

future direction of the association. The membership has every right to expect the board to keep the impact of inflation in operating costs from creating shortfalls as a normal part of doing business. As part of those efforts, GCSAA will continue to explore and try additional sources of non-dues revenue.

In contrast, failing to prevent future dramatic dues increases would be counterproductive to membership growth and retention strategies.

*Why increase dues when the investment reserves are over \$9.5 million?*

The investment reserves have two specific purposes: (1) to provide major funding for planned future needs and (2) to prevent significant interruption of member benefits, services or programs caused by a significant unanticipated event. It is both financially prudent and responsible for an organization like GCSAA to have this level of reserves in order to operate successfully and maintain viable options for future planning.

If the proposal were adopted, the board would consider the financial health of the association and other relevant economic indicators when reviewing options to increase dues or not. This review would, of course, include consideration of the investment reserve levels.

*Have other associations tried a similar indexed dues pricing strategy?*

Yes, there are other associations that have implemented an indexed dues increase process with positive results and few pitfalls. These organizations report that their respective memberships embraced the change after some initial reservations and have experienced almost no negative impact regarding decreases in membership or dissatisfied members. The most numerous comments on developing a successful process include demonstrating that the membership will not lose control (Board of Directors to be held accountable and increase not to exceed a fixed amount) and keeping it simple.

*Credit: GCSAA Web site*

## Plants of the Year

Here is the final Plants of the Year series for 2006. The plants selected for this program have been found to be good performers in the Florida environment and require less maintenance and inputs. Here are two specimens for your consideration. Go to [www.fngla.org](http://www.fngla.org) for more information and suppliers who carry these plants.



**Common name:** Yellow African Bulbine  
**Botanical name:** *Bulbine frutescens*  
**Hardiness:** Zones 9B -11  
**Mature height and spread:** 14-16 in. tall with 24-30 in. spread  
**Classification:** Flowering Perennial  
**Landscape use:** Massed perennial for color or as an accent  
**Characteristics:** Bulbine prefers full sun, has light green succulent foliage, and produces ever-blooming stems of many star-shaped yellow or orange flowers late spring to early summer. It can withstand a light frost but should be protected. In South Africa, the sap in the leaves is used for healing purposes.



**Common name:** Amethyst Falls Wisteria  
**Botanical name:** *Wisteria frutescens* 'Amethyst Falls'  
**Hardiness:** Zones 5-9  
**Mature height and spread:** 10 – 15 ft. in height  
**Classification:** Vine, flowering perennial  
**Landscape use:** Beautiful trained over an arbor, or espaliered against a building. Ideal as a containerized specimen.  
**Characteristics:** A woody deciduous vine whose shiny dark green pinnate leaves have about 15 leaflets. The blue-purple flowers appear in young plants, are carried in short clusters, and have a light fragrance. This cultivar is not as aggressive in its growth as the parent species or any other of the wisterias, does not make seeds, and is recommended for the smaller garden.

*Photos from Leu Gardens*