



Scatter Info As We Bloom and Grow

Horticulture Edition, Gail Berthe, Editor

Environmental Edition, Judy Keenan, Editor

Landscape Design Edition, Jane Hersey, Editor

Volume I, Number 8

Environmental Edition

May, 2014

Letter from the Editor

Spring is finally here, the season we gardeners wait for all year long. The sun shines, the rains fall and new life emerges. This year, it seems we've waited longer than ever. As you gear up for the coming months, may I urge you to think of the planet as you choose your plants and tend your gardens. Make sustainability your goal for 2014. Consider environmentally friendly alternatives for pest and disease control. Think about wildlife and choose to plant native species whenever feasible, and more important, avoid all invasive species. Gardeners by our very nature are stewards of the Earth, so let's get to work!

Judy Keenan, Environment Editor

Wild for Wildflowers

By Evelynna Rogers and Barbara Johnson, GCG Wildflower Co-chairs



Georgia is blessed with a large variety of wildflowers, from the mountains to the coast to the lowlands. Wildflowers can be enjoyed along roadsides, byways, in the woods and meadows, along the beach and in lowland bogs. Many of these wildflowers thrive without human intervention, however, we humans must intervene if we want to continue to enjoy them. Many varieties of wildflowers have become extinct and many more are at risk. To preserve our wildflower heritage, we must educate, manage and protect, plant, transplant and grow from seed to replenish and supplement nature's wonderful wildflowers.

In that spirit, the Garden Club of Georgia Award #11 recognizes wildflower garden club projects. Now is the time to focus on Wildflower projects and to make plans to enter those projects for this award. This year the Garden Club of Georgia is also sponsoring a Wildflower Photo Contest. Digital submissions will be accepted through March 10, 2015 and the winners will be announced at the State Convention. For more information, contact Evelynna Rogers at rogers2767@bellsouth.net.

Ban the Bag

Plastic bags are bad for the environment, plain and simple. After a single use, they most likely end up in the landfill, or worse, in our parks, waterways and roadsides. In the oceans, huge “islands” of plastic exist in remote locations. The plastic breaks down in the oceans into polymers, small enough to be digested by living organisms near the surface, which in turn enter the food chain, disrupting endocrine systems all down the line. Bigger pieces of plastic trash also kill fish, turtles, marine birds and mammals (at least 267 species worldwide). Plastic bags are the second most common type of ocean refuse found (following cigarette butts), and they can take up to 1,000 years to fully degrade.

If that isn't enough to convince you to ban the bag, listen to this: No more than five percent of plastic bags are ever recycled. That wouldn't be so bad, except for the fact that 1 trillion (that's trillion with a T) single-use plastic bags are used annually across the world. Twice the amount that get recycled—10 percent—end up in the oceans.

The Garden Club of Georgia, under the leadership of Suzanne Wheeler, has begun a “Ban the Bag” Campaign. We challenge you and your clubs to choose environmentally friendly options to single-use plastic bags. Chairpersons, Lonnie Sutton, Barbara Keadle Johnson and Evelynna Keadle Rogers urge you to “Think before you bag it” and to BYOB—bring your own bag. Some Districts in the state are selling tote bags with their insignia. Proceeds from these sales will go toward the Ban the Bag Project. If you must use a bag, then please, reuse it and then recycle it. If you have any creative ideas for repurposing bags, please send photographs to rogers2767@bellsouth.net, to help us spread the word. Be sure to include your garden club's name and contact information.



Mattie Rogers models repurposed plastic bags that were sold at the Oleander District Meeting's Country Store

Ziploc Brand Recycling

The Johnson Company, makers of Ziploc brand products recently announced that their single-use bags can be recycled, along with other, unavoidable plastics, such as newspaper bags, dry-cleaning bags, bread and produce bags, wrapping from toilet paper and napkins, plastic shipping envelopes and all clean bags labeled #2 or #4. Simply bring these plastics to any location that recycles plastic grocery bags. Before recycling those Ziploc bags, first clean them and, preferably, reuse them a few times. Recycled plastics typically become composite lumber used for fences, benches, decking and more.

Update of the Great Backyard Bird Count

The results are in from the most recent Great Back Yard Bird Count that took place from February 14 – 17: 4,296 species were observed in the 135 countries that participated. A total of 142,000 people participated.

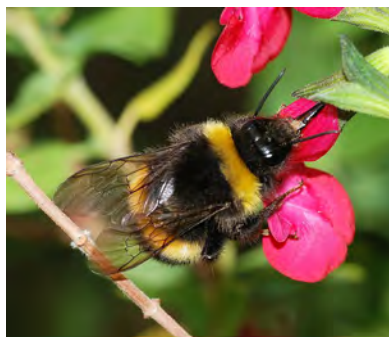
Get Outdoors with the Georgia DNR

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources has created an interactive map to help Georgians to get outside! Log onto www.georgiaoutdoormap.com to find DNR-managed lands and outdoor recreational opportunities. The map will even provide door-to-door mapping from your home to their parks for fishing, boating, hiking, lodging and more.

Become a Bumble Bee Scientist

The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation in Ottawa, Canada is asking citizens of North America to participate in the Bumble Bee watch. Log in to www.bumblebeewatch.org and learn how you can help researchers determine the status and conservation needs of these important native pollinators. All it takes is a walk in your own backyard or neighborhood and a camera or smartphone. Start snapping photos of your neighborhood bumble bees, upload the photos and submit them as data. In Georgia, the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee is considered imperiled and the Cuckoo Bee is considered critically imperiled. Your input will help scientists determine their status.

In addition to becoming a citizen scientist, you also can help by creating habitats that are favorable to bees. This includes: planting natives, planting flowers with a variety of colors and planting in clumps.



EPA Proposes Biggest Step for Clean Water in a Decade

According to Environment Georgia, the Environmental Protection Agency recently proposed a rule to close loopholes in the Clean Water Act that leave 57% of Georgia's streams and millions of acres of wetlands at risk of unchecked pollution and development.

"With the drinking water for nearly 5 million Georgians at risk, we're thrilled to see the EPA moving forward to protect our waterways," said Jennette Gayer, Director with Environment Georgia, which has worked for nearly a decade to restore Clean Water Act protections. "Today's action is about securing that all our water is safe and healthy. Whether we're floating down the 'Hooch, fishing in our favorite stream, or just drinking the water that comes from our tap, we need Georgia's waterways to be clean and protected."

This rulemaking comes after a decade of uncertainty over the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act, following polluter-led Supreme Court challenges in 2001 and 2006. The rule, which could be finalized as soon as later this year, would restore Clean Water Act protections to many of Georgia's wetlands and more than half Georgia's streams.

"This rule would protect the streams that feed into rivers like the Chattahoochee and the wetlands that filter pollution from Lake Lanier," said Gayer. "If we don't protect these critical waters, we can't ensure that any of our waterways are fully protected."

With so much at stake, Environment Georgia and its sister groups across the country have waged an intensive multi-year campaign to restore these Clean Water Act protections – including more than 1 million face-to-face conversations with people across the country, and rallying more than 400 local elected officials, 300 farmers, and 300 small business owners to call on the Obama administration to take action.

In September 2013, the EPA announced it was moving forward with the rulemaking to restore Clean Water Act protections to waterways throughout Georgia and across the country. It simultaneously released a draft science report on the connection between smaller streams and wetlands and downstream waters, which makes the scientific case for the rulemaking. Members of the public submitted more than 150,000 public comments in support of the report's findings that these waterways merit protection under the law.

"Clean water is an essential part of growing healthy food," said Steve O'Shea the owner of 3 Porch Farm in Madison County. "The good news is this rule will help make sure farmers have access to the clean water that is so important."

Many of the nation's biggest polluters are already weighing in against the rulemaking, spreading misinformation about the rule's potential impacts. While the EPA has announced the rule will preserve all existing Clean Water Act exemptions for the agricultural sector, the American Farm Bureau is insisting that the rulemaking is "a land grab" by the EPA and cause for "battle." The American Farm Bureau Federation is one of 28 members of the Waters Advocacy Coalition, an industry group formed to lobby against clean water protections.

"When finalized, this rule would be the biggest step forward for clean water in more than a decade," said Gayer. "Thank you, Administrator Gina McCarthy and the EPA for fighting to protect clean water."

Water, Water Everywhere....

By Judy Keenan

We live on the Blue Planet—blue thanks to all the water. I'm not a numbers person, but let me throw some water numbers your way for minute:

- Only 2 ½ percent of Earth's water is fresh.
- Of that fresh water, 60 percent of it is trapped in glaciers and icecaps.
- Only 10 percent of our fresh water is surface water: streams, ponds, lakes.
- The remaining 30 percent comes from groundwater, much of which is too deep to access.

Now if that doesn't have you confused yet, let's consider how we use our available water (the usable 40 percent of the 2 ½ percent of Earth's water):

- Humans use some 70 percent of our fresh water for agriculture,
- 22 percent for industry and
- 8 percent for drinking and sanitation.

We have all the fresh water we will ever get. We can't really use it up, it will continue to be recycled. Nevertheless, as the human population grows and more nations join the developed world, our demands for fresh water will increase. Now if that doesn't sound ominous, let's throw some global warming into the mix, which has shifted weather patterns and upset agriculture all over the place. Interestingly, one of the rainiest places on Earth, Cherrapunji, India which boasts a whopping 40 feet of rain per year, lacks fresh clean water from November through March, forcing locals to walk long distances to fill jugs in springs or streams, according to Gardiner Harris of the *New York Times*. Also in India (like other developing nations), half of the water in rural areas is routinely contaminated with bacteria. To put it simply, despite a continuous, although limited supply of water, many people do not have potable water for simple drinking and sanitation.

Many of these problems seem far away, halfway across the world, in fact. But here in Georgia we have plenty of water woes of our own. As gardeners, it has been hard to ignore the droughts of the last several years or the so-called 100-year and 500-year rains we've experienced. Storm water runoff pollutes our waterways, making them toxic to aquatic life. Viruses, bacteria and heavy metals also get washed in from runoff, which affect human health. Meanwhile our population continues to grow and we hope to bring

new industry and jobs to the area. (Remember, industry represents 22 percent of our fresh water use.) If we want our local economy to grow, then we must find solutions to our growing demand for water. What's more, Georgians use 10 percent more water per person than the national average.

We can't make more water, but we can be more conscientious with the water we do have. In Dekalb County alone, if every home owner replaced one pre-1993 toilet with a low-flow toilet, it would save more than 6 million gallons of water per day—that's enough to meet the average daily demand of 60,000 people (assuming an average use of 100 gallons per person per day). All from one toilet. Image if you were to replace all the toilets in your home!

According to the Georgia Water Coalition, we need to make conservation and enforcement of existing laws our first priority in preventing a water crisis. Yes, we could build more reservoirs, but much of the water in reservoirs evaporates and building one is expensive and takes its toll on wildlife. Lake Lanier loses on average 125 million gallons per day through evaporation due to the increased surface area of a reservoir. Instead, by enforcing watering restrictions (not bans) and practicing simple conservation, we could achieve our goals much more inexpensively. And I don't just mean water conservation. More than half of the surface water withdrawn in Georgia (3.3 billion gallons) is used for running our coal-fired and nuclear power plants. Simply turning off the lights saves water.

Other ways of conserving water include collecting rainwater for irrigation. Not only will you avoid paying for the treated water and sewer fees, your plants will appreciate the non-chlorinated drink. Collecting rainwater has the further advantage of slowing storm runoff. All that water that would have gone down the sewer, now slowly percolates through the ground when you water, filtering it along the way.

Finally, the ways in which we choose to consume impact our water usage. For example, did you know that to raise one pound of beef, it requires 1,799 gallons of water? One pound of goat meat only requires 127 gallons. Goat not on the butcher's shelf at your market? Well, a pound of chicken only requires 468 gallons and each egg, 53 gallons. Similarly a pound of coffee requires 880 gallons of water to go from seed to cup, whereas a pound of tea only requires 128 gallons. I am not suggesting we all stop eating hamburgers and start eating goat burgers, but opting for an omelet occasionally could help.

Scatter Information as We Bloom and Grow is a monthly publication of the Garden Club of Georgia. Each edition focuses on one of three themes: horticulture, the environment and landscape design.

Horticulture Editor: Gail Berthe, gail.berthe@gmail.com

Environment Editor: Judy Keenan, thekeenanfamily@comcast.net

Landscape Design Editor: Jane Hersey, jhersey@bellsouth.net