

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

March 2016

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Nassau Extension Plant Clinics (10am-2pm): March 7, 21 (Monday), Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.) Bring your sick plants in a bag for diagnosis.

Weds. March 2, 10am-11am, “Shade Gardens”, Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.)

Tues. March 8, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite — “*N. Fla. Archaeology*”, Peck Center, 516 S. 10th St., Fernandina.

Weds. March 9, 10 -11 am, “Pollinators”, Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.) \$5. Call 904-491-7340 to register by March 2 or go on Nassau County Extension website for more information.

Weds. March 16, 10-11:30am, “Bluebirds”, \$20. Yulee County Bldg. Preregister by March 9 (see above)

Sat. March 19, 8 am-noon. Annual St. Marys River (and downtown streets) Cleanup. (No local info on the internet yet, but they always meet at the boat ramp by the park.) Picnic at White Oak after the cleanup (ticket required).

Sat. April 2 – Coastal Wildscapes Spring plant sale at Ashantilly Center, Darien. More info next month.

Fri. Apr. 22, Sat. Apr. 23 – NOGS tour of Hidden Gardens of Savannah, \$40, tickets available day of event or in advance.

More information on Garden Club of Savannah website.

Garden to-dos for February

Starting March 15 (official frost date), you can plant almost any flower, herb, or vegetable, including peppers and tomatoes. Group plants by water and light requirements, fertilize your perennials and vow to be better about deadheading this year. Start fertilizing citrus, loquats also get citrus fertilizer. Give tea olives acid loving fertilizer. Apply fungicide as needed. Prune, fertilize, and transplant azaleas after blooming. Prune and fertilize shrubs. Cut seedpods off bulbs after flowering. Feed palms out to drip line with 8-2-12 fertilizer. Don't just add potassium (deficiency shows little orange speckles), it will create other deficiencies, use 8-2-12, and leave the fronds on the tree till they are completely brown before cutting off.

Announcements

Bring your personal care items to the meeting for the senior care facilities for “Christmas in July”.

The Garden Maven's Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden Maven,

What gardening zone are we in?

Bewildered and missing my hostas

Dear Bewildered,

Living where we are, it's no wonder you are confused. Up north, if you are in zone 6 you can grow pretty much everything. Most of the perennials we grew there (like hosta) do well in zones 5 through 8. Zone 8 is a big dividing line. The confusion comes because there are three (well, 4) zoning systems, and the commonly used **USDA hardiness zones map**, based on average annual minimum winter temperature, is not always a lot of help for our area. The rule of thumb in south GA and north FL is that east of I-95 is zone 9a (20-25 degrees F), west is 8b (15-20 degrees F). But this does not mean that you can grow zone 5-8 hostas in Folkston. The heat and humidity will do them in. The **American Horticultural Society has a map of heat zones** based on the number of days over 86 degrees F. According to this map, east of 95 is zone 8 (91-120 days), west is zone 9 (121-150). Wasn't it convenient that they put I-95 where they put it? **The Sunset zones** are the most descriptive. They take climate variances as well as temperature variances into consideration, because zone 8 in the humid east is way different than zone 8 on the dry west coast. We are in Zone 28 which covers the Gulf coast, North FL, and the coast up to Charleston. Here the growing season is from mid-March through early December. We have high humidity and winters are usually frost free, but can have an occasional frost. **The Southern Living gardening zones** (Upper, Middle, Lower, Coastal, and Tropical South) roughly correspond to the Sunset zones. We are in the Coastal South.

If you can have only one garden book, get the **Southern Living Garden Book**. It lists the areas where each plant will thrive. They also give a heat zone rating. Sadly, hostas will not make it here. For a similar look, get variegated cast iron, holly fern, or farfugium. Buy plants that grow in both zones 8 and 9. The big box stores in Georgia get the same plants for the most part that are sent to Atlanta (truly zone 8). Unless you know for certain that it will grow here (like annuals, nandina, camellias) go to Yulee, where the plants are for north Florida.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: The winter has been so warm, my black eyed susan vines are still alive and blooming.