From: your Horticulture Edition editor, Gail (the Happy Gardener) Berthe

Spring is trying very hard to spring, but it just keeps getting frustrated with the cold weather reappearing! But what else is new—isn’t this what makes the garden fun? Each year is different and a challenge which we, as gardeners—and by extension ecologists, have to meet. It is the challenge that keeps it interesting! Some things that are facts—never plant hot weather plants too early in the spring (tomatoes, peppers, okra, zinnias; total waste of time if planted before the soil has warmed up. The ground temperature MUST be appropriate for the specific plants to thrive—even if you get a tomato in the ground and keep it alive with cold weather cloches etc. it WILL NOT THRIVE. My boring mantra about mulch—put it down AFTER the soil warms in the spring and AFTER the first freeze in the fall is a good thing to follow because it will determine when ‘things’ bloom and/or thrive.

Scatter Info….is meant to be a review of various topics to help us with our various pursuits. Know that each of our editors welcome your ideas and questions. Check your GCG Guides for the appropriate emails or contact me at gail.berthe@gmail.com.

Trial Gardens

What is a trial garden? It is a garden in which specific plants are grown under controlled conditions to evaluate new plants—ornamental as well as agricultural, to determine the viability of a new cultivar. This can be the work of academic institutions, seed companies, plant breeders to judge the value of their new creations, even the individual gardener who just wants to try a new plant in their own garden. (How many plants have you tried and then realized this is not going to grow in your garden—you may try to change the growing conditions to give it a better opportunity for success—or just throw it on the compost pile! Your results are not ‘academic’ but they are useful to you and maybe your gardening friends.)

Garden Trials: how plants are evaluated—our very own UGA Trial Garden is quite important. Allan Armitage and Michael Dirr started the garden in 1982 with support from PanAmerican Seed Company. Today the garden has achieved success and evaluates plants from almost all the plant breeding companies in the world! This excellent resource is available
to help us know which plants will work best in OUR gardens. ‘The right plant in the right place!’

**Annuals** are evaluated very two weeks for horticultural performance. Based on number of flowers, leaf color, uniformity of habit and flower, resistance to insects and diseases, and overall appearance data is compiled in a single performance rating. A rating of 5 is exceptional and 1 is ‘almost dead.’ This gives an understanding of general performance and understanding of how a plant performs from spring to fall. **Perennials** are evaluated based on at least three year performance. Evaluation starts after the first winter. “The time of first flower, duration of flowering, height, foliar health and comments are provided as the plants mature throughout the season.”

**Trial Gardens UGA welcomes its new director this spring.** Dr. Armitage and Dr. Dirr have retired and John Ruter has taken over day to day operations at the garden. Dr. Rutter spent twenty years at UGA Tifton as a horticulture professor and nursery crop research and extension specialist, and received many awards in this position. He will now teach classes at UGA Athens on plant identification and environmental issues. He plans to use the trial garden as an outdoor classroom.

The Trial Gardens at UGA Athens are open year round. More information about them can be found at visit [ugatrial.hort.uga.edu](http://ugatrial.hort.uga.edu). Two of my favorite sites are *Best of the Best* which compares the qualities of various plant species and *Classic City Awards*. Dr. Ruter states “We take great pride in the Trials at the University of Georgia. We don’t trial for the sake of trialing or to make us look good or to give us something to do – we trial in the steadfast belief that what we do makes a difference. When we provide real data under real world conditions, we do so in the belief that someone, breeders, growers, retailers and consumers, will pay attention. Quality is not limited to fertility standards and spacing, quality is also what consumers, from landscapers to buyers, see when they have a little money to spend.

So, in the steadfast belief that what we do does make a difference, here are the Classic City* Award winners for 2013, the very best plants in the trial gardens, based on year round performance and/or eye-clutching beauty. Of the over 2000 plants in the garden, being a Classic City Award winner is equivalent to the Oscar and Tony rolled up as one.”

**Happy Gardening,**

Dr. John Ruter Director UGATrial Garden and Meg Green, Trial Supervisor

### Plantapalooza Plant Sale

**Three Plant Sales in One Day**

**State Botanical Garden of Georgia - UGA Horticulture Club –**

**Trial Gardens at UGA**

Shop three very different University of Georgia plant sales, offering perennials, annuals, shrubs, trees, herbs, native plants, tropical plants, and Georgia Gold Medal plants. Professors, garden curators, and master gardeners will be available to help you select plants and answer questions. All locations will offer a stamped, special card which will allow participants to receive discounts in many local nurseries. Admission and parking is free and Plantaplooza will happen rain or shine! Cash or
checks only accepted at Trial Gardens. For more information about Plantaplooza, including plant lists, directions, and participating discount card nurseries, visit [www.plantapalooza.uga.edu](http://www.plantapalooza.uga.edu) or call 706-542-6014. Information on Athens hotel and attractions can be found at [www.VisitAthensGA.com](http://www.VisitAthensGA.com).

**Plantapalooza Plant Sales:**
The State Botanical Garden of Georgia – 2450 S. Milledge Avenue, Athens
The Trial Gardens at UGA – 220 W. Green Street, Athens
UGA Horticulture Club – Intersection of College Station Road and Riverbend Road, Athens
(This information has been edited from the UGA Athens Trial Garden website and from Georgia Gardener Magazine, March 2013)

**Other established trial gardens** giving valuable information to Georgia gardeners?
- Georgia Gold Medal Plants
  - The Gold Medal Plant Committee is a non-profit organization comprised of nurserymen, flower growers, garden center retailers, landscape professionals, county Extension agents and faculty from the University of Georgia.
  - Their goal is: To promote the production, sale and use of superior ornamental plants for Georgia

### Winners for 2014

**Spider Flower**

* Cleome Hybrids
* Category: Annual
* Conditions: Full Sun

Compared to old-fashioned Cleome, Señorita Rosalita® and Señorita Blanca™ offer a bushier form, no spines, no seed pods, a tough constitution that can take hot summers, drought tolerance, and foliage that stays on the plant throughout the season. What has been kept are the charming, airy flowers on an upright plant that stands tall in a flower border.

**Rain Lily**

* Atamasco Lily
* Category: Native
* Conditions: Full Sun

Zephyranthes are native throughout the Americas. Atamasco Zephyranthes that is native to Georgia, found in moist forests, seepy areas around rock outcrops, wet pastures and road-moisture and full sun and it will fit nicely into the home landscape. Appearing in March and April the show of flowers rise above the grass like foliage and is always a sweet surprise after a rain.

**Red Hot Poker**

* Kniphofia Hybrids
* Category: Perennial
* Conditions: Full Sun
Tall flower spikes open from the bottom up, rising on strong stems above sword-like leaves. As the blooms open, the lower flowers change color, often creating a two-toned effect that is beautiful, towering above annuals and other perennials. The blooms make great cut flowers and are hummingbird magnets. The Popsicle™ Series bloom all summer on dwarf plants.

**Sweetbox**

*SARCOCOCCA CONFUSA*

Category: Shrub  
Conditions: Full Sun

This native of China is related to boxwood, but has a relaxed form. It is used as low hedging and can be but its pliable branches form a beautiful, arching shape. small, deep green leaves are a perfect background for bells and vivid spring bulbs – or plant a few in front of hydrangeas to help support floppy stems. Sweet Box is also an excellent, deer-resistant choice for a shady bank or woodland landscape. Sweet Box can handle dark shade under eaves or trees.

**Chinese Pistache**

*PISTACHIA CHINENSIS*

Category: Tree  
Conditions: Part Shade to Full Shade

Chinese Pistache can take heat and drought. It can also take but its oval form and the orange-red fall colors are showier in full is tough enough to be used in urban parking lots. This is a good tree with an upright form that fits into a home landscape and dense, uniform canopy.

One of the really good things about the Georgia Gold Medal Site is that all the Gold Medal Plants are listed back to 1994 and they are just as valid today as in 1994. I have many of them in my garden and am rarely disappointed in selecting them. My plans for this year are some of the *Cleome* Señorita Rosalita® and *Cleome* ‘Señorita Blanca™’. Cleome is a delightful almost foolproof plant except it is a bit too prolific—reseeding very easily (but also easy to pull out and transplant). It would be nice to have such pretty cultivars in special places as these two new hybrids. [just a ‘test’ question’—what is the superscript included with the botanical designation? Answer at the end of the newsletter for the curious.

Other excellent authorities for evaluated plants include

- **All-American Selections** was founded in Atlanta in 1932 by the Hasting Brothers. When this symbol is displayed in a horticulture catalog, or on a seed packet you can be assured the variety has been tested and proved to be a worthy plant. Their website **AASwinners.com** will give you information describing this worthy organization, and lists of their many winners through their 82 year history.
AAS was organized to fulfill the need for gardening magazine editors reliable information about plant seeds quality. The ‘Garden Club’ movement was new—GCG, Inc. was established in 1928 and joined the National Garden Club organization in 1929. W. Ray Hastings was president of Southern Seedsmen’s Association of Atlanta and proposed the idea of AAS as a way for home gardeners to learn which new varieties are quality improvements. He encouraged seed companies to establish seed trials and have them judged by impartial judges.

The first awards were given in 1933 and AAS has been a very successful organization through the years.

Please make special recognition of the ‘garden club’ movement and its needs for better information—and Georgia has at the forefront of this enterprise—let’s not forget our part in horticulture history. {I’m proud to tell you one of the charter members of GCG, Inc. is Concord Garden Club which will celebrate its 90th anniversary on April 17 of this year—there is more about this in the upcoming events section. But it is quite an accomplishment for a village of 300 people!}

- Royal Horticulture Society is an excellent plant rating organization. Their awards are generally useful in at least some parts of our country.
- Most state Agriculture Universities maintain some kind of trial garden. This is to meet the specific growing conditions that exist in their state. These state ag schools have developed some really great new cultivars—a favorite is Penstemon digitalis ‘Husker Red’. Isn’t the leaf color just perfect for the flower!? It’s perennial and comfortably expanding. (Which state university developed this one? Answer at end of the newsletter for the curious.

- By listing these other organization it must be recognized it essential for the gardener to verify the specific needs of the selected seeds. Reputable seed catalogs will tell you USDA zonal range and basic growing requirements of each plant. Read this carefully before purchasing your seeds!!! Remember—‘the right plant in the right place.’

**A Little Garden Club History**

Several years ago I read a book by an English garden essayist. visiting American gardens in 1928 because she had been told no gardens in America!’ Her trip was under the auspices of Club of America—the existing Garden Club organization in country. Needless to say she discovered wonderful gardens in yearlong coast to coast travels. In the last chapter she states the effect that she understands a new ‘federation of garden being formed to meet the needs of those living in small more of the country and they are forming a national federation!’ My
goodness—that was us! Remember her trip was in 1928. (Our metropolis of today was not so big in 1928! In Georgia there were 30 clubs which joined this ‘federation’. Concord Garden Club was one of the clubs, but they had to get a special waiver because of their size—only 12 women, but Concord didn’t have enough population to have a larger membership! We are among the last 12 charter member clubs still members of GCG, Inc. and will celebrate our 90th anniversary on April 17 in Strickland Store which is the historic center of Concord established in 1887. It has been renovated and is now our community building.

The program for Lunch and Learn is extensive and great fun—a real Georgia treat. It is hoped your will join us for a ‘day in the country’. The garden related vendors are local and great—produce, plants, and garden artifacts. The speaker is outstanding. Check out her web page http://sharonmcgukin.com/sharons-blog/ She is going to focus her designs on using ‘home grown flowers and foliage.

**Happy 90th Anniversary Concord Garden Club**

**Fifteenth Annual Lunch and Learn**

**Strickland Building**

**Thursday, April 17, 2014 11:00 to 2:00**

**Herriette Beckham Lecture: Sharon McGukin**

**Rock Star Floral Art**

**Plus Garden Related Local Vendors**

**Raffle to benefit Herriette Beckham Scholarship Fund**

**Bring your own box lunch or order from Concord Café (770 884 5566**

**Beverages & finger desserts provided**

Concord Garden Club, Charter Member of Redbud District,

Garden Club of Georgia, Inc, National Garden Club, Inc.

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**Plight of the Butterfly**

We are aware of the general decline in butterfly population—reasons are still being discussed, but one cause which we can try to eliminate is to provide nectar and habitat for them. Environmental/social issues have diminished the necessary living conditions and food for survival. Monarch butterflies are among the most seriously affected. What can we do? (and
beautify our own gardens in the process!) There are many excellent internet resources available, and they give detailed information. One that appealed to me was Monarch Watch, Butterfly Gardening. Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca), Butterfly bush (Buddleia davidii), and many of our common vibrant summer annuals such as cosmos, zinnias, marigolds phlox, are mentioned and all grow well in Georgia. Even a collection on containers with appropriate plants on a balcony or deck can be a good thing for butterflies. Their migration story is so amazing—they deserve something good to eat along the way! Also, a large saucer with a rock landing site with fresh water and a piece of ripe fruit is heaven to them! Help the butterfly survive. Garden environmentally.

**Unique container for planting!**

Using large and study cardboard boxes lined with plastic (holes must be cut for drainage in both the cardboard and plastic) make good inexpensive plant containers—and can be decorated or not, depending on where and how you are using them. *Birds and Blooms* is the source of the pictures. Looks intriguing to me—anyone have any experience with this technique. Recycling and inexpensive!

There are also several ideas for reusing common household items in the garden—plastic venetian blind slats cut for plant markers, an old bucket for a bird house, broken garden tools as ornaments for the garden…..

**Happy Gardening from Gail the Happy Gardener**

[Gail berthé@gmail.com](mailto:Gail.berthe@gmail.com), 770 228 8849 answering questions about the garden is a favorite thing. ™ is the symbol for trade mark and ® is the symbol for Registered—this designation means the plant may not be propagated for commercial enterprise. As an amateur you should recognize this is ‘protected property’ and you should not abuse that fact for other than use in your own garden.

University of Nebraska—the ‘Cornhuskers’ developed *Penstemon* ‘Husker Red