



The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

Mission: Beautification ... Conservation ... Education

Sowing Seeds of Knowledge

(published monthly to inform and to encourage participation in NGC Schools)

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STRINGS TOO SHORT TO TIE? Tie small environmental strings together!

After my paternal grandfather died and Grandmother reduced the size and amount of her living quarters and possessions, a major place to tackle was the upstairs linen storage closet with over a half century of pillows, wool blankets and covers therefor as well as feather beds, duvets, plus bathmats, towels and sheets and pillowcases of all sizes. In that space, up on a shelf, all tied up with bits and pieces of cotton string tied together was what was then described as a suit box. Written in Grandmother's hand on the box top in all capital letters, just under the name of a still extant New York tailor was STRINGS TOO SHORT TO TIE.

Of course all the bits and pieces of strings inside were shorter than about six inches. **However, despite their length, they were not too short to tie together** and then use for packages. Grandmother's mother had grown up in the 1860's in what was then Forestville, NC, just across the street from a small college when everything except war was scarce for everyone. Of course they saved string. Grandmother herself had survived the 1930's when mailed brown paper packages were literally tied up with string. The family regularly baked brownies and cookies to send to a relative serving in the military during WWII: strings could be untied or cut to inspect packages to insure that nothing forbidden that might abet or aid an enemy was inside and then retied and delivered. Most of the time such packages reached their recipients.

What everyone knew then was that when balls of string were not available or not easily available, especially in small towns, such little bits and pieces of string could also be tied together and then used to make neat and secure packages to mail to family members for birthdays and holidays. It was part of general saving for future needs. It has often occurred in recent years that such careful and planned conservation and environmental protection was not only necessary but wise. Do we now have streams too short to matter? Forests too unimportant to save? Of course not! Are our natural resources akin to those little snippets in the Brooks Brothers suit box, to be conserved, reused, recycled, and saved for when they would be needed and used with care, saving some for tomorrow and after? Is our environment like that? Of course!

Consider this issue akin to a box of small but useful strings. Remember also that these newsletters are also very much about "... Conservation ..." as the GCG Mission's middle name. They are also about the GCG Mission's "...Education" when we continue to seek information to educate ourselves. GCG is and serves much as the 1971 first published Dr. Seuss Lorax that states "I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues." Principles described in our Position Papers, available on our website, listed under Projects and Programs and then under Legislative Activity are among our short strings. **They guide us when we speak for the things that cannot speak for themselves and need laws to protect them.** In all

years, especially in an election year, they are akin to our platform. They cover the topics and cores of much of our activity. They contain our principles. Although they may be used and sometimes abused by people, we as an organization deal with such principles, not with personalities or with politics. They are now being reviewed and revised and updated by a committee headed by our Legislative Chairman.

Late Additions: this newsletter edition was complete until the local newspaper arrived this morning and messages flooded into electronic mailboxes. Look for appropriately green updates.

BOOK RECOMMENDATION:

A book to read has evolved as part of these Sowing environmental newsletters that intentionally do not include photographs, but do direct readers to websites and books with visuals including outstanding photography, maps and graphs and illustrations, encouraging independent study. Pages on horseback blowing trumpets will not arrive at our homes to unfurl scrolls to inform us. We need to study and to evaluate for our individual selves. Sticky and hot August is a great time for a tall glass of iced tea and a sit down with a real book. This issue suggests two.

First: It may seem initially odd as a choice, but David McCulloch's 2015 **The Wright Brothers** (Simon and Schuster) is very much about the Dayton brothers and their first successful motorized airplanes for astounding flights. It is also very much about how monumental events can initially be ignored or viewed skeptically if at all covered, little recognized, and mostly dismissed.

Granted, on December 17, 1903, then reachable only by boat, Kitty Hawk, NC, was remote for the bicycle building brothers from Ohio, but soft sand and Kill Devil Hills dunes as well as wind for wing lift were major factors in the site choice. Five witnesses plus Orville Wright were likely outnumbered by seagulls for Wilbur's first flight. Telegrams were then the fastest communication form from there. They were mostly ignored by the press. It was not until Wilbur went to Paris by boat and train and with one of their early planes, built of balsa wood, disassembled for shipping and then put back together, that their invention captivated the French before the Americans caught on to the importance of what had happened. Only later did recognition begin back in their home country. Such seems almost beyond credence now, but think back a dozen years when climate change was fairly commonly met with incredulity, if not disbelief as if it were fiction. Mankind has long since progressed beyond the flat Earth concept; it can grasp climate change.

Seeing the original plane now hanging among other flying machines in the Smithsonian that initially declined backing the Ohio bicycle boys puts its relatively tiny size into perspective and recognizes the enormous importance of it as mankind's first successful flying machine.

McCulloch always writes well, making his Wright book is a right read for now.

Second: An additional choice is **Seeing Trees: Discover the Extraordinary Secrets of Everyday Trees**. With text by Nancy Ross Hugo and photography by Robert Llewellyn (Timber Press), a photo of the cover online was enough to add that book to an order, in this case precisely using the no-no of judging a book by its cover. It's surely an elegant example of book design with a great respect for the book page itself. Switching scale of photos is done effectively. One could learn much about design principles and layout simply by studying **Seeing Trees**. That the trees included in the book are highly familiar to most Georgians makes the color photographs placed in botanical drawing fashion on crisp white backgrounds superb. The book is very much about looking differently at the familiar. Such visual efforts are a major part of study and learning flexibility. As a result of only one photograph, I will, as example, now always see redbud blooms enchantingly differently. Hint: think of a small bird.

DROUGHT:

Note that at the start of August, Georgia has not yet officially declared drought: what follows is that if it isn't declared, it evidently doesn't exist. It's like stating it isn't raining or snowing until the official declarer of such things says it is, a practice somewhat akin to describing the Emperor's New Clothes.

Now that much of Georgia is again experiencing drought, with extreme drought over most of the state above the fall line, water conservation is vital - starting months ago. We need to revive water conservation practices from a few years back. Drought areas late last month included counties almost statewide. July was the hottest month on record. As a specific example, in July, Athens GA just missed the record for the driest July in history that goes back to 1947.

Local ordinances vary greatly which means we likely now have or soon will have specific hours on specific days and odd or even house numbers to make outdoor watering permissible. In some areas, vehicles cannot be hose washed. Be prepared! At least one county - DeKalb - has put drought restrictions into effect on a voluntary basis. Check with your county and municipal governments for the water ordinances currently in effect for your area and address.

1. Xeriscaping, native plants, bog gardens, and rain gardens all provide good opportunities choices for water conservation planting. Check with your County Extension Agent for details. Or, better yet, take the NGC Gardening Study Courses, Environmental Studies Courses, and the Landscape Design Courses. In addition to learning useful information, you'll find yourself among kindred souls and in good company.
2. Repair or replace leaky pipes and dripping faucets. Install low flow toilets and water efficient appliances to help. One of our most water conserving GCG members keeps a bucket in her shower and uses her rinse water for her plants. Use of such grey water is being water wise. Rain barrels for roof runoff can provide water for gardens - when there's rain.
3. Continue to turn off the faucet while you brush your teeth. Take short showers.
4. Because energy production and manufacturing are the highest consumptive users of water, think when setting a thermostat to make your living space even a few degrees cooler. Do you need to cool rooms you don't use? Reuse grey water, do a little laundry and wash as few dishes as possible. Do not run dish and clothes washing machines for only a few items. Become full load friendly and recycle the grey water.
5. Remember that without rain, runoff from roads and other impervious surfaces will not happen and that when it eventually does rain, the collected noxious chemicals will quickly end up in great quantities in state waterways. As often happens, it may take rains from a hurricane to end a drought. Remember the negatives like wind, erosion, and high tides with damage to structures, roads, trees, gardens and crops before hoping for hurricanes to relieve drought.

Withdrawal amounts from Lake Lanier as determined by the Army Corps are based on the 1992 Atlanta population, half of what it is today. In an outstanding op editorial by A. Quinton White in the Florida Times Union, White reminds readers of Pogo's Earth Day 1970, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Try pulling up the White op ed from August first, 2016. It's astounding partly because it recommends GCG's ongoing plea to members to contact our elected officials and tell them what we'd like for them to do, to evaluate their campaign positions, study and review their voting records and then to vote accordingly after we each come to an individual decision.

UPDATE ON WATER WARS:

Currently, there is a date set for Florida's pending case against Georgia over the use of waters from the Chattahoochee/Flint watershed and remember watersheds as similar to bathtubs. The case is now to be

heard in Washington DC District Court, not the U.S. Supreme Court. The date which may or may not be an example of foreshadowing or irony is October 31st. SAVE THAT DATE! Am not an attorney, but hearing the case in a District Court before our elections will mean that it will not be heard before the currently less than fully seated U.S. Supreme Court unless the appointed special master changes plans. His job has been to try to get the two states to settle the case out of court.

There will naturally be more attorneys' billing hours, meals, lodging, transportation, and staff expenses.

Note that the seemingly endless case will likely continue. If the Washington trial doesn't please both parties which it almost by definition won't, then when a replacement for Justice for Scalia is appointed by a new President and approved by a Congress that will have been changed to some extent by November elections, Florida's case can then be taken to the Supreme Court with whole new millions of dollars in costs to be met. Most likely, whatever the decision, the case will continue because whichever side does not win will appeal, perhaps through a new case starting in lower courts. Meanwhile, Georgia continues to spend millions on attorneys, on travel and lodging with no solution.

As of August first, Florida's Water Wars case over the question of the capped water withdrawals limit for Georgia about its Lake Lanier flows has been moved to Portland, Maine, because the appointed Special Master presiding judge Ralph Lancaster has deemed there is insufficient staff in the District court in Washington for the case. From the 8/2/16 Atlanta Journal, "... it will be located, appropriately enough, in the bankruptcy court," according to Judge Lancaster. Georgia currently has 70 paid lawyers for the case and has, thus far spent more than 40 million dollars defending its use of Chattahoochee/Flint waters. For more information, go to the AJC website: <http://specials.myajc.com/>.

Note also that Army Corps of Engineers rate for Georgia withdrawals

POWER:

Good news is that highly air and water polluting coal powered plants are being shut down and that alternative sources of energy like wind (with inherent problems for birds) and solar are being developed. The question about what happens to coal ash from cooling towers is highly problematic. If it's put into retention ponds, they may likely leak, even if they are lined. There are also efforts to move such noxious and harmful chemicals to other sites. Jessup, Georgia understands. One major producer of power in NC and also with some plants in FL would like to ship such ash to out of state sites, a practice akin to the moving and storage of nuclear wastes hundreds of miles. Natural gas is a great source of energy, but needs to be piped generally from out of state through Georgia to refineries, most often near ports, one of the reasons for deepening Savannah Harbor.

Fracking/hydraulic fracturing according to propublica.org is "a process of drilling down into the earth before a high pressure water mixture is directed at the rock [generally shale] to release the gas inside. Water, sand and chemicals are injected into the rock at high pressure which allows the gas to flow to the head of the well." It's all good *except* that it takes massive amounts of water, that the chemicals used are generally dangerous to animal life, and that the gas withdrawn usually must be shipped, most often by pipelines to refineries. Parts of Georgia are experiencing demands of pipeline companies to place pipes through private lands. There have been studies and cases of the fracking process generating earthquakes. Moreover, the water isn't treated and recycled. Fracking is a conservation issue that like many other aspects of conservation has unfortunately become a buzzword for politics. A simple test of a concept for those interested in conservation is the following: is it good for plant and animal life and natural ecosystems?

New Nuke Plant?

Latest power production news in Georgia is that the huge, new, unfinished and way over budget nuclear plant on the Savannah near Waynesboro will have all the inherent dangers of nuclear energy and that plans for another new nuclear plant are being considered for a site only about 230 miles across the state on the Chattahoochee, below Columbus and Fort Benning, in Stewart County.

Surely, there's also concern about the potential for two water guzzling nuclear plants so close together, especially when such power generated in Georgia using waters in Georgia can be sold in other states across the energy grid. Also especially concerning is considering such production in a time of yet un- declared drought when rains are not keeping existing state lands waterways, watersheds and farmlands well supplied.

Moreover, what is the rationale for adding another nuclear plant with extremely high consumptive water use to a watershed that currently lacks sufficient water in drought situations? Also, keep in mind that all lakes in Georgia are manmade, many belong to power companies, and that it is the Army Corps of Engineers that determines when how much water is released to flow downstream. Whatever else humankind does, it does manage to produce complications and dilemmas for itself.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

If for no other reason than to avoid ruffling any local feathers, let's pick up a bit of a short string from another state that was on NBC news on July 30th. Isle de St. Charles in Terrebone Parish, just off Louisiana's mainland and in the Gulf of Mexico, but the conditions can be applied to any barrier island or lowland. St. Charles is primarily inhabited by a tribe of 150 to 175 Native American Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw who have owned the land and lived there happily for many generations. The island was reachable only by boat roughly 70 years ago. Today it is reachable by a sinking, often flooded and narrow two lane road that makes commuting to dry land employment possible for some of the remaining population. Isle de St. Charles is simply continuing to disappear as unstoppable tides and waters rise. As the waters rise, land disappears. They have farmed and have fished and have lived quite happily and independently there as a people and as a culture with the older generations still speaking Cajun French.

They also know they cannot financially continue to continue to build levees and to replace buildings. With each storm and hurricane, parts of the island disappear from inside a surrounding levee, and salt waters creep higher despite their having built their homes and one building church, grocery and dance hall up on pilings. The one room school closed half a century ago. Their only choice is to move to higher ground. Canals for ships and oil pipelines have helped prevent silt from the Mississippi River to refresh the soil on freshwater wetlands.

There's not enough land left for the inhabitants to be sustainable. The island is simply disappearing. They will move inland, thanks to a Federal grant as the country's initial Climate Refugees. Be aware that other lowlands in other states and countries face similar fates. The New York Times predicts that up to 50 to 200 million people, fishermen and subsistence farmers worldwide may be displaced by rising waters by 2050. The cost for such loss of property, employment, and population is all but unfathomable.

July information for Georgia is not yet available, but the major power company in NC with some generation and some distribution in Florida has announced that last Wednesday, its customers set a record for use of power between four and five in the afternoon. Although temperatures locally have not yet hit 100 degrees, it's the day after day after day of ninety degrees or more with high humidity that take a toll.

GEORGIA WATER COALITION:

That group, of which GCG is a founding partner, met last Wednesday at Georgia Wildlife Federation at Covington. GCG had an unprecedented and welcomed six members there as attendees. A yearly naming of

an improvement needed DIRTY DOZEN bad spots of water within the state will continue. That list will be available in the next several months. If you know of such a spot, do contact the Water Coalition.

A new set of positive site designations to be called the GREEN THIRTEEN is being planned for next year. After a brief conversation, this editor was told that *The Garden Club Ladies* as we are usually called will be looked to as major participants. Such participation will of course have to be described, determined, voted on, and approved, but will offer outreach opportunities for GCG members, especially for Landscape Design Consultants. Such participation would enhance GCG and give GCG/NGC Landscape Design Consultants more opportunity to apply their expertise.

RYAN GAINNEY:

Known internationally for his gardening and garden design skills, Decatur resident and featured speaker at least one GCG State Convention, the knowledgeable Ryan Gainey and his three Jack Russell Terriers died when his house burned this past weekend. His knowledge was extensive, almost limitless; his speaking was outstanding; his style was decidedly flamboyant. Listening to him inspired imaginations. The loss of Ryan Gainey to all who garden and love gardening is great. Just recently, I had seen a quote from Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* and had thought of Gainey. "The purest and most thoughtful minds are those which love color the most."

Organizations and websites to visit and explore:

Use of websites and online information sources are highly recommended. Google has an outstanding search engine. Simply type in a subject or organization of interest and click search. When using such sources, do keep in mind that the integrity of the source and the source itself will in real part determine the kind and quality of the information you find. Most of the following offer information, newsletters, and membership opportunities. The following baker's dozen will be a good start.

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Georgia Conservancy

Georgia Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Federation

Georgia Sierra Club, National Sierra Club

Georgia River Network

Georgia Water Coalition

Rivers Alive, especially for local river cleanups

Environment Georgia

Georgia Forest Watch

RIVERKEEPERS

American Rivers

Trees organization for your city/Arbor Day Foundation

If you have questions about the above or suggestions for future items to include, use contact information in the GUIDE.