Senior Center, plant digs and the April Plant Sale, the Garden Tour in May, Photo Contest, and much more. So many members have ongoing projects and plans for many new gardens and improving existing gardens. I hope everyone can find a new project to help with and find great volunteer events. We'll continue to monitor CDC guidelines to keep everyone safe. Be sure to renew your membership either online or at the next meeting!

My biggest event this year will be opening my garden for the garden tour May 14, 2022 – I have a long list of things I want to do this winter before that day plus I'm already taking care of plants for the plant sale. **Susan Hanson** and **Jane Trentin** have volunteered to head the Garden Tour Committee and will be getting committees organized for all the many moving parts that make this event so amazing.

This winter also finds me trying some winter sowing of native plant seeds. I've been reading many blogs and articles on the process. I'm going to try using the techniques from <https://wildseedproject.net/how-to-grow-natives-from-seed/>. Wild Seed Project is a group in Maine with many published articles and online classes. And even though they are in Maine, their seed starting techniques will work anywhere. I'm combining what I've been learning at GNPS Stone Mountain Propagation Project site with these procedures. I'll keep you posted.



Hopefully a few of the seedlings will be ready for the plant sale.

I've registered our yard at

<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>. We're ON THE MAP!

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This website was founded by **Doug Tallamay** (Nature's Best Hope, etc.) So many resources at this site to help people find plant choices for their specific zip code and with filters for planting site requirements. Lots of articles and links to amazing information for helping us expand the diversity of our own yards. Maybe we should consider ordering and selling signs at our plant sale???

And speaking of plant sale – its time to start digging and potting up plants for the plant sale. If you need pots let me know – there are still a lot behind my shed. Let [Margaret Molyson](#) know if you need to schedule a plant dig. We'll be getting started in January. We're also looking for someone to chair the Garden Art committee – there are still some left-over items from previous sales and a committee needs to be formed to create/find items for sale. Winter is a great time for these indoor activities.

**Bob** and I have been taking advantage of the strangely warm temperatures to get the multitude of bulbs he bought into the ground – he is a bit of a hyacinth fanatic so the front yard should have delightful color and scent this spring. It seems we are usually planting in the extreme cold, so this has been a nice change.

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and got to spend time with family and friends. Continue to be careful out there and stay healthy! Spring is coming!!!

Happy New Year

**Lynda Pollock**  
2022 President GCMGA

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## **[2022 Extension Plant Sale.](#)**

Check out all the fruits and ornamentals available through the 2022 Extension Plant Sale ([GCGA.us/PlantSale](http://GCGA.us/PlantSale)). Send in your check and order form by mail to the Extension Office before Friday, March 4, 2022. Pickup and center-of-the-ring bonus sale is on Thursday, March 17, 2022 from 9:00 am to 5:45 pm at the Gwinnett County Fairgrounds. Contact **Lisa Klein** in the Extension Office at 678-377-4010 for more information.

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# **Gardening for Beauty and the Environment - Garden Tour.**

The next GCMG Garden Tour will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2022, from 10 am to 4 pm. Six gardens will be featured including a Community Garden, a brewery with grounds maintained by Master Gardeners and four home gardens. The theme for our upcoming tour will be "Gardening for Beauty and the Environment" with gardens featuring plants that provide food for wildlife (including pollinators) as well as plants that provide food for humans!

The home garden hosts on the tour would all welcome some help readying their gardens for the tour. If you would like to be a "garden angel" and learn from some fantastic home gardeners by helping them in their gardens you can earn MG hours while playing in the dirt with them. Two are in Lilburn (**Lynda** and her neighbor **Kelly**), one is in Lawrenceville (**Jane**), one is in Snellville (**Wes**) and one is in Duluth (**Mary Ann**). Some of them will probably have plants to share.

To volunteer, please contact them directly to set up best times for you and for them. The hope is that garden angels will then be willing to serve as docents or guides on the day of the tour for one of three 2-hour shifts. An additional perk will be that as a garden angel/docent, you will be free to visit the rest of the gardens on the tour gratis either before or after your shift.

Here is how to reach each gardener on the tour:

**Lynda Pollack**

[robert9811@att.net](mailto:robert9811@att.net)

**Kelly Brzozowski**

[tripleharp@gmail.com](mailto:tripleharp@gmail.com)

**Jane Matthews**

[matthews646@att.net](mailto:matthews646@att.net)

**Wes Nettleton**

[Wesnet50@gmail.com](mailto:Wesnet50@gmail.com)

**Mary Ann Hindes**

[mhindes@bellsouth.net](mailto:mhindes@bellsouth.net)

Submitted by **Jane Trentin**, Garden Tour Committee Chair

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## [Class of 2021 - New Master Gardeners!](#)

Congratulations to the following new 2021Gwinnett Master Gardener interns! Make an opportunity to get to know them and invite them to visit your volunteer projects.

Judith Adams  
Marilyn Davis  
Eugenia George  
Kelley Hanada  
Joe Kong  
Sonja Lee  
Cindy Lubowicki  
Larry Nicastro  
Melissa Olsson  
Sharon Palmer  
Deputy Wyld Perez  
Dolores Romero-Stewart  
Jim Saleh

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## [What's living in my compost pile?](#)

A compost pile with its warm temperature, nutrients, moisture and plenty of oxygen is an ideal environment for composting organisms. Here's what's living in your compost pile.

**Primary level consumers** eat organic residues. About 80-90% of all microorganisms in a compost pile are bacteria with the remaining being fungi (molds, yeasts) and actinomycetes (organisms intermediate between bacteria and true fungi). Invertebrates such as millipeds, sow



bugs ("rolly-pollies"), snails and slugs also shred and eat the plant material. Many kinds of worms such as earthworms, nematodes, red worms and potworms eat decaying vegetation and microbes and excrete compounds that enrich compost (worm castings). Their tunneling aerates the compost and their feeding increases the surface area of organic matter for microbes to act on.

**Secondary level consumers** eat primary consumers. They include springtails, some mites, feather-winged beetles, nematodes, protozoa and soil flatworms. These predators are mostly incidental to the composting process and take advantage of the smorgasbord of primary consumers present.

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**Tertiary level consumers** such as centipedes, predatory mites, rove beetles, some ants and carabid beetles eat secondary consumers. They are common in compost piles. Ant colonies are often a sign of dry conditions in the pile. Many of these insects increase airflow with their tunnels.

**Rotten egg odor in compost.** A lack of oxygen in the pile allows anaerobic microorganisms to take over and release hydrogen sulfide which smells like rotten eggs. Turn the pile to introduce more oxygen.

**Pile doesn't seem to heat up or compost.** It may contain too much "browns" (dead leaves, straw, manure). Decomposition occurs at a slower rate as less heat is generated. Add more "greens" (cut grass, fruit & vegetable waste, coffee grounds).

**Compost smells like ammonia.** There is an excess of nitrogen ("greens") in the pile. Spread out the compost to allow the ammonia to vaporize or add more "browns" and mix well.

**Flies around the compost pile.** If fruit flies and other flies are a problem kitchen waste is often too close to the surface and attracts the flies. Bury your plant food waste under more "browns."

Submitted by **Shirley Bohm**,

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## **Garden Project for Kids.**

School gardens are not the only place where kids can learn and enjoy plants and growing things. You can create all kinds of experiences, spaces and ideas for children's play and open up their imaginations. Here are some ideas for kids for all seasons and for all ages. Spring break is coming up and some of these make great projects for the kids/grandkids.

1. **Create a fairy garden.** Any available space will work – a hidden corner of the garden, a window box or a planter. Use "found" items such as moss, popsicle sticks, twigs, tiny plants ("toe ticklers"), pebbles, miniature bulbs, gourds for houses, etc.
  2. **Make a puddling area for butterflies.** Sand and stones in a plant pot saucer work well near your flower garden. Butterflies like slices of orange too.
  3. **Make an insect hotel.** Collect different diameter hollow plant stems and tie them together with twine. Hang the bundle from a tree branch then watch to see if any stems become sealed off when bees lay their eggs.
  4. **Make a cookie cutter bird seed ornament for outside.** Cut shapes from leftover bread, brush with beaten egg white and press with bird seed to cover. Place on a cookie sheet and bake in a 350<sup>0</sup>F oven for 10 minutes.
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5. **Paint garden labels for the garden.** Let children use acrylic paints to decorate labels or rocks for your vegetable or herb garden or your landscape. This also give you a chance to start teaching them how to identify different plants.
6. **Count the “critters” in a bucket of garden soil or fresh compost.** Look for roly polies, earthworms, pill bugs, beetles and more. Explain how they help break down all the organic matter in the soil to make nutrients available for new plants and aerate it to allow oxygen and water to enter more easily.
7. **Visit a state park or botanical garden to look for spring flowers.** Take along a wildflower guide to identify what you see.
8. **Grow microgreens.** Many varieties of microgreens such as sunflower, radish, broccoli or watercress can pop up in a week or less. Growing them can not only hold kids’ interest but also encourages them to taste and enjoy their greens.
9. **Make a garland of fruits for the birds.** Uncooked cranberries or dried fruits, both of which are easy to keep on yarn or string make a good garland. When the kids are done, drape the garland on a tree and watch the birds dig in.
10. **Collect leaves and flowers.** Collect interesting plant materials to put in a picture frame, placemat or bookmark. Put them in a plant press with alternating layers of plant material and absorbent newspaper or blotting paper sandwiched between sheets of cardboard then weigh this down. They will dry in about 2 weeks to be displayed as you like.



Submitted by **Shirley Bohm,**

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**Capturing Our 2021 Master Gardener Hours.**

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According to the official Georgia Master Gardener Handbook, each Master Gardener Extension Volunteer (MGEV) needs to complete 50 hours of educational based service their first year and then a minimum of 25 hours every year thereafter. There are many ways to get those volunteer hours, including helping the local Cooperative Extension office with events and projects, creating projects of their own and helping with existing MGEV projects. UGA Extension then collects all of this valuable information through [MGlog.com](http://MGlog.com) and compiles it into an annual report that shows the tremendous impact we make statewide as MGEV volunteers. Sections of this report showcase the types of projects we help with; the hours we give and the number of people we reach, providing a roadmap to our story as master gardener volunteers.



In 2021, the Gwinnett MGVE's contributed over 13,000 hours and contacted more than 15,000 people! We had almost 130 active projects in 2021, including more than 30 schools; 30 plus demonstration gardens, 18 community gardens and miscellaneous other projects located throughout Gwinnett County. Activities vary within the volunteer community but can include speaking at garden clubs and church groups; answering questions at Extension events with Ask a Master Gardener tables; growing vegetables at community gardens for local food co-ops; taking in crops and judging them during the Gwinnett County Fair; donating plants or loading cars at the Gwinnett County Master Gardener Association (GCMGA) plant sale and educating the public by showcasing theme gardens at the GCMGA Garden Tour. As master gardeners we have weeded, raked, pruned, mulched, sowed seeds, and dug holes. We have spoken to over a thousand friends and neighbors about voles, planting times, and tomato end rot. This is the life of a master gardener and one we are proud to share.

This year has a promising start. Along with all the community gardens, demonstration gardens, and school gardens, we can look forward to the county extension plant sale, the GCMGA plant sale, the Garden Tour, and Farmer's Markets. What a great way to see old MG friends and meet new ones. I can't wait!

Be sure to capture your hours and contacts as you go!

Submitted by **Karen McGinty**, MGEV

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## **2021 GCMGA Holiday Party.**

A good time was had by all! Were you there? While COVID put a damper on some of our activities, we still found time to socialize and share some holiday spirit.

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Photos by **Freda Steward**, MGEV, Historian

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## Coming Events!

**Jan. 17**, 11:30 am, GCMGA Mtg., Bet Sobon, "Roses," Bethesda Sr. Center

**Feb. 21**, 11:30 am. GCMGA Mtg., Dr. Tim Smalley, Georgia's Heritage of Trees, Bethesda Sr. Ctr.

**March 14**, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, GCMGA Executive Committee Mtg. (closed), Extension Office

**March 21**, 6:30 pm, GCMGA Mtg., Speaker TBA, Bethesda Sr. Center

**April 11**, 10:00 am - 12:00 noon, GCMGA Board Mtg., (open), Extension Office



**April 18**, 6:30 pm, GCMGA Mtg., Harvest Gwinnett, Bethesda Sr. Center

**April 29**, 2:00 - 4:00 pm setup, 4:00 - 6:00 pm plant delivery, Plant Sale Setup, Lilburn Library

**April 30**, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm, GCMGA Plant Sale, Lilburn Library

**May 14**, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, GCMGA Garden Tour - "Garden for Beauty and the Environment"



## *Bit of Sunshine*

**Winter Vegetables** – Are you looking for a new way to serve Brussel sprouts? Here's a recipe that makes a bright and refreshing salad that is quick and easy to put together.

### **Brussel Sprout Salad.**

4 c. Brussel sprouts, coarsely chopped

¼ c. extra virgin olive oil

¼ c. fresh lemon juice

1/3 c. dried cranberries

½ c. grated Parmesan cheese

s & p to taste

Wash Brussel sprouts and cut ends and dead leaves off. Coarsely chop. Stir olive oil, lemon juice, dried cranberries and chopped almonds together and pour over sprouts. Add salt, pepper and grated cheese and stir.

## **Helpful Hints!**

- Soil temperature. Find the soil temperature at 2 inches before you plant your spring crops. Germination and safe planting depends on soil temperature. There is a website that tells you the 2 inch soil temperature ([georgiaweather.net](http://georgiaweather.net)). Click on soil temperature under Calculator on the tool bar to locate the nearest weather station. Set the date for the previous week and US for Fahrenheit degrees.
  - Quick soil pH test. Most plants require a pH level of 6.0 to 7.5 to do well. For a “quick and dirty” test for your soil's acidity, get one cup of soil from your garden. Then divide it
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into two containers. Add a half cup of vinegar to one of the containers. If it fizzes, it is probably alkaline (7.0 or more). If it doesn't, however, put a half cup of baking soda and some distilled water into the other container. If this fizzes, it is acidic. If there is no reaction, the pH is just right. For a more accurate reading of your soil pH, have a soil test done through the Extension Office.

- Our bird friends. Winter is a good time to help birds get ready for nesting season. Inspect birdhouses to make sure they're firmly mounted. Clean their feeders and once dry, fill them with fresh seed. Give birdbaths a good scrubbing and refill with clean water. Finally, make a pile of nesting materials (short pieces of string or yarn, dry moss or dry grasses, dryer lint) and place it in a wire suet cage or large mesh bag hung in trees so they can reach it easily.

## Did you know?

- Which pepper is the hottest in the world?
    - T Pot Douglah
    - Carolina Reaper
    - Trinidad Moruga Scorpion
    - 
    - Ans. The Carolina Reaper. Pepper heat is measured in Scoville heat units (SHUs). A standard tobasco pepper is 30,000 to 50,000 SHUs. The Carolina Reaper is just a bit more than that at 2.2 million SHUs. Now that's fire!
  - Here are some common all natural/organic fertilizer options that are readily available. The average N-P-K values are provided. Flowers, fruiting plants and vegetables all require a sufficient supply of phosphorus along with nitrogen and potassium. Blood meal and fish emulsion provide the high nitrogen needs of leafy vegetables such as lettuce chard and spinach. Blood meal also lowers the soil's pH slightly while wood ash raises the pH.
    - Nitrogen
      - Blood Meal (12-0-0)
      - Cottonseed Meal (6-.4-1.5)
      - Fish Emulsion (5-2-2)
      - Soybean Meal (7-2-2)
    - Phosphorus
      - Bat Guano (3-10-1)
      - Bone Meal (3-15-0)
      - Soft Rock Phosphate (0-18-0)
    - Potassium
      - Alfalfa Meal (2-1-2)
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- Kelp Powder (1-0-4)

## Keep us laughing!

- You see me once in June, twice in November and not at all in May. What am I? (The letter “e.”)
- Why couldn’t the green pepper practice archery? (Because it didn’t habanero.)
- I was taking care of my landlord’s garden last summer while they were away on a 2 month vacation when I noticed a wilted container plant with a “tomato” marker. Not wanting the plant to die on my watch, I got my fertilizer and watering can out and started nursing it back to health. By the time they returned, the plant was about 5 feet tall and very lush. I proudly showed them the plant but my happy grin soon disappeared when my landlord pointed out what I thought was a tomato plant was nothing more than the healthiest weed in the garden.
- Sign on a stone: “If this rock is wet....it’s raining. If it’s moving.....it’s an earthquake. If it’s white.....it’s snowing. If it’s not here.....it’s stolen.”
- A person of words and not deeds is like a garden full of weeds.
- Real gardeners buy at least ten thousand plants in the course of a lifetime without having the least idea of where they will put any of them when they get home.
- Roses are red, violets are blue. I’m just telling you gardening facts.
- What is 3/7 chicken 2/3 cat and 2/4 goat? (Chicago)
- What can’t be put in a sauce pan? (It’s lid)

## Botanical Terms Challenge.

Provide the term which is defined by each of the following 10 items. The answers are at the bottom of the Botanical Challenge.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ wing-like seeds of big leaf maple and box elders that fly through the air with a helicopter-like motion.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ vegetative sprouts or cuttings from sweet potatoes that are used to replant another crop.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ charcoal that is produced by pyrolysis of biomass in the absence of oxygen to transform biomass carbon into a more stable form and used to stimulate plant growth.
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ this is the fibrous, inner shell of the coconut, used as a replacement for peat or perlite.
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ excrement generated by the larval stage of an insect, often with a specific color and appearance.
  6. \_\_\_\_\_ stage of development of an insect between moults as it develops from the egg to
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the adult.

7. \_\_\_\_\_ sticky, sugary secretion from aphids which often attracts other insects, especially ants.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ cover crop planted in a garden bed which is turned back into the soil to increase fertility.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ a temporary crop planted to lure pests away from a prized crop then disposing of the plants, pests, eggs and larvae before they move on.

10. \_\_\_\_\_ the top 12-18 inches of soil where essential nutrients are taken up by plants and the plants in turn release substances back into their environments to affect soil microorganisms.

**Ans.** 1. – samaras, 2. – slip, 3. – biochar, 4. – coir, 5. – frass, 6. – instar, 7. – honeydew, 8. – green manure, 9. – trap crop, 10. – rhizosphere.

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

**Spring 2022 Issue - March 31st**  
**Summer 2022 Issue - June 30th**  
**Fall 2022 Issue - September 30th**  
**Winter 2023 Issue - December 31st**

## 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 depend on pandemic conditions. Notices will be sent out letting you know if the meeting will be held in person or on Zoom. The event is free and open to the public. Social (and potluck dinner if appropriate) at 6:30, or just arrive in time for the program which begins promptly at 7 p.m.*

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**Our mailing address is:** c/o S. Bohm, 2735 Meadow Gate Way, Loganville, GA 30052