



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

NOTE: This GCG publication supplements, updates, and expands on course material made available through National Garden Clubs' Study Courses available to all members. The title that changes for each GCG administration for the 2019-2011 GCG Term is **Planting and Nurturing**. Environmental issues will follow concepts contained in the GCG Position Papers, found on the GCG website. Readers may find it helpful to download the papers into their computers, laptops, or tablets, or to print them and keep hard copies near their workspaces: they are our outline for what GCG considers its action plans, our wish list.

This issue of the always evolving publication will include the applicable Position Paper/Papers on printable, separate pages following the content of the newsletter itself. Such will allow members to print the newsletter and/or the referenced Position Paper separately. Position Papers all have the dates of their initial production and detail what GCG would like to see happen in Georgia and United States laws. They are to be reviewed and revised as needed during the second year of each GCG administration. It is Legislation that makes conservation happen - or not.

This issue will also include a WATER UPDATE and progress with REDUCTION OF SINGLE USE PLASTIC ITEMS, a major CONSERVATION interest of GGC President Sara Lanier, former GCG President. Plastic ends up as trash, adding to landfills, becoming increasingly damaging to marine life by ingestion as well as by constricting mobility. It is now a highly serious concern because it is common in the food chain, and is becoming part of animal bodies, including humans. It is a major danger.

I. WATER WARS:

The seemingly endless saga of **WATER WARS** exists currently between Florida and Georgia and involves withdrawal and use of public waters as well as which state can withdraw how much, from where, and when. The Chattahoochee/Flint River system that begins just north of Helen GA that at the Florida line becomes the Apalachicola River that eventually flows into the Apalachicola Bay and into the Gulf of Mexico. In addition to supplying water to many cities and towns along its way, such waters are used for manufacturing, generation of electricity, irrigation of crops, human and animal consumption, and commercial fishing as well for recreation, especially on manmade lakes along most of the rivers and streams. Opportunities for contamination are multiple. The adage of what constitutes good water quality as "drinkable, fishable, and swimmable" involves many governments, industries, and businesses along the flow; each and all can reduce or improve water quality, as can temperature and rainfall.

A second Special Master, Federal Judge Paul Kelly of New Mexico, appointed by the U.S Supreme Court after the first one died, to review extensive materials and previous legal cases, has done so, and sent another report to the U.S. Supreme Court. His report is favorable to Georgia's efforts at water conservation including replacement of inefficient toilets, especially in Metro Atlanta that continues to grow; locating and remediating leaks in extensive piping systems, and in educating the public in best water management practices. Water withdrawals in Georgia have been reduced by ten percent while Metro Atlanta's population has increased by 1.3 million people. More efficient use of irrigation for farmlands, especially in years of low rainfall, has become part of conservation and wise environmental practices. Hurricanes or the lack of them, also often increase or decrease rainfall.



The Supreme Court has now essentially three options: 1. to rule on the case before its session ends in June, to making rulings about how much water can be used where, by whom, and when, 2. returning the case to Judge Kelly for more review, or 3. simply dismissing the case. Note also that 2019's summer was an especially dry and warm one, attributable at least in part to climate changes/global warming.

Part of what Florida has not included in its pleas about commercially reduced harvestable oysters in the Apalachicola Bay is how much water is withdrawn from the Apalachicola and its tributaries as it flows through Florida, and its condition as well as the amount of such waters used, treated and returned. How much water is consumed by industries of all sorts and what amounts in Florida and algae spread do not seem to be factored in the amount or quality of water that flows into the oyster areas. Are significant quantities of water withdrawn and not returned or returned in condition appropriate for swimming, drinking and fishing?

Georgia receives much blame it does not deserve according to the Judge. The costs of such litigation has become a

burden on the states. Other uses could have been found for the multiple tens of thousands spent for attorneys, their lodging, and office support staffs including printing as well as meals as the case worked its way up through the levels of the courts system a second time.

NB: The river basins map above is available on the Southeastern AGNET Radio website. it is especially helpful in showing how much land of the combined basins is included and shows that much of that land is rural and fertile, used for agriculture including row crops, forests, and domestic animal herds. Note also that the watershed includes three states and covers territory larger than some states. Be aware that because of reservoirs, dams, and created lakes, the system is essentially not now commercially navigable, especially since the last of the dams at Columbus was opened about ten years ago.

Prior to that, goods could be shipped commercially by boat as far upstream from the Gulf to Columbus or down the rivers as far south as Columbus and then loaded onto trains and trucks for final destinations. Boating through the rapids at Columbus is a new now special attraction area for recreation, enhancing tourism, a major source of income statewide.



THE PHOTO ABOVE FROM THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION SHOWS THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE CHATTAHOOCHEE/FLINT ALMOST AT THE STATE LINE AND THE DAM BEYOND THAT AT THE ENTRY TO LAKE SEMINOLE.

II. “PLASTICS, MY BOY, PLASTICS”:

DISPOSABLE AND ONE USE PLASTIC ITEMS ARE THREATENING WATER QUALITY, RIVERS, LAKES, AND OCEANS WORLDWIDE. ANIMAL LIFE IS INGESTING PLASTIC AND NOT ABLE TO BREAK IT DOWN. IT IS NOW ALSO SHOWING UP IN HUMANS, MOSTLY THROUGH SOURCES OF PROTEIN.

Lakes, oceans, and rivers, worldwide and including the length of the Chattahoochee/Flint/Apalachicola watershed can become plastic choked. Islands of plastic float atop and within oceans, moving in patterns determined by both winds and currents.



Styrofoam is an entity and all to itself a different product - almost all air in a small amount of plastic, not usually worth recycling. Plastic peanuts and bubble wrap also take up space and are not prime recyclables. It's astounding to in a town where plastic recycling is collected and to see how much one person can generate - close to a large garbage kitchen can full a week. Milk, juices and other beverages arrive in plastic containers. Coffee now also comes 25.6 ounce plastic containers with a handy handle.

THE PHOTO ABOVE, LEFT, SHOWS ONE WEEK'S CLEANED AND READY TO RECYCLE PLASTIC ITEMS FROM A ONE PERSON HOUSEHOLD.

Truly good news is that municipalities are outlawing single use plastic items. Included with recently passed bans on plastic with an effective date a year or so in the future include Atlanta with a within the city limits population of 500,000 in a metro area of approximately 5,950,000 that includes getting rid of plastic bags; very small Clarkston nearby with a population of 7,554 in 2020 in a square mile

also serves as a model place for accepting over 2,300 immigrants and helping them to become good citizens is also doing fantastically in recycling efforts; moreover, in that square mile sixty languages are spoken.

Georgia is not alone in efforts to reduce plastic use. In nearby Mount Pleasant, a Charleston SC suburban town, *ban the bags* efforts are being initiated. Kroger stores are in the process of phasing out plastic bags, but as of yet has announced no replacement. It is astounding.

THE PHOTO ABOVE, LEFT, SHOWS ONE WEEK'S CLEANED AND READY TO RECYCLE PLASTIC ITEMS FROM A ONE PERSON HOUSEHOLD.

The time for action on Sara Lanier's plea for *ban the bag* efforts has surely arrived. GCG can make a major contribution with emails, letters, visits and calls to elected officials. Let's do that needed thing and recycle plastics to reduce waste!

APPLICABLE POSITION PAPERS FOR THIS ISSUE:

Position Paper 2004:

GCG Supports Responsible Litter Control and Waste Reduction

Revised 2016

There has been a per capita increase in solid waste disposal in Georgia since 1995. Millions of tons of materials are going into Georgia landfills each year and the state has failed to meet the 25% waste reduction goal set by the 1990 Solid Waste Management Act. Tipping fees in Georgia are cheaper than in neighboring states, resulting in materials, like toxic coal ash, being shipped to Georgia for disposal.

Furthermore, litter strewn along its landscape has negative effects on the environment, as well as on the health of Georgia's wildlife and citizens.

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. supports initiatives that will improve the appearance of Georgia's roadways and waterways by preventing the accumulation of trash by:

- Enforcing litter violations and preserving the right of local governments, school districts and more, to regulate products, such as plastic bags or Styrofoam, that become common litter problems.
- Encouraging the manufacture of safe, reusable, and recyclable products.
- Establishing guidelines to promote reduction of waste at the source by favoring minimum or reusable packaging, fewer disposables, and less toxic, more durable products.
- Ensuring toxic materials are not being disposed of in a way that will contaminate ground or surface water. Providing stricter fines for waste and illegal dumping.

and

Position Paper 2003:

GCG Commits to the Protection of Water as a Public Resource

Reviewed 2014

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. supports independent, scholarly, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for the formulation of responsible public policy and legislation, and appropriate funding in order to ensure qualified results.

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. maintains that the surface and ground waters of [the State of] Georgia should continue to be a public resource, subject to reasonable use by others, but protected for the common good; and should be managed in a sustainable manner by the state in order to protect the natural ecosystems and to meet both human and economic needs.

GCG recognizes that all life is dependent upon clean water, and we support the original objective of the 1972 Clean Water Act to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the nation's waters." We maintain that a "watershed-based" approach is the best way to achieve this goal.

Despite outstanding progress since 1972, many waters in Georgia do not meet the minimum standards for drinking, fishing, and swimming. Contamination from industry, agriculture, municipalities and households grows faster than our ability to set and enforce standards. The proliferation of excess nutrients and toxic

substances pollutes our rivers, lakes and coastal waters. The loss of critical wetlands as well as nonpoint source pollution from stormwater runoff, have increased the pollution and sediment load in our waters. Fresh water resources are also a problem in Georgia. Water quantity is endangered by droughts, subsidies, diversion of water for agricultural use, and rapid commercial and residential development.

In order to protect our water resources, to promote water conservation and reuse, and to prevent pollution, the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. supports the following goals:

1. Reduction of water pollution by:

- Reauthorization of a strengthened Clean Water Act
- Reduction of point source pollution from industry and sewage treatment plants
- Reduction of nonpoint source pollution from stormwater runoff
- Reduction of airborne pollutants which degrade water quality
- Enforcement of strict water quality standards and pollution permits
- Increased funding for public education and clean water programs

2. The protection of our ecosystems

- Restoration and preservation of our watersheds
- Protection of ground and surface waters
- Restoration and preservation of our wetlands
- Public education about natural resources protection
- Incentives for greenspace acquisition, to encourage riparian restoration and preservation
- Development of statewide policy to increase protection of coastal waters and our oceans

3. Ensure the statewide availability of safe drinking water and public education concerning its content.

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