

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

November 2014

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Nassau Extension Plant Clinics (10am): Nov. 3, Nov. 17 (Monday), Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.)

Bring your sick plants in a bag for diagnosis.

Wed. Nov 5 – 10-11:30am – “Compost”, Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee)

Tues. Nov. 11, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite — “*Nesting Shorebirds*”, Peck Center, 516 S. 10th St., Fernandina Beach.

Nov. 4-8 (5-11pm Tues-Fri, 1pm-midnight Saturday) -- Glynn County Council Flower Show. At Coastal GA Fair, Exchange Club Fairgrounds, 101 Emory Dawson Parkway, Brunswick. \$5 admission, includes fair.

Sat. Nov. 22, 9am-3pm – Duval County Extension, 1010 McDuff Ave., Jacksonville. Gardenfest “*Art in the Garden*”. Several garden related presentations. Call Rachel Wilson (904-272-4252) to register. \$12 fee must be received by them by Nov. 15.

Announcements

Fig Leaf – Start collecting underwear, sweatpants, t shirts, nonskid socks or slippers for Christmas distribution at the local senior care facilities. Larger sizes are needed.

Garden to-dos for November

Plant winter vegetables like beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, Chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, bulbing onions, radishes, spinach. Plant flowers like alyssum, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, and dianthus, and sow seeds for spring bloom such as sweet pea and California poppy. Divide and replant perennials when done blooming. Avoid heavy pruning of shrubs, but pruning dead or diseased wood and suckers is always beneficial. Winter is forecast to be colder and wetter than usual, so purchase frost blankets and be prepared to mulch for winter protection.

The Garden Maven’s Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden Maven,

I rescued a gardenia from a member that moved away and planned to put it in the plant sale. However, its leaves are yellowed and it looks sad. Can I restore it to health for next year’s sale? It is in a pot.

I Cried at “Old Yeller” and I’m Crying Again

Dear Crying,

Gardenias have been responsible for more tears than Oprah. The people who have those 8 foot by 8 foot bushes full of flowers keep telling us how easy they are to grow. Giving the rest of us a serious urge to hit them with a shovel. I have personally slain seven gardenias. They started out happy at Home Depot, then came to my yard and began to die. The leaves got smaller and smaller, the branches fewer and punier. Finally they were prostrate on the ground with leaves a half inch long, begging me to step on them and put them out of their misery. So I have researched their care and feeding and am having some success at last....

First, I gave them more sun. They look like they love shade, but they need sun and full sun won’t hurt them. When the leaves get yellow with green veins, this shows a nutrient deficiency. You can add iron sulfate or magnesium sulfate, but this will only help temporarily. If the soil is not acid enough, the plant can’t absorb the nutrients. They want the pH between 5.0 and 6.5. You can give them gardenia/camellia/azalea fertilizer in September and March. I also give them some every month or two in the summer. Coffee grounds can help lower the pH. Some people swear by a jar of pickle juice every now and then. One person mulched them with oranges that fell off the tree and had success. Pine straw mulch (not too thick and keep it away from the trunk) can also help acidify the soil. If you get the soil tested, take a sample from 8 inches or so below the surface, where the roots will grow.

Since your plant is in a pot, it should be easy to lower the pH and to fertilize it back to health. You should not prune it until late spring or early summer, after flowering. They don’t need much pruning, except for shaping and getting deadwood out. Dixie Acres nursery sells a “Miami” gardenia, which they say is the easiest to grow in our climate. It looks a lot like some of the old fashioned garden varieties and might be worth a try for those who want to plant a new bush.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: Those wild and crazy giant orange sulfur Cosmos are ten feet tall and bulletproof and blooming themselves silly.

(Contact Judy Molnar at cjmolnar@tds.net or 882-8887 with newsletter items or questions for the Maven.)