



MISSION: BEAUTIFICATION ... CONSERVATION ... EDUCATION

Planting and Nurturing

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Environmental Issue: Mary Lovings, Editor

Environmental Edition Editor: Mary Lovings, May, August, November, February
Gardening Edition Editor: Linda Doiron, June, September, December, March
Landscape Design Edition: Suzanne Finger, July, October, December, April

CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS: As we march along in March, we can expect almost any sort of weather. I well remember one very strange March when we'd had no snow or ice storm all winter. Of course an ice storm arrived on March 31st. when we had elderly relatives visiting on their way back to Massachusetts from a Florida winter. Of course the electric power went off, but the next morning, the sun came out and melted the ice in about an hour. My husband and I went out in shirt sleeves to pick up fallen limbs and carried them out to the street - almost as an odd offering to April Fool's Day.

Our Georgia General Assembly ticks off its days that will total the total forty, starting by law on the second Monday in January. For each of us, knowing the names of our state and local officials and how to contact them is important. Because General Assembly and U.S. Congressmen and Senators are elected by registered voters and it is we who are their constituents, they are generally polite to us as we state what we request that they vote for or against. How do we find out who these elected State Senators and Georgia House Representatives are? How do we contact them in an effort to make conservation happen through legislation?

It's not difficult to find them. Pull out your voter registration card that will show your House and Senate District numbers and/or then go online to open states.org online to find their contact information. If you call, you'll most likely speak to a staff member who is supposed to relay messages to the House Rep. or Senator or at least tally pro's and con's on issues or Bills. Snail mail is slow and may be even slower if checked for dangerous enclosures. Email has several advantages, especially if you copy such messages to yourself. Although some may say they have no email, they assuredly do. Copies of emails stay in computers of both senders and recipients and remain on hard drives even after being deleted. Going to the local offices or the Capitol is effective, but do request an appointment. It's also helpful to go in pairs or groups of three. and, after a visit, write them a short thank you stating briefly what you talked about.

State your request briefly, include that you are a **constituent**, and include your contact information. That word important, almost magic, because most elected officials know they represent you and want your vote for their next election. One of our wisest GCG Presidents stressed that knowing the people who represent us well enough to speak back and forth on a first name basis is important. It's fine to include that you are a GCG member, and to include an appropriate Position Paper in your visit, but do not imply that you are speaking for the organization, but are speaking as an individual constituent. Handing them a Position Paper is a gift gesture. Keep the visit short. After a visit, write your House Rep. or Senator a brief thank you stating briefly what you talked about.

Remember that the eight GCG Position Papers are found on its website. A link them appears in about about the middle of the website's opening page.

OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION TOPICS: YES, IT'S WATER, AGAIN; IT'S ALWAYS WATER:

Though most of Georgia has had at least plentiful rain recently, we do need to conserve it. and keep it *swimmable, drinkable and fishable*. Part of conservation truly is keeping such a natural resource as clean as possible and as fit for human and other consumption as possible. A great danger to potable water can be rain, often including toxic chemicals in the rain itself in addition to oil, fuel, and chemicals that collect on paved surfaces to become runoff from roads and parking lots when it rains.

COAL ASH: A related major concern continues to be coal ash contained in water used to generate electricity collected in often unlined ponds. Included in such waters are lead, mercury, arsenic, and uranium. Such heavy metals sink to retention pond bottoms and can leach into the soil and in turn into groundwater. Or in heavy rains, ponds can overflow dispersing such noxious and dangerous chemicals. If such ponds are lined, deterioration of the liners is a potential hazard.

For truly drastic water damage information, go online to find what has happened in Flint, Michigan, or more recently and far more locally, search for news about the town of Juliette, here in Georgia, south of Metro Atlanta near Macon. Citizens from Juliette have recently gone to the Georgia Capitol to meet with elected officials to seek relief from coal ash contamination. Purchase of their homes, farms, and sites is not necessarily something to be wanted, but neither are the ill effects including cancer, from coal ash contaminated water. The EPA - ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY - in some cases and places astoundingly does not consider coal ash as hazardous waste. How that can be possible stretches credulity beyond belief. Another source of water contamination is overflow from retention ponds located on hog farms. Such overflow is especially problematic in our neighboring state to the north where when I was a child, swamps were the filtering systems for animal waste..

WATER WAR: Florida's lawsuit against Georgia may come before the U.S. Supreme Court before it adjourns in early summer 2020. Some of us in GCG wonder if we will still be alive if this case is ever brought up for hearing before the Court and settled. The lead story in The Atlanta Journal - Constitution, Metro Section B for March first covers this topic in greater detail. It can be found online.

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DOCTOR SEUSS'S TREE; As Dr. Seuss's Lorax states, he speaks for the trees, for the trees have no tongues. That statement is very much about what people in Conservation do, They speak for animals, vegetation, and other parts of nature unable to speak for themselves. The Lorax is required reading and should be part of every family's book collection.

The windswept tree in the picture to the right has now fallen, but it is considered to have been the inspiration for the trees of Dr. Seuss. Many Monterey cypresses on the windy California coast are in similar fashion, shaped by winds. Theodor Geisel (1904 -1991) used Dr. Seuss as his pen name for more than 60 books he wrote and illustrated.



PLASTICS, AGAIN: ROUGHLY ONLY ABOUT 10% REUSABLE PLASTICS ARE CURRENTLY RECYCLED: DISCARDED PLASTICS ARE INCREASINGLY A WORLDWIDE PROBLEM.

In many Georgia communities, public recycling of plastics is unfortunately no longer available. or at least has been reduced. Recycling of plastics and paper is no longer cost effective. Our country used to be able to fill shipping containers with such used materials and ship them to China to be recycled. The containers were then refilled with manufactured goods and shipped back here.

Please, therefore, use as few single use plastic items as possible.

GCG POSITION PAPERS APPLICABLE TO THIS ISSUE:

FIND THEM ON THE GCG WEBSITE. HINT: there is a link to them about half way down the home page on the website. These statements have been included in messaging for several years. AS an experiment, they are not included in this issue.

GCG Commits to the Protection of Water as a Public Resource

GCG Supports Responsible Litter Control and Waste ReductionG

GCG Supports Clean Air

You can make comments to this editor through the Listserv Manager.

Comment about Rebecca McNeill who passed away at age 93 – long serving member of the GCG Board. Rebecca was one of my truly treasured mentors and friends for decades. I will miss her always, but be thankful for having known her and receiving her input, wisdom, and sound advice. I especially treasure on afternoon years when she, I and another state board member laughed and giggled for a good part of an afternoon in Statesboro.