



# Over the Garden Gate

## President's Corner

Shantha McDonald

### Hammerhead Worm

As you know, our surroundings are full of many surprises. One morning on my walk I came across a long flat worm slithering on the ground. Although it was similar to an earthworm, I noticed it was quite different. My curiosity got the best of me; I resorted to photograph it (see below). Many photos later I went home to research it. Of course, my first instinct was to call our wonderful Extension Agent, Garrett Hibbs. Here is what I learned:

This worm's hammer shaped head gives it the name Hammer Head Worm. They are also called Shovel Head Worms for obvious reasons. These planarians belong to Kingdom - Animalia, Phylum - Platyhelminthes, and Genus - Bipalium. They grow up to a foot long and may be confused for a small garden snake. They are different from earthworms in that they have long brown spines going down the back and a flat head shaped like a hammer.

These slippery, slithering creatures are native to Southeast Asia and are believed to have come to the United States over a hundred years ago in potted plants. They are considered an invasive species. However, their cannibalistic nature is believed to have kept their population down. They are also predatory to earthworms and slugs. Because of their ability to slither faster than our native earthworms they follow the trail left behind by earthworms to find them. The predator will wrap itself around its prey and stun it by releasing a low dose of a neurotoxin called Tetrodotoxin. It then devours its hapless victim. While the dose of Tetrodotoxin is

enough to stun its victim, it is not enough to harm humans.

Fascinating! The photos below are the ones I took on that curious day in Gainesville, GA.

Shantha



### Write for Us!

Like to write? Have something to say? Your fellow master gardeners want to hear from you!  
Email Rick at [rsfreeland@charter.net](mailto:rsfreeland@charter.net) for details.

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### Contributors:

Shantha McDonald; Karin Hicks; Rick Freeland  
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There's snow on the ground, and icicles hanging from the eaves. Winter has settled in like a long-lost relative visiting for the holidays. It's time to store your containers until spring, right?

Not necessarily. Even though your garden has gone dormant and the landscape is cold, drab and uninviting, you need not hang up your gardening gloves. Think of winter as an excellent opportunity to showcase your home with a festive arrangement of cold hardy pots and plants. A winter container garden will brighten your home's entrance and lift your spirits every time you step out the door.

## Holiday Container Garden Basics

Before you start, there are a few important parameters to keep in mind.

- Choose frost-proof containers. Terra-cotta absorbs moisture and can crack in low temperatures. Use containers made from fiberglass, plastic, foam, wood, concrete, or stone.
- Use plant species adapted to cold weather. For the best results, choose plants that are cold-hardy to two or three zones further north than yours. For example, if you live in zone seven, use plants that thrive in zones five and four, or colder.
- Pick mature specimens and plant them close together for a full, lush show. Plants grow slowly in cold weather, so using larger plants gives you a finished appearance a lot quicker.

## Holiday Plant Combinations

The ideal plants for winter arrangements provide color, height and texture, and complement your home's exterior.

- Go for green! Plant containers with broadleaf evergreen shrubs like holly (*Ilex* spp.), Japanese boxwood, and Japanese skimmia. Shrubs bursting with winter berries are an extra treat. A good tip is to use evergreens and conifers that you plan to plant in the garden the following spring. Place them in containers for the winter,

and transplant them when the weather warms up.

- Use perennials like Heuchera 'Plum Pudding' to fill out winter containers and provide cold weather color. Finish up with a plant that droops over the rim of the pot, such as trailing ivy.
- Winter-flowering hardy annuals are always good choices for a splash of festive color. Think pansies, snapdragons, lavenders, kales and violas.



"Winter Container 2007" by daryl\_mitchell is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

## Heighten Your Display with Berries, Branches and Highlights

Live plants aren't the only tools at your disposal. Branches, berries and accessories can add another dimension to your creations.

- Red twig dogwood (*Cornus alba*) branches add height and structure and bright red color to your cold weather container garden. Other good choices for branches are yellow twig dogwood and white birch.
- Compose a work of art with select spruce, weeping conifer and pine boughs that fill out your display. Inter-mingle them with holly branches adorned with berries—or use artificial berries to add even more color interest.
- Other good branch/berry choices are flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*); Japanese andromeda (*Pieris japonica*); sedums (*Sedum* spp.); and firethorn (*Pyracantha*).
- Complete your holiday container garden masterpiece with a handful of accessories. Fill voids with pine cones, ornaments, and colorful rocks. Add artificial berries, and tie

the whole together with satin ribbon and a string of tiny white lights.

## Maintaining Your Holiday Arrangement

Winter container gardens need special care specific to the season.

- Roots can suffer freeze damage in small, thin-walled pots. Use larger vessels with ample room for roots, or insert a smaller, plastic pot within a larger container and fill the void with insulation. Elevate your containers using pot feet or stones to keep them off freezing concrete or stone surfaces.
- You'll need to water less in the winter. Check your plants about once a week, and add water as needed. Don't water in freezing weather. If the soil freezes, stop watering until it thaws.
- If the temperature plummets, consider moving your holiday containers to a sheltered spot, like close against a south-facing wall, out of the wind. Wrap any pots containing live plants with horticultural cloth or bubble wrap covered by plastic.

Creating winter containers is worth the effort. They're a welcome addition to your home's décor. On the coldest, drabest winter day, they will warm your entrance with the gifts of color and life.

## What the Heck?

### Zoochoric

The dispersal of plant seeds and fruit by animals such as ants, bats, birds, monkeys etc. These are viable seeds that become attached to fur, feathers etc, or wind up in the digestive system, etc.

Examples include cherry stones spread by birds, beggar lice on a dogs' fur, and even tomato seed spread by humans.

With a windfall donation of native plant stock to Redbud Project for conservation, Hall County master gardeners have rallied to launch the Homegrown National Park™, the nature activists' movement to preserve our planet for future generations.

The Homegrown National Park™ grassroots movement rallies ordinary citizens to create natural habitats in their own yards that will form biological corridors between habitats of parks and preserves to proliferate plants and animals. Isolated greens spaces are too small and too separated to preserve species biodiversity.

As honorary chair of Redbud Homegrown National Park project, Hall County master gardener Penny K. Stowe inspired the local project, which earned enthusiastic support from Doug Tallamy. Redbud Project is as one of the first organizations in the United States to carry out the program. When Redbud Project issued the "Invitation to Save the Earth—Locally," Hall County master gardeners collaborated with volunteers from Georgia Native Plant Society (GNPS) and Redbud Project volunteers

to create biological corridors across 274,560 acres of Hall County—contributing to the ambitious goal of Homegrown National Park™ to connect habitats across 20-million acres of the United States.

Biologist Eric Duncan donated over 4,000 herbaceous native plants when he dismantled All About Natives Nursery in Acworth, GA, to make Redbud Homegrown National Park project reality. Duncan mandated that the native plants were to be used only for conservation and as Redbud Project saw fit. The collection of some 15 species of herbaceous native plants grown from seed were used to create new habitats or add to existing landscapes at residential sites and selected parks, schools and selected high profile public sites and educational institutions.

The Duncan Collection of herbaceous pollinator plants were distributed to 86 home gardens and 22 public and institutional sites in 29 zip code areas of 12 Georgia counties between September and December. Biological corridors connect green space of parks and preserves with residential landscapes, academic institutions, housing communities, and public spaces over

the 429 sq. mi of Hall County and beyond to the north, south, east and west.



Duncan Benefactor

## How We Did It!

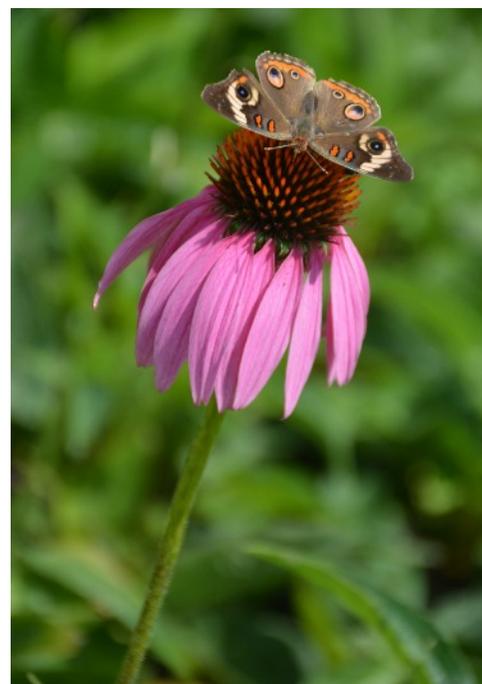
With four trips in trailers and trucks, master gardener Mark Barton, GNPS volunteers Karen and Steven Smith, and Redbud Project volunteer Nathan Wilson hauled the plants from Kennesaw State Biology Field Station to Gainesville for greenhouse and Linwood Nature Preserve.

In partnership with Lanier Nursery and Gardens, the trays of seedlings were potted up and housed in a dedicated section of the greenhouse. Master gardeners Barbara Jones and Renette Todd labeled the plants and grouped species together for distribution.

Master gardener Mary Griffin with help from GNPS volunteer Carol Hershey coordinated registration and scheduled plant pickup for residential landscapers. Horticulturist Nathan Wilson grouped the native plant perennials into Caterpillar Starter Collection (5); Chrysalis Intermediate Collection (8); Butterfly Complete Collection (11). Master gardeners Ellen Claessen, Loretta Byrd, Ila Santimauro, Alice DePrima, filled and loaded orders on collection days.



Butterfly Milkweed



Echinacea purpurea



Rattlesnake Master

Distribution of the plants in the Fall was timely. Master gardener Lynn Poole presented her well-researched program "Fall into Gardening" in two sessions to people who had registered for plants. Addressing best-gardening practice and specific of the species collection, Poole advised planting perennials between mid-October and mid-February while they are dormant to allow plants to direct more energy into growing new roots that helps them survive summer heat and drought. Rather than enhancing the soil when planting, she advised heavy mulching to build up soil from the top down into the Georgia clay. She cautioned patience as the "first year the plants sleep, the second year they creep, and the third year they leap."



Education/Poole

Volunteers installed a network across Gainesville and Hall County of natural habitats to connect residential landscapes, schools, colleges, historic sites, county parks, public and commercial sites.

• *Longstreet 1875 Heritage Landscape*  
Master gardener interns Alice DiPrima, Janice Jones, Jill Myers, Ila Santimauro, Joanne Winters, led by Leslie Johnson installed a pollinator garden in memory of the late Jorene Pilcher.



Longstreet

• *Enota Multiple Intelligences Academy*  
Restoration of the educational garden at Enota school is benefited from a collection of plants with master gardener intern Joanne Winters coaching first and second graders who were pleased to dig holes and escape the classroom.



Enota School

• *Gardens on Green*

Pollinator plot was installed on north slope of Gardens on Green with Rose Barton training a team of Redbud volunteers in best practice to propagate Linwood Nature Preserve areas.

• *Re-Creation Refuge of Linwood Nature*

Redbud Trail Steward and GNPS volunteers planted pollinators to restore the landscape of the late Lorene Martin at at Linwood Nature Preserve trailhead.

• *University of North Georgia-*  
Environmental students stocked the UNG-G campus greenhouse with flats of native plants that they will keep in the nursery through the winter for replanting on campus in Spring.



UNG-G Students

• *McDonalds*  
Front of McDonalds Thompson Bridge Road restaurant features a Nathan Wil-

son horticultural designed collection of Royal catchfly, Rattlesnake master, Spotted bee balm, Hairy mountain mint, Eastern purple coneflower, and Green-headed coneflower interspersed with established dwarf Yaupon holly and Cleypora.



[McDonalds.jpg]

**A Duncan Collection Pollinator Sampler**

Royal catchfly, rattlesnake master, swamp milkweed, butterfly milkweed, purple coneflower, green headed coneflower, hairy mountain mint, spotted beebalm

**Nature Lecture Series 2021  
Homegrown National Park**

*Tuesday February 9*

**Herbal Lawns**

Gary Love, Horticultural Program Director  
Lanier Technical College

*Tuesday, April 13*

**Native Plants for Pollinator Habitats**

Lauren Muller  
State Botanical Garden of Georgia

*Tuesday, June 8*

**Birds as Propagators**

Judy Stoop  
Wild Birds Unlimited

*Tuesday September 14*

**Living with Monarch Butterflies**

and Other Pollinators  
Mark and Rose Barton  
Butterfly Authorities  
Hall County Master Gardeners