# GCA CONSERVATION WATCH

A Publication of the Conservation Committee of The Garden Club of America

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**CONTENTS**



***Spiza americana***
Dickcissel

## Restoring Maryland's Native Grasslands

The Conservation and National Affairs Committee members were surprised to find that Maryland's Eastern Shore was predominantly tall prairie grasses during pre-colonial times. Everyone had learned in school that a squirrel could hop from treetop to treetop from Maryland to Michigan. "Not so," says Dr. Douglas Gill, a biologist with the University of Maryland and the group's host at his research project to restore these grasses after over 200 years of mixed farm use. Dr. Gill and the owner of the property, Dr. Henry Sears, a surgical oncologist in Massachusetts, wanted to see if it was possible to bring back the native grasslands. The Sears family has owned Chino Farms since World War II. The Chester River Field Research Center at Chino Farms was the answer.

***Andropogon gerardii***
Big Bluestem

Dr. Sears, a hunter dedicated to preserving his family's land, was willing to set aside low production farmland – hay fields – to Dr. Gill's grassland's project. In 1999 when the project began, no one knew where the experiment would lead. Native grasslands are considered the rarest habitat in the world. For example, less than 1% of the original Great Plains grasslands still exist. With the decline of the grass habitat comes the decline of the plant and animal species who depend on it. Dr. Gill believed that if you build the field "they will come" but it took an actual controlled and managed project to demonstrate the hypothesis.

Dr. Sears set aside 227 acres. They were first divided into twelve plots and carefully cleaned of existing plants and planted with only 8 species of warm season grasses: big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), coastal panicum (*Panicum amarum*), deertongue (*Panicum clandestinum*), switchgrass (*Paicum virgatum*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), India grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*). In subsequent years, students and scientists have identified 261 species of plants. To Dr. Gill, this eruption of plants speaks to the inherent resilience of the land. Many plant species, thought to have originally carpeted the Eastern Shore, have been simply lying dormant for decades, waiting for the right conditions.

The researchers combined their plantings with a prescribed burning plan mimicking the native peoples use of fire prior to European settlement. Over time the ecology came to depend on the burns to renew both the soil and the seed stocks. The researchers observed that the fields with frequent burns produced a shorter, more attractive grass for wildlife. In addition the ash residue amended the soil enhancing the health of the grasslands.

Dr. Gill and his students set about documenting the animal species attracted to the fields. They sighted and identified many bird species using the grassland area. Individual birds were banded and coded and their territories in the plots noted. With the aid of GPS technology, researchers recorded the movements and activities of the birds.

It quickly became apparent that the birds

had very specific habitat requirements. The more specific the habitat requirement, the scarcer the bird. The grasshopper sparrow, a relatively uncommon bird, was the first to arrive. The very rare dickcissel also discovered the new grassland. Ornithologists have reveled in the diversity of species using the grassland habitat.

The grasslands experiment has allowed researchers to demonstrate the resilience of the natural seed bank. "These seeds apparently have been waiting for the opportune moment to sprout," said Dr. Gill. The conversion of low yield farmland into natural grasslands is an attractive optional land use. It both preserves the desired rural character of the Eastern Shore and provides habitat for many species thought to be gone forever.

Dr. Gill fervently believes in the biological strength of the land. His experiments with Chino Farms and with the endangered pink lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium acaule*) have reinforced that opinion. He reminds us that the environment changes over time both from man's use of the land and from natural forces. His pink lady's slipper orchid, which he has studied for over 30 years, seemed to be in permanent decline until a gypsy moth infestation removed the tree canopy and allowed the plant to get more light. A floral explosion resulted. "These are meadow plants," he said, "and we always thought of them as woodland plants…no wonder they didn't flower. They were waiting for the right conditions."

Like many similar areas, Maryland's Eastern Shore is under intense pressure from potential development. In addition, many of the standard farming practices were at fault for the decline of habitat and wildlife. Herbicide use over the past sixty years contributed greatly to the demise of many species of waterfowl.

The grasslands experiment at Chino Farms is very good news for biologists. It shows that long term damage can be corrected and with proper management, the land can again attract species long absent. Dr. Gill's infectious enthusiasm was caught by the garden club group and all came away heartened by the prospect of managed land regeneration.

*Diane Stoner*
*Litchfield Garden Club (II)*

***Sorghastrum nutans***
India Grass

# Political Compost:
## Cypress Mulch, Gulf Wetlands and Hurricane Katrina

In the new, post-midterm election era, there is more talk about compromising for the greater good. Could such a sea change parallel the relationship between the environmental community and the business community? Let's examine that question by looking at the cypress mulch controversy.

Wendy Kelsey provided us with background to the cypress mulch issue in an excellent article in the Summer issue of *Con Watch*. Wendy identified many factors that contribute to the problem; the age of the trees make them useful only for mulch, not lumber. Similarly, environmental conditions have changed, including a permanent rise in sea level as well as increased sedimentation and subsidence. Such circumstances reduce the probable regeneration of felled trees to 20 to 30 percent.

With Hurricane Katrina, we learned the hard way what the removal of the natural buffer of mangrove forests can cost in flooding, damage and lives. Because we have so recently suffered the consequences of imprudent forest management, the question of cypress logging becomes an issue. The cypress problem, however, could be a win-win situation. Let me explain why.

First, logging cypress trees cannot be justified on the basis of a need for cypress mulch. A wide variety of alternative mulches is available. Some are cheaper and more satisfactory for landscaping and garden uses than cypress mulch. Acceptable alternatives include recycled yard waste, eucalyptus mulch, pine bark, pine straw, melaleuca mulch, and promulch. A voluminous 2005 scientific study, conducted on behalf of Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, documented that "these (cypress logging) impacts are so substantial that total loss of wetland forests is nearly assured in most of coastal Louisiana without active measures to ameliorate the problem." In view of these findings, reducing one's choice of mulches from seven to six hardly seems like much of a hardship.

There are businesses that rely wholly or in part on cypress logging. To address their needs, government must work on a case-by-case basis to identify areas where sustainable logging can be accommodated. Policy makers also need to determine what kind of

financial assistance or aid, such as mitigation credits or conservation easements, can be awarded to those willing to bear an economic burden to keep the cypress forests alive for the greater good.

This kind of negotiation and compromise has produced positive results in the past. The Forest Stewardship Council, for example, certifies lumber that has been logged in a fashion that sustains forests. Home Depot and Staples were early corporate sponsors of this program. Perhaps we need the same kind of certification for sources of mulch.

Recently heightened awareness of climate change has led some politicians and businesses to join forces and advocate for policies that aid in the struggle to protect the planet. In the recent election, alternative energy sources were being touted by politicians, and propositions supporting alternative energy industries are popping up on ballots everywhere. Isn't it time to advocate for alternative landscaping and gardening practices as well?

Change is often difficult and painful. Elevating the greater good over one's self-interest is not always an easy choice. However, it is often the wiser choice and frequently serves one's interests in the long run. Perhaps it is becoming apparent that acrimony and divisiveness are counterproductive. It is in this spirit that we see progress may be on the horizon, with respect to sources of mulch. Recently several municipalities in Florida have banned cypress mulches. Editorials in support of protecting the cypress forests have appeared in newspapers ranging from the *New York Times* to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Consumers everywhere can help. Don't buy cypress mulch and educate others, including retail establishments. As Steve Fleischli, the Executive Director of Waterkeeper Alliance, notes, "Every bag of cypress mulch for you could mean a sandbag for someone else." Let's spread the word while we spread the sustainable mulch.

*Derry MacBride,NAL Vice-Chair,*
*Forests/Redwoods*
*Piedmont Garden Club (XII)*

**Resource Mismanagement of**

# COASTAL GEORGIA

## Storm Warning

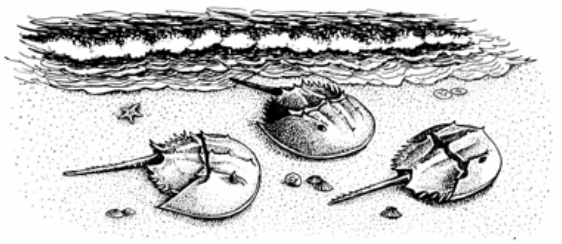
Now that coastal Georgia has been spared another hurricane season, we can risk jinxing ourselves by talking about the particular vulnerability of our state to storm surges.

Simply put, a storm surge is a "lump" of water driven ashore by a hurricane's strong winds. The extremely low pressure at the center of a hurricane contributes to this phenomenon, acting like a straw, literally drawing water upwards. Depending on the depth of the continental shelf at landfall point, a storm surge can add 25 feet or more to a normal high tide—and that does not include the additional impact of wave action. Coastal Georgia features an unusually wide, shallow-sloping continental shelf which would serve to amplify the impact of an advancing surge.

It isn't hard to envision what this means for Georgia's coast, much of which is less than 10 feet above average high tide. Observations of memorable storms like Hugo illustrate how wave-washed debris cause a domino-like effect of destruction. A kind of shrapnel bashes and batters inland, far from the oceanfront. As our coastline becomes more heavily developed, we are virtually ensuring more intense and widespread destruction.

In an attempt to learn to manage this phenomenon, climate researchers at Georgia Tech have been working to distinguish natural cycles from human-caused contributions to the increasing number and intensity of hurricanes. The implications are alarming: recently the percentage of Category 4 and 5 storms has doubled and storms are lasting almost a whole day longer in the North Atlantic. The number of storms is almost 50% higher than previous peaks, and the season for hurricanes is growing at a rate of five days per decade. Fickle as they are, an increase in the overall number of hurricanes translates into a greater likelihood of their making landfall.

An additional complicating factor in managing natural hazards is sea-level rise. Sea level has been rising at a rate of one foot per century, and that rate is accelerating. Sea level is predicted to rise another foot over the next 50 years. We also see increases in sea surface temperatures, which



can serve to fuel more powerful hurricanes. Our historic approach to natural hazards has been to resist and armor against them. But dramatic damage levels in recent years from hurricanes, floods, and other natural disasters suggest that some patterns of human settlement are simply not sustainable, either from an environmental perspective or as a matter of risk to life and property.

Impacts of rising sea levels, winds, storm surge and tidal flooding even from normal storms are very real and very complicated, and each requires a different set of policies and tools. One simple answer is to start making better decisions about the quality and location of future development, preserving natural safeguards like wetlands and native vegetation, and reasonably avoiding areas prone to flooding and storm surge. By doing so, we would save billions of dollars in recovery costs when a major storm hits. More importantly, this strategy would help keep coastal ecosystems intact so they can absorb the brunt of these storms and continue to provide the services and benefits we all rely upon.

*Patricia McIntosh, Vice-President, Coast*
*The Georgia Conservancy*

***Busycon carica***

# Leading Environmental Issues Confronting Coastal Areas

Unfortunately, most coastal issues are not unique to the coast, though their implications may be more pronounced because of the proximity to so many waterways, wetlands and related aquatic/marine ecosystems. Also troubling is that many of the most pernicious problems cannot be solved within any given state's coastal region. Moreover, these two truths are inter-related. Environmental problems in fast-growing inland areas that are replicated in rapidly developing coastal regions may combine in downstream coastal zones where these problems become more concentrated, compounding the difficulty of resolving them.

**Non-point Source Pollution**

For example, it is widely known that non-point source pollution is the single greatest water-quality problem in the nation. During the past thirty-five years since Congress passed the Clean Water Act, most polluting discharges from pipelines have been brought under control. Yet water quality problems persist, and in some cases are getting worse, because of the effects of storm-water run-off that carries a broad array of contaminants from land into our wetlands, streams and rivers.

Innocuous though many of these individual non-point sources may seem, collectively they are enormous and getting worse. Pollutants carried from driveways, roads and parking lots, including oils, brake-lining dust and fuels, combined with petrochemicals used by farmers, golf courses and suburban property owners, as well as leachates from septic systems and animal farming operations. All flow downhill during rains, winding up in our waterways. Once areas become improperly developed, correcting these problems becomes extremely difficult, as evidenced by the well-known downward trend in Chesapeake Bay water quality and crab populations. Such problems are common throughout coastal regions, but they are also widespread in many

inland areas, too, and can move downstream, adding to coastal troubles.

Another seemingly harmless non-point source pollutant is soil itself. When land is excavated during construction, mining, or farming, vast amounts of soil can be washed into nearby creeks, wetlands, and rivers. Eroded soil increases the turbidity (or cloudiness) of water, cutting off light to aquatic vegetation and often adding organic materials that are then decomposed by bacteria, which can result in dangerously low dissolved oxygen (DO) as these microorganisms proliferate.

In coastal Georgia, as in many other coastal areas, we have witnessed an alarming 20-year reduction in DO, and this is directly correlated with land development. It has been projected that if this trend continues, our famously productive inter-tidal estuaries may become dead-zones incapable of supporting the complex biodiversity needed to sustain most fish and many shellfish. Such an outcome would be tragic for various reasons, not the least of which would be the loss of nature-based businesses that, along our 100-mile Atlantic coastline alone, generate more than $1 billion a year in commerce.

**Hope not quite abandoned, but on the ropes**

As ominous as these trends may be, they are not inevitable. The Center for a Sustainable Coast is collaborating with other organizations to require developers and the governmental agencies that regulate them to more carefully evaluate and control potential sources of pollution and erosion. One of the most important steps is to keep developed land uses, including all hard 'impervious' surfaces like paving and rooftops, away from waterways and wetlands. (Such environmental set-backs are commonly known as buffers.)

Despite the simplicity of this remedy, it is often fiercely fought by developers who seek to maximize the number of lots, hence the perceived profitability, on a given amount of acreage. Furthermore, property owners often resist any push for the use of buffers because they believe such policies will deprive them of their property rights, not the least of which is to gain the best view of vistas across rivers and marshes. Even in Georgia where state law requires a nominal 25-foot natural buffer, property owners are permitted to cut back vegetation to such an extent that it can die off, thereby defeating one of the main filtration functions of the buffer.

Most discouraging of all, we have witnessed our state officials revoke the requirement for a buffer on headwater streams (those flowing only after rainstorms) and cut the buffer mandate on trout streams by half. Research indicates that the latter resulted in an 80% plummet in trout population.

**Flooding & Wetlands**

Not only is it important to keep development away from waterways, it is increasingly critical that we radically reduce the development of unsuitable areas. In coastal regions, by 'unsuitable' we usually mean

lands that are too low in elevation, and where soils and native vegetation indicate that they are wetlands, no matter how altered by past land uses. In many instances, such areas were formerly used for commercial forestry, an activity that is given allowances for draining under a special provision of the Clean Water Act.

Over the decades that such areas were forested, drainage done in forestry practice resulted in the compromise of wetlands functions to such an extent that during extended dry periods they no longer appear to be wetlands. As these areas are sold off, they are often mistakenly classified as uplands, resulting in their inappropriate development for homesites and commercial uses. When moderate rains fall, low-lying areas that once held water and slowly released it are now filled, and therefore they no longer retain the stormwater draining from surrounding areas. The result is that not only are these new projects likely to flood, but they make formerly dry areas more flood-prone. Thus, this inappropriate use of land becomes not only a consumer issue for those who unwittingly buy lots in poorly planned projects, but also raises property rights questions, since established property uses are harmed by new, poorly planned, development practices.

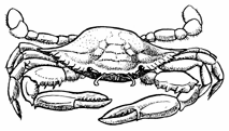
**Convergence and accumulation**

As you might guess, anytime flooding occurs in developed areas, water quality is also likely to be adversely affected. When water from flooded areas drains away, it is prone to be carrying all sorts of contaminants, including toxins and septic materials. It is little wonder that non-point source pollution problems are escalating under the combined effects of more development too close to wetlands and waterways as well as less suitable lands being used. The cumulative effects of these incremental indiscretions are rapidly mounting.

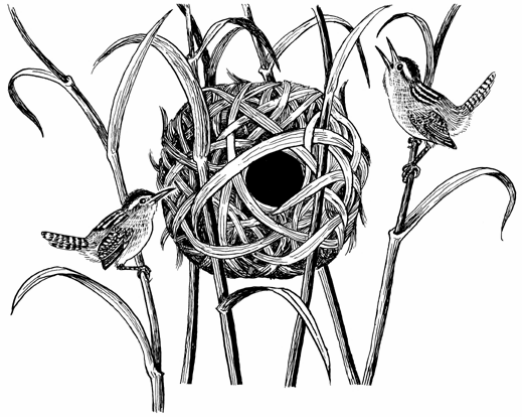
Another accurate inference is that rising sea level, expected to be significant within several decades, will amplify the adverse implications of these prevailing problems by making low elevations relatively lower, water tables higher, and inadequate buffers even narrower.

The best solution is a radical alteration in land-use controls to address these problems, coupled with intensified environmental monitoring to derive 'early warning' signals to help prevent disastrous outcomes. Given the skyrocketing profitability of squeezing greater development density from coastal landscapes and the forced retreat from effective regulation being demanded by powerful 'property rights' advocates, the prospects are not good. Our only hope is to strengthen public understanding enough to quickly build an informed majority so that responsible protection of public resources is ensured through vital policy reforms.

*David Kyler, Executive Director*
*Center for a Sustainable Coast*



***Callinectes sapidus***



# Real Estate Speculation Hurts Coast

Everyone living in coastal Georgia has noted how much the area is growing. But is population growth really increasing at the same rate as construction and land sales?

According to a recent article in *USA Today*, "Nearly 28 percent of homes bought last year were for investment purposes, and an additional 12 percent were vacation homes. More than three-fourths of the buyers had no interest in renting their property. About 20 percent said it would one day be their retirement home."

Assuming these proportions apply here in coastal Georgia, 40 out of every 100 homes being built are not the primary residence of the buyer, and 30 of those homes will be unoccupied.

For example, if a new subdivision has 200 lots and all lots are built on and sold, no more than about 140 will have residents, assuming that our real estate market profile mirrors that of the nation.

With more disposable income available for investment and the prospect of handsome real estate profits, development speculation has become rampant.

This ghost market is of concern to those of us troubled by unwise or poorly planned development because it unnecessarily increases the area of land being prepared for sale, bringing with it a host of related adverse environmental impacts.

An artificially urgent demand for real estate generates more erosion, resulting in increased contamination of wetlands and waterways. Likewise, natural landscape and drainage features are being altered in ways that cause flooding of already developed properties.

Even to the less environmentally conscious, land speculation raises unsettling issues. How much of the apparent demand for roads, sewers and water supply is real?

Providing these amenities prematurely can induce still more speculation, since areas served by public facilities tend to gain greater market value. Thus, a disturbing share of development may be driven as much by financial gaming as by real population growth and related needs.

Much of this imprudent activity is no doubt unintentionally subsidized and condoned by taxpayers when their local governments encourage or promote speculation by readily approving development and new infrastructure.

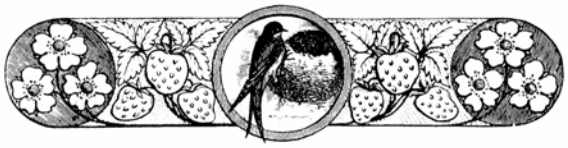
It is probably impossible to eliminate all speculation in any market, including real estate, but surely there are ways to reduce its most extreme risks. These risks include not only environmental harm, but also financial penalties to both taxpayers and unlucky investors. If permit applicants were required to demonstrate the need for their projects based on a legitimate market analysis, it might help curb the reckless "gold-rush" nature of many current development practices.

As a matter of public policy, elected officials need to give this issue thoughtful consideration and try to fulfill their obligation to serve coastal citizens. To do this will require the means to carefully distinguish between well-planned growth and unbridled speculation.

Decisions about land use — and the public infrastructure that supports it — must be guided by improved methods of analysis that avoid the pitfalls of the "ghost market."

Unless new policy is adopted to control development and its consequences, we can expect to see continued casual approval of projects that produce quick profits at the public's expense.

*David Kyler, Executive Director*
*Center for Sustainable Coast*



# ZONE WATCH

## Mariquita Farm

***"Mariquita** means ladybug in Spanish. We named our farm Mariquita Farm because the ladybug is a beneficial insect and especially important in organic farming."*

Andrew Griffin
Mariquita Farm

Last October, farmer Andrew Griffin welcomed members of Carmel-by-the-Sea Garden Club to the Mariquita Farm, located just north of Hollister, California, where he grows organic vegetables, fruits and flowers. Known for his unusual heirloom vegetables, always incredibly flavorful, and for the entertaining *Ladybug Letter*, the Carmel ladies were curious to meet Andy and to see his farming operation.

Indeed, Andy is as lively and knowledgeable as one might suspect from reading his newsletter. He was obviously happy to share his world with us. Before taking us around the farm, Andy described the land, which is a natural wetlands in the heart of the rich, flat, agricultural district surrounding Hollister, California. There is abundant water for the plants, sometimes too much—an unusual occurrence in this part of the country.

Andy guided us through his crops, all carefully chosen for their flavor, nutritional content and beauty. As we walked, he told us some of the history of the vegetables and their characteristics. He talked about how "Orange Chantenay", the pleasing colored orange carrot, was developed from "White Belgian", a white carrot that readily produces a root. He grows several different colored carrots—we tasted a scrumptious purple carrot. He told us, "The red and yellow carrots are flavorful heirlooms that are great for cooking, but not as good raw as the sweet orange ones. The 'Red Indian' holds the deep orange red when roasted." Success with the heirloom varieties comes from starting them in the summer so that they can mature in the fall or they will not develop a root. To his thinking, crops planted in their season usually grow the best, taste the best and give us the most satisfaction.

Beyond the carrots grows cardoon, an artichoke relative, cultivated for the petioles of its leaves rather than its flower. Andy told us an interesting story about the naming of Swiss chard. In the French-speaking region of Switzerland, the word for "cardoon" is "chardon". The Swiss were unable to grow cardoon, so they bred the beet plant to produce leaves with a large midrib. This they ate in the same way as the stems of the cardoon. Hence, "Swiss chardon" which has been shortened to "Swiss chard." Andy finds it ironic we now cook the leaves and discard the midrib for which the plant was developed.

More than half of the harvest is purchased by CSA members. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture, a program where by each member receives a box of fresh produce once a week from March to November. Recipes and a newsletter accompany each box. For Mariquita Farm it is more profitable to sell to CSA members than selling the produce at the farmers' markets. "With CSA everything we harvest is sold," said Andy.

Looking over a large field of "Broccoli di Cicco", Andy pointed out the edges of the farm where it has been left wild for the birds. Birds help control the insect pests such as the green broccoli worm. No chemical pesticides are used, nor herbicides, nor "water-fouling" chemical fertilizers. Only organic fertilizers are applied to the fields. In the fall, Andy plants cover crops to enhance the soil. This also encourages bird life by giving them cover.

Andy believes that if you treat the land well, if you apply study and diligence to your task, and if you don't take more from the land than you put in, you will receive an ample harvest.

*Susan Osborne*
*Carmel-by-the-Sea GC (XII)*

## "A Sense of Wonder"

A performance by Kaiulani Lee

The Akron Garden Club recently sponsored a performance by Kaiulani Lee of her dramatic show "A Sense of Wonder" which is based on the life and writings of Rachel Carson. The performance was held at the University of Akron. Admission was free and open to the public. Area groups attending included the Sierra Club, the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, Crown Point Ecology Center, area garden clubs, and students and faculty from community high schools and colleges.

*Nancy Ray*
*Akron GC (X)*

# BOOKS

## Editor's Picks

I have three books to recommend to you this season, three *really* good books! I dare say, I think you will find among this collection one that will appeal to you and surely one that is the perfect gift for a friend.

I won't say I have a favorite because this is an eclectic batch and each one is worthy of top rating, but the one I can't wait to tell you about is *Blithe Tomato* written by Mike Madison and published by Heyday Books. I learned about *Blithe Tomato* from my brother Jim who lives in Chicago, loves books, especially poetry books, and could not be further from the dirt-under-the-fingernails kind of person that I am, though to say so might offend him. When Jim handed me his copy of *Blithe Tomato*, he merely said, "You will enjoy this." Then smiled. That was it. Tempted as I am to do the same here, I will give you a bit more to go on by quoting a passage from the book's Forward by Deborah Madison, the author's sister:

"Mike Madison mainly grows flowers, thousands of them, food for the soul. And he's spent enough years behind his table at the farmers' market, talking with customers, chatting with fellow farmers, and closely observing the world he inhabits, to have formed a wealth of opinions about people and food. Telling it like it is in a piece on weeding, he chides people like me who gasp at neatly laid out rows of newly weeded lettuce and immediately, with perhaps a dash of envy, imbue the work of farming with symmetry and calm. Hours spent planting thousands of bulbs give him time to raise some interesting questions, such as 'Is slovenliness an infectious disease?' He admits to the bad days and dreams of escape. He cites poems and prose and prints to-do lists that will humble all but the most industrious among us.

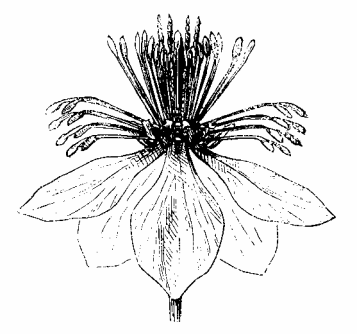
There are family stories, gossip about the market shoppers, and musings on such subjects as dogs, tomatoes, mowing, foraging, birds and raccoons, the virtue of local economies, beautiful women, and gophers. The chapter on gophers, I'm convinced, will stop all but the most blindly stubborn would-be farmer from ever planting a thing."

I hope this is enough to whet your appetite.

Usually I am behind on my reading. I am a slow reader and often read books well after everyone else. *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* by John M. Barry is just such a book; copyright 1997. This book headed the Conservation/NAL Committees Summer Reading list back in 2005. I apologize to those of you who already know this book and want new works. However, *Rising Tide* needs to return to the public eye for the historical perspective it gives to the problems caused by Hurricane Katrina. A long book, more than 422 pages, masterfully written, John Barry delves into the science, politics, economics, and social structure of the Mississippi Delta. The story begins on the morning of Good Friday, April 15, 1927 when "the great storm would pour from 6 to 15 inches of rain over several hundred thousand square miles" swelling the Mississippi River to over three million cubic feet of water per second. The man made levees would soon collapse under the force of the raging water. Barry then steps back into the nineteenth century to tell the story of rivalry between Andrew Atkinson Humphreys, chief of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and James Buchanan Eads, a "man of genius, of industry and of incorruptible honor." Both engineers were determined to control the Mississippi River. The desire to control the indomitable river wrought havoc throughout the Mississippi Delta in 1927.

Barbara Rumsey (GC of Denver) emailed me to recommend Judy Sellers (Broadmoor GC). She wrote, "As you know Judy was the keynote speaker at the GCA Annual Meeting. Since then, she has come back to Denver to speak to our club and most of us have read her glorious book, *Colorado Wild*. She is eloquent, knowledgeable and cares passionately for our western lands." Well, I didn't know Judy was the keynote speaker because I didn't attend the Annual Meeting, nor was I aware of her book. This is when I love Amazon; in no time I had *Colorado Wild.* This is a *beautiful* book. Willard Clay's photographs of Colorado lands are stunning. Any photographer interested in wild flower and landscape photography should have this book. The writing compliments the photographs. Anyone who knows the Rockies should have this book.

*Sarah Swinerton, Editor*
*Woodside-Atherton GC (XII)*



## The Books:

**Madison, Mike. Blithe Tomato.**
Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 2006

**Barry, John M. Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 And How It Changed America.**
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997

**Sellers, Judith B. Colorado Wild: Preserving the Spirit and Beauty of Our Land. Photography by Willard Clay.**
Stillwater, MN: Voayageur Press, 2002

## Letter to the Editor

Susan Osborne (Carmel-by-the-Sea GC) forwarded this Ideal Bite:

The Bite
Muzak, awkward silences, and children who press the buttons for all the floors: these are a few of our least favorite things. A surefire way to avoid these elevator nuisances *and* save energy? Take the stairs instead.

The Benefits

1 Climb your way to buns of steel. No surprises here: climbing stairs burns up to 10 times more calories than standing in an elevator.
2 Spend less time just staring at your watch. The average person squanders as many as 62 minutes a day *waiting* (in elevators, traffic, lines).
3 Conserve energy. Depending on type, capacity and usage, an elevator's yearly energy usage can equal the energy used to power 7 homes annually.

If 10,000 GC members climbed a stairway 3 floors every day for a year (rather than taking the elevator), we'd save enough energy to power 691 homes over the same period of time.

www.idealbite.com

# Conservation Watch

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**The Garden Club of America**

Susan Gordon, Chairman
Conservation Committee
41 Woodland Park Drive
Tenafly, NJ 07670
(201) 871-1263/Fax (201) 871-9136
sfgordon@optonline.net

Sheila P. Hughes, Chairman
National Affairs & Legislation
8 Patterson Street
Providence, RI 02906
(401) 621-4111/Fax: Same, call first
Sheila.Hughes@cox.net

Sarah Swinerton, Editor
191 Miramontes Road
Woodside, CA 94062
(650) 851-3021/Fax (650) 851-3053
sarahswin@gmail.com

Anne O'Brien, Assistant Editor
6018 East Cholla Lane
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253
(480) 874-3323
annie39ob@cox.net

Remember, Con Watch is *your* conservation publication. Your ideas, your contributions and your suggestions are needed and welcomed. *Sarah Swinerton, Editor.*
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