It’s been a challenging and eventful six months and I hope that all of you, our volunteers, are healthy and weathering the impacts from COVID-19. I have finally adjusted to a new “norm,” working from our 25 acre farm in Athens on Monday and Friday and at the Garden Tuesday through Thursday. The Garden is so comforting when I arrive every Tuesday morning; it gives me a sense of my former life. But I do miss seeing our staff and volunteers, and things just aren’t the same without you.

But enough sentiment; you want to know how the Garden is fairing and I am relieved and delighted to say that the Garden is thriving and has become a respite for visitors escaping from the stress of these last six months. We have all learned to be efficient in Zoom meetings, occasionally throwing in a strange or funny background to make things more interesting. Most staff work from home and continue to demonstrate that working virtually has great value and efficiency. We will modify work in the future to enable staff to work virtually on some days, reducing drive time and emissions. Perhaps one positive out of all of this might be cleaner air and bluer skies.

After intense preparation, the Garden re-opened on May 18th and has remained open every day, 12 hours a day. Adding Member Monday enabled members to enjoy a quieter day at the Garden with fewer guests. Staying open until 9:00 pm has been a resounding success – every night is Cocktails in the Garden and we are seeing a more diverse and younger crowd than ever before. All those extra hours open have created some challenges for our staff; the Operations, Horticulture, Guest Services and Longleaf teams have worked so hard to keep things safe, working and beautiful for our members and guests. I am so proud of them. As a result of these decisions and hard work we have seen robust visitation. In June, our visitation was 23% behind budget, in July it was almost at budget, and in August it has almost doubled our budget! So yes, people are coming, staying safe and enjoying the Garden and that gives all of us such pleasure to know and see.

As an example of how adept and innovative we have been this year, the Gardens for Connoisseur Tour was moved to September when it was clear that May was out during the early pandemic months. And we sold out before the end of August which is remarkable! We are grateful to the homeowners for their willingness to open their beautiful gardens to visitors. We limited the numbers per hour so that people were paced out and distanced. It’s reassuring to see that something as treasured with such longevity can be a success even in a pandemic.

Now we look to the fall and early winter and the return of Scarecrows and Garden Lights. The Garden will remain open daily through the end of the year. We will continue to have timed tickets so that guests’ arrival can be controlled and distanced. This is the tenth anniversary of Garden Lights and it will be more important than ever as people in our community look to celebrate the holidays safely – and outside is one of the safest places to be with loved ones.

I hope that you all will volunteer at Garden Lights this year; we need you to welcome guests and assist staff. I realize that some may not be able to volunteer right now and truly understand. Josh will continue to connect you all via Zoom calls and do his best to stay in touch. We miss so many of you and look forward to seeing you later this year or in the New Year. And to wrap this up with some great news - Staff and Volunteer night for Holiday Lights is a GO! We will be socially distanced with paced entry, and with face masks hiding smiles, but we will celebrate the opening of year 10! I hope you will join us in the Garden that night and enjoy Atlanta’s finest holiday tradition.

Mary Pat
Meet the Volunteers of the Month

May: Carrie Mayhan

Carrie Mayhan began volunteering at the Garden in 2009 during a lull in her professional life as an executive search contractor. Now she says it’s “my own private oasis, away from the worries of life, and I just love it.” She first trained as a Children’s Docent, later also adding adult tours, and in 2016 OKRA training. After awhile, she began helping with special events including concerts, Connoisseurs Tour, Garden Lights and with children’s activities on Vanilla Sunday and Chocolate Covered Weekend, summer cooking schools, and Storytime, often bringing along her daughters, now 22 and 20, instilling in them a commitment to volunteering. One of their favorite activities is the annual natural egg dyeing for children. “Carrie has helped with family programs and in the Outdoor Kitchen for several years and is always welcoming and friendly with guests and staff,” says the Garden’s Abby Gale, Public Programs Manager. This year, with COVID causing a work slowdown for her, Carrie has also pitched in to fill greeter slots and is excited that she will, for the first time, make Centennial Status.

The Garden thanks Carrie for being so dependable and always fun to work with and taps her as May’s Volunteer of the Month.

June: Lauren Melde

June’s Volunteer of the Month Lauren Melde spends most of her time at the Garden cultivating not plants but insects. Yes, bugs. Since 2011 she has been one of the dedicated Amphibian Conservation volunteers whose calling is to maintain the insect colonies so that the frogs have a reliable supply of food. Hers is a unique and valuable job, and it takes a special person. “That’s my main role at the Garden but I do other things as needed,” the biology grad adds with her trademark sly smile. A six-time Centennial Club volunteer, who has logged over 200 annual hours three times, Lauren travels weekly to the Garden from Canton where she lives on a farm with husband Chris, 3 dogs, a cat and 17 chickens. “My favorite part of coming here to volunteer besides the obvious...getting to work with so many rare and interesting frogs...is getting to meet and work with so many like-minded people.” The Amphibian staff say they just couldn’t get along without Lauren.

For her dedication, her love of frogs and bugs, her science mind and her can-do attitude, the Garden names Lauren Melde as June Volunteer of the Month.
Meet the Volunteers of the Month

July: Lin Inlow

A year or so after retiring from Georgia State University, Lin Inlow joined the ranks of Garden volunteers, first training as a Docent in 2016 then signing up for Discovery Stations and also for kitchen duty as an OKRA because, as she tells it, she “enjoys cooking but mostly eating.” Currently the Docent Chair, Lin has been a Centennial volunteer since that first year and logged over 200 hours in 2017. A gardener all her adult life, beginning with a quarter acre organic garden in the early ’70s, during the pandemic she has had a greenhouse built in her home garden and now is learning to grow orchids and all kinds of succulents. “As a volunteer, I particularly enjoy the opportunity to learn about plants from the staff at the Garden as well as from guest speakers,” says Lin who is described by staff as a trusted class assistant whose positivity and sense of humor make her a hit with Garden guests.

For that sense of humor and curiosity and her leadership and dependability, the Garden salutes Lin Inlow as July’s Volunteer of the Month.

August: Bhavani Saravanan

It was April 2017 when Bhavani Saravanan first donned a volunteer apron at the Garden, starting on Wednesdays with Garden Essential Maintenance duties. “I do whatever our team is tasked to do,” she explains, “and believe it or not my favorite is weeding, particularly pulling arums out with their bulb intact!” There is an art to proper weeding after all. Looking for other ways to help out and spend time at the Garden, she soon was also helping with Discovery Stations and with a variety of children’s programs, interacting with the children and their parents and caregivers. The Garden’s Heather Rice says Bhavani has been “a lifesaver this year with our children’s programs.” During the last two years she also became a regular with Cocktails in the Garden and with Garden Lights, where she proudly boasts she learned a new skill: tending the firepits. “I never experienced campfires growing up!” A Centennial since her first year, Bhavani has logged over 200 hours the past two years. Like so many Garden volunteers, she comes because “being at the Garden, surrounded by so much nature and beauty, always lifts my spirits.”

For her energy, caring and positive attitude, the Garden is pleased to salute Bhavani Saravanan as August Volunteer of the Month.
Changes in store for the 10th Annual Holiday Tradition

Every year since it began in 2011, the Garden has made changes and added new festive elements to what has become the Garden’s most loved event. This year brings the always anticipated new showstoppers as well as some improvements designed with the Garden’s COVID safety protocols in mind. The Garden’s Exhibits Project Manager, and top Holiday Elf, Emily Saccenti outlines the biggest changes:

- Crape Myrtle Allee will have new lights in a custom color combination: purple, green, and aqua.

- The flames and fire will be gone from Camellia Walk replaced with many of the fun insects that were formerly found in the Edible Garden.

- The Ice Goddess will melt, and her new colors will be greens and blue. The Ice Storm trees will be replaced with colorful flower buds.

- The Train Garden will be livened up with a fun 8 foot high rainbow wall along the back walkway. There will be no Decoration Station this year to limit the spread of germs.

- The Ice Storm Trees are being repurposed for the Flower Walk. They’ll be stripped of the cool white lights and rewrapped in a color combo called "Enchantment" which is a warm white, pure white, and champagne mix, matching the lights of the Skyline nicely.

- Nature's Wonders is being redesigned this year also. We’ll have all new light strings that feature updated technology for a brighter and more impressive show. There will be an all-new soundtrack that features several recognizable nostalgic favorites with an overall uplifting feeling of positivity and togetherness.

- The Phoenix, White Rabbit, Cheshire Cat, and Red Queen will be wrapped with lights and the Chess Board will remain in place with colorful uplights.

Plenty of traditions will remain unchanged: our red and white star galaxy, the Great Lawn Orbs, the model trains, the Kiss Me Arch, the Radiant Rainforest and the Poinsettia Tree in the Atrium though we are still thinking through crowd control there. There will be no topiary bears this year.

Installation is well underway!
Family Programs Adapt to Take Center Stage This Summer

Volunteers are Key to Success

By Heather Rice
Family Programs Manager

We have successfully run select family programs in the Garden this summer, despite the challenges 2020 has brought. It took some creative thinking to adapt programs in ways that would still be engaging for young children while keeping safe during the pandemic. The product has been a hit! Parents and children alike have enjoyed three popular family programs since our May reopening: Garden Grooves, Storybook Time and Garden Playtime, all of which will continue through October.

Our first step to ensuring safe programs was to move everything from the Children’s Garden to the Great Lawn, where we can easily spread out and maintain safe distances. Secondly, we added more sessions of Garden Grooves and Storybook Time to accommodate demand while giving families plenty of “room to bloom” in each session. Lastly, we set up strict sanitizing processes and eliminated unnecessary shared materials in all programs. It’s a lot of work sanitizing each and every marker, table, chair, shaker and rhythm stick between uses, but it’s well worth the peace of mind we get from knowing everything is clean and safe for our families, volunteers and staff.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel a few programs for the year. Weekend Nature Play and Shows for Seedlings will remain closed until it’s safe and feasible to run them again. Goblins in the Garden will be significantly scaled back this fall; the Reindog Parade will go virtual; and St. Nick will return in 2021 when it’s safe for him to visit again. We look forward to hosting these programs as usual in future years.

During our spring closure and before reopening programs, we posted videos and craft projects online so families could enjoy Garden activities at home. Our latest video, “Creative Chocolate Creatures” arrived just in time for Chocolate Covered Weekend in its 2020 virtual format. We are also working on a fall scavenger hunt to replace the Cheshire Catwalk— a path where kids could hunt for 10 painted cats.

It’s not easy to pivot from a role engaging closely with children to a more task-oriented one, but our volunteers have done just that. They graciously wash dishes, disinfect instruments and welcome families, all with a smile behind their masks. We also recognize that many volunteers are staying safe at home, which is a sacrifice in itself. We thank you all! And we are very grateful that the Garden can continue to provide a safe natural space for families to have fun at a time when they need it most.
What’s Growing in Gainesville

By Wanda Cannon, Gainesville Education and Volunteer Coordinator

The Garden is back! Since reopening in June, despite the challenges and changes for everyone, the Garden is looking more beautiful than I have ever seen it. We have welcomed many families and individuals back to stroll, play and breathe! The Garden has provided a place of comfort and serenity throughout a challenging time. Many volunteers were ready to return. First, the Garden welcomed Greenhouse and GEM volunteers back. Volunteers returned with safety protocol measures in place; it has been such a heartwarming experience to see them donning masks and social distancing in order to keep everyone safe and still be able to fulfill their commitment to making our Garden a place of beauty and respite for all. Thank you to Mikky Lockwood, Chris Michael, Sharon Marler, Glen and Marie Cypher, Diane Korzeniewski, Renee Steinike, Denise Waldron, Bill McMahan, Lenard Poole, Tricia Terrell, Susan Motes, Cheryl Schuster and Debbie Delauder. I hope I did not miss anyone!

Later in July, many wonderful volunteers gave of their time to assist me with a new task of leading Storybook Time/Grab ‘n Go crafts and also adding a new family program called Garden Grooves every week. I have been facilitating these programs and leading them with books for the young and music for the little ones. Volunteers have made my job easier, and they have always shown up with a cheerful and enthusiastic attitude. Thank you to Bev Adkins, Maureen Smith, Lamerle Loveland, Sharon Volante, Holly Sparrow and Becky Mensinger! Your support has meant the world to me.

The Garden hopes to welcome back Visitor Service volunteers in the fall, and they will be stationed outdoors in covered areas.

Storybook Time and the new Garden Grooves children’s programs will continue every Wednesday and Thursday through October. Wine in the Woodlands on Friday and Saturdays evenings has been a hit in the past, and we are glad to be offering this event again for our members and visitors. The Garden had to cancel many events and classes this year, but as we transition into the fall, we are planning our fall plant sale (online and pick up). The Garden will also offer art classes and a photography class to be taught outside in the Garden. Scarecrows in the Garden and our Goblins event are planned for October. Various creative “Scarecrows” will be on display throughout the fall months. Goblins in the Garden is planned for Sunday, October 25. Our Holiday Tree Trail with various holiday trees decorated in the Garden will be on display starting in December. Both Scarecrows and Holiday Tree information will be on the website. Plan on registering and create a scarecrow or a decorative themed holiday tree!

Many hopeful thoughts for 2021. This season has been a time of testing, but it has also made us appreciate what we have taken for granted. I hope this time has been one of personal growth for you, and I hope many have found ways to carry on with healthy habits, new hobbies and a lot of positivity! The Garden appreciates all of our wonderful volunteers, and I look forward to the day when I will see you all here again. One big happy Garden family!

News from the Volunteers at
Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville

By Diane Korzeniewski

It is good to be back. The Garden looks great. Maintenance volunteers have been very busy. Greenhouse volunteers have been catching up on a “to do” list of projects as well as getting ready for the fall plant sale. Wanda has recruited helpers for storytime and music on Wednesdays and Thursdays and everyone is enjoying that. There are fewer volunteers to be sure, but the plants and weeds just keep growing. Staff and volunteers are rising to meet the challenge. We are all looking forward to cooler weather and to seeing more volunteers in the future. Visitors have been upbeat, enjoying the Garden, often thanking us for our work. It is always nice to see visitors enjoying the Garden. That’s all for now!
Saluting the Gainesville Garden’s Volunteers of the Quarter:

Glen and Marie Cypher

By Wanda Cannon
Gainesville Education and Volunteer Coordinator

Glen and Marie Cypher are a volunteer dynamic duo at the Atlanta Botanical Garden Gainesville. They both have been regular GEM volunteers for several years, and on any given Tuesday, you will see them out assisting the Horticulture Staff in whatever task they are doing that day. Glen and Marie returned to the Garden in June as we reopened and transitioned back with our safety protocol measures all in place. Even behind the masks, anyone could see that this energetic couple are two very special people who are always ready to complete any task laid before them, even in these new normal times! They are the epitome of what a valued volunteer is, with a commitment toward a common goal and mission with enthusiasm and positivity!

Marie began volunteering at the Garden after retiring, and not too soon after she began, Glen joined her and they started volunteering as a team. Marie was born in Florida, but soon the family moved to New Jersey. Glen grew up in New Jersey as well and says “Marie and I met in high school and we have been together ever since.” The Cyphers began raising their family in New Jersey. They have two grown children, four grandchildren. All of the family lives close by.

Marie says that traveling has been the highlight of her life. “I have traveled up and down the East Coast and lived in Germany and have had the opportunity to collect fossils out West. My biggest joy was when we accompanied our son and daughter in law to China to adopt their daughter.” Marie says, “Traveling makes me appreciate the beauty in my own backyard.” This volunteer couple enjoys hiking, camping, rock collecting and being outdoors. Gardening naturally fits in with their lifestyle and once they both retired, they began volunteering here at the Garden. Glen says, “When the opportunity came to volunteer, we were eager and enjoy it so much”

The Garden is certainly glad they both enjoy spending their retirement at the Garden and spotlight Glen and Marie as Volunteers of Quarter 2 and Quarter 3.
During this time of COVID-19, communication has been challenging. Working, meeting, and taking classes using technologies such as Zoom have supported us in maintaining relationships in ways that we did not anticipate before the pandemic. Even in-person communication has been affected. Since nonverbal communication represents two-thirds of all communications, our reliance on understanding what someone is saying is in part now complicated by the masks we are all wearing. While keeping us safe, our masks also prevent a view of a person’s facial expression making understanding more difficult.

Do not dismay. There is still another language we can use to communicate with each other. It is not written, verbal nor non-verbal but rather the language of flowers or floriography. This cryptic way of communicating dates to Persia and Turkey in the 15th century where flowers replaced words for expressing forbidden or socially unacceptable feelings. Later the Victorians relied on flowers to express complex feelings that may have been considered impolite. As you might expect, using flowers to express sentiments varies across cultures. In the Arab world, for example, white flowers are often given during happy times while in Germany white flowers represent sorrow and are presented at funerals. The language of flowers has its own set of complexities such that in the early 19th century French publishers began printing dictionaries devoted to decoding the meaning of flowers. By the 20th century, there were more than 100 flower dictionaries around the globe.

The magnolia is one of several flowers that symbolizes perseverance. If I were using plants to convey my thinking during this pandemic, I would include their meanings to avoid any confusion. My collection and their meanings include: Aloe – affection, also grief; Anemone – forsaken, sickness; Arborvitae – unchanging friendship; Sweet Basil – good wishes; Bittersweet – truth; Black-eyed Susan – justice; Geranium – true friendship; Lemon balm – sympathy; blue Saliva – I think of you; Thyme – courage, strength; and, Zinnia – thoughts of absent friends. What would your collection include?
The Sheffield Library
Partnered with Local Groups to Support Composting in Earth Day 2019 Event

By Clara R. Williams, EdD, Garden Librarian

With an eye on composting, the Garden’s Sheffield Library was pleased to join the Atlanta Community-Based Composting Council in coordinating a Garden experience held on April 23, 2019, during the Garden’s Earth Day Week festivities. The Council was created by the Georgia Recycling Coalition, FoodWell Alliance, U.S. EPA Region 4, and City of Atlanta’s Office of Sustainability, for the purpose of promoting community-based composting in Atlanta.

The public-private partnership was awarded a grant from U.S. EPA Region 4 to fund the creation of compost-themed events in the community that would support the “increased awareness of the importance of healthy soil, including its nexus with water conservation and where our food is grown among communities,” as stated by Stephanie Busch, author of the grant and community coordinator. The campaign specifically focused on millennials and their families.

Through the coordinating efforts of Stephanie Busch and the Garden Librarian, an hour-long “Storybook Time” session was created to focus on composting. It featured storybook time readings – Diary of A Worm and Compost Stew. Copies of these books were given away to children and their parents in attendance. Children also enjoyed the interactive hands-on compost workstations; 108 were in attendance.

The Atlanta Botanical Garden Library was happy to be a partner in this successful endeavor.

Scarecrows Will Soon Be In The Garden!

The annual Scarecrows in the Garden exhibit opens on Thursday, October 1. Extended Garden hours will continue through the month of October, so every night will be Fest Of Ale from 5 until 9 p.m.

The always-creative scarecrow entries are to be delivered to the Garden on September 24, 25 and 26.

The annual Goblins in the Garden will be on a much smaller scale this year but will be held on Sunday, October 25. Contact Josh if you’d like to lend a hand!