



March 2007 "The Dirt Worth Printing"



# Douglas County Dirt



Douglas County Master Gardener Association Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 3

## News from the President of DCMGA

Hello Fellow Gardeners,

I tried to think of what to say in this month's newsletter but felt out of touch. As most of you know, I have been working full time again and unable to be a part of a lot of happenings. Talking to a friend, I realized what I wanted to say.

Whenever you can, take part in master gardener activities. I have heard the Home & Garden Show and Flower Show were both great. I'm sure the Alexander HS Project is moving along. I can't wait to be a part of the building of our own greenhouse and our vegetable garden.

These are only a few of the many things that DCMG offers, and I am sure there is a spot for you to get involved. Come to our next meeting on March 1 and find a spot that is right for you. I'll be out there real soon.

Sharon Morton

As of today Feb 20, 98% of the metal structural work is done. The hoops are up and all of the lateral connectors are in place. The only thing to be done with the framework, is to align and tighten the clamps connecting some of the laterals to the hoops. Hopefully, on Thurs. this week we will erect the wood frame at the north end. I am very impressed with the work of our very inexperienced crew. Give them some direction and keep them going that way and they make things happen. Weather permitting, the plastic covering cannot be too far away.

**WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE!**



### Next Meeting:

**March 1, 2007**

Douglasville, GA

6:30 for pot-luck

dinner

7:00 meeting

begins

**How to get to the meeting site:**

**St. Julian's Episcopal Church**

**5400 Stewart Mill Rd**

**Take Chapel Hill Road to Stewart Mill Road (Intersection at Target and Shell gas station)**

**From I-20 turn right on Stewart Mill Road. Church is about 1 1/2 miles on the right.**

**March 1, 2007**



# March To Do List



March is a great month to plant trees, shrubs, and hardy perennials if the soil is dry enough. Do the squeeze test--Take a handful of soil and squeeze it. If it forms a hard ball, then it is too wet. If it crumbles easily, it's probably just right for planting.

Try to plant at least one tree this spring and, speaking of trees, remember to fertilize them when they start to leaf out. Be sure to spread the fertilizer out as far as the tree canopy extends and slightly beyond.

Camellias and hellebores are good companion plants for shady areas. Butterfly bush and lantana are a good combo in the sun. Now is the time to prune shrubs that have become overgrown or leggy. Pruning now will give them time to put out new growth before hot weather sets in. When Penny McHenry said to prune hydrangeas before March, she meant it! Tardivas and other hydrangeas that bloom on new wood, that is.

My son gave me a nice rose bush for Mother's Day last year and I'm looking forward to seeing how it will do this summer. I'm new at growing roses, so here's what I've read from Walter Reeves that needs to be done in March: For newly planted roses, topdress with one cup each of bonemeal and cottonseed meal. Scratch the meal into the soil and water with one gallon of water in which 1/4 cup Epsom salts has been dissolved. For established roses, topdress with one cup each of bonemeal and cottonseed meal, plus 1/2 cup bloodmeal and water lightly. Established perennials love to be topdressed with cow manure or compost.

Cut back ornamental grasses to about 6-12 inches high just before new growth appears. Plant beet, cauliflower, mustard, radish, and turnip seeds outside and tomato seeds indoors.

Prune peach and plum trees when you are fairly sure that severe weather won't visit again. To prevent brown rot, spray a fungicide labeled for fruit trees when all the blooms are open.

And don't forget: divide your perennials and get them ready for the plant sale!

Your Sister in Soil--Elaine

## DNC Annual Hard to Find Plant Sale

Each year, Dunwoody Nature Center's annual "Hard-to-Find Plant Sale" offers a selection of native plants that are not usually found in your average nursery. Dunwoody Nature Center sponsors a Hard-to-Find Plants sale every spring and this year's order form is ready! Since this is the tenth annual sale, we decided to bring back "greatest hits" from past sales. Go to the link below to see our plant list and order form. Please note this is a PRE-ORDER sale, deadline to order is March 9th. Plants will be delivered from growers to Dunwoody Nature Center, where you may pick them up on March 23rd (from 2-4 pm) or March 24th (from 10 am - noon).

You can find more information on the website - <http://www.dunwoodynature.org>  
<<http://www.dunwoodynature.org>> .



# HEALTHY GARDENING

(Adapted from “Garden Wisdom” by Larry Maxcey)

So, just what does “organic” mean? Organic is a word that means different things to different people. In the gardener’s world, “organic” refers to methods of growing plants without using synthetic fertilizers, manufactured herbicides, or artificially fabricated pesticides. Organic gardening is a whole philosophy that follows as closely as possible nature’s own practices. Fertilizers and pest disease controls are made up of biological rather than chemical materials.

A plant doesn’t really care whether the nitrogen it uses came out of a factory or the hind end of a cow. To the plant, nitrogen is nitrogen. But the “vehicle” for the nitrogen does make a difference to the soil and ultimately to our food. Synthetic fertilizers add nutrients but do not help the soil structure or the organisms that help plants naturally fight off disease. Biologically-based fertilizers contain active organisms that improve and strengthen the soil’s ability to support plant life. With the addition of organic fertilizers, soil structure is actually enhanced: worms are fed, microorganisms are preserved, and fungi are stimulated into vigor, all of which lead to healthy soil, giving us healthy plants, which then gives us healthy food.



## **NAME: Oregon Grape Mahonia aquifolium 'Compacta'**

**USDA HARDINESS ZONES:** 3 - 8    **HEIGHT:** to 3'    **FLOWERS:** yellow, in clusters, February - March    **FRUIT:** small, dark (almost black) grape-like fruit covered in blue waxy powder, ripening in late summer to fall

Mahonia has been in flower in my garden since the last week in November. First, Mahonia intermedia 'Winter Sun' came into bloom. Then, about the first of the year, with flowers still opening on 'Winter Sun' the first flowers of Mahonia bealii, leatherleaf mahonia, began to bloom. Now, the last half of February, with some flowers still on M. Bealii, the Oregon grape is blooming.

The species, Mahonia aquifolium, is native to the west coast, from British Columbia to Northern California. In its native habitat, Oregon grows in oak woodlands, in the chaparral (hillsides covered in thick shrubs with very few trees, common in the semi-arid areas of the west) and in protected areas (rock outcrops) of grassy hillsides. It grows with an erect habit. The plant spreads by underground stems but is not invasive. 'Compacta' is a cultivar that grows more compact than the species, only reaching about 3 feet high.

Oregon grape will grow in full sun, however, looks best in partial shade. The plant is evergreen although the winter leaves turn burgundy-red. It is not very particular when it comes to soil and once established is quite drought tolerant, which is something that is becoming more important in our gardens.

Use as a foundation plant or in the woodland garden, or even in large pots. The flowers attract bees and the fruit is devoured by birds. It is said the fruit makes good jelly but I've never been that ambitious to try and you have to beat the birds. Compact Oregon grape is available here in Georgia, but it may take some searching.                      By Randy Cooper

# Douglas County Master Gardener Association

**President:** Sharon Morton 770-949-4797

**Vice President:** Jan Thomas 770-489-9276

**Treasurer:** Judy Cole 770-489-0567

**Newsletter:** Melanie Cardell 770-920-1278

**Web site:** Fred Finch

**Secretary & Archivist:** Rachel Hendee 770-577-3493

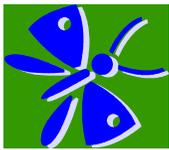
**Yard of the Month:** James Kirkwood 770-942-1663

**Douglas County Extension Office:** 770-920-7224  
Douglas County Court House

## Your input is needed.

For newsletter articles, tips, hints, anecdotes, recipes, book reviews, website reviews, gardening and/or shops or online sources, and ideas: Email: MJ\_Cardell@yahoo.com  
Newsletter deadline is the 20th of each month.

Did you know this newsletter is also posted at our web site in full color, so you can get your dirt online?



## GMGA Mission Statement:

To stimulate the love for and increase the knowledge of gardening, and to voluntarily and enthusiastically share this knowledge with others.



## Piccadilly Farm "Hellebore Days"

See hundred of clumps of Lenten Roses (*Helleborus x hybridus*) in full bloom. Lenten roses and many companion plants will be for sale. Piccadilly Farm is located in Bishop, Georgia (south of Athens, near Watkinsville) For information, hours of operation, and directions call 706-769-6516. Piccadilly Farm on Whippoorwill Road will host garden strolls at 11 a.m. Saturday in the display gardens. The tours are led by Sam Jones and features 400 kinds of conifers, hostas, ferns and other rare plants. The program is free. For more information, call (706) 769-6516. Annual Hosta Weekend is on Friday and Saturday in May.

*Remember to pay your dues if you want to continue receiving the newsletter and the email updates.*



*DC MG Plant Sale is  
May*

## Continuing Projects & Work Days

**Greenhouse Work** ~ All on hold at the present

**Butterfly Garden at Deerlick Park** ~ Generally Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

**Children's Garden at DC Library** ~ Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.

**Nature Trail Work Day** ~ Generally Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m.

**Vegetable Garden Work Days** ~ Definitely On hold at the present

[www.dcdirt.org](http://www.dcdirt.org)

Putting Knowledge to Work