



Newsletter October 2023



Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Sat. Oct. 7, 9am-noon Nassau County Extension Master Gardener Plant Sale 85831 Miner Rd., Yulee.

Cash/check only.

Tues. Oct. 10, 7pm “Community Inspired Conservation”, Wild Amelia Wild Nite. Peck Center, 516 S. 10th St., Fernandina.

Thurs. Oct. 12, noon – 1pm Camden County Extension – “Valuable Vultures.” Virtual Lunch and Learn.

Register on Website.

Announcements

Fig Leaf – Start collecting personal care items, diapers, soap, detergent, etc. for Christmas distribution to local nonprofits (Camden House, Food pantry).

Garden to-dos for October

Plant winter vegetables like beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, Chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, bulbing onions, radishes, spinach, turnips, and strawberries. Plant flowers like digitalis, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, viola, million bells, flowering kale, and Shasta daisies. Plant bulbs like agapanthus, society garlic, spider lily, gladiola, star of Bethlehem, and pineapple lily. Of course, fall is a great time to plant those perennials you have purchased at the plant sale! Don't prune spring flowering trees or bushes. Prune fall flowering shrubs just after bloom. Check grafted trees and plants and remove growth below the graft. If planting new trees, water well, don't fertilize till spring. Start keeping Christmas cactus in the dark at night to have them bloom for Christmas.

The Garden Maven's Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden Maven,

Chrysanthemums really put me in the mood for fall, but usually we are tricked into buying them by a couple of cool days, then we get a really hot spell which fries them totally. Do I need to switch to silk mums for my fall fix? **Mum's the Word**

Dear Mum,

We've all fallen victim to the bait and switch of autumn in the deep south. A couple of days of fake fall and we're digging out the flannel, making chili, and lighting the pumpkin spice candles. Those giant mums at Lowes are calling our name. Then we get the heat and humidity back for a week or more. Our mums shrivel up faster than frog eggs in a frying pan. How can we enjoy them when the weather is so predictably unpredictable?

Mums don't like to be above 85 degrees during their bloom time. If the mums are potted, bring them inside for the duration of the heat wave. You do this for some plants when we're supposed to get frost, so it's not that weird of an idea.

For mums planted in the ground, it's another story. Some sites claim they like full sun, but the sun is so strong here that I'd go with the other sites that say partial shade (maybe morning sun, afternoon shade). It is important to get garden mums (preferably varieties that are heat resistant, but the stores don't usually include this on their labels) rather than florist mums. Fertilize with slow-release fertilizer in spring and midsummer. Don't fertilize too late in the season or they will get new growth that can suffer damage if there is a frost. Prune in late spring through August if they get more than 6 inches tall. Pinch back the tips in early summer. Deadhead and prune out dried leaves and stems. Plant far enough apart (18 inches for most varieties) to get good air circulation. Consistent moisture is important, so water every other day, keeping the water off the leaves if possible. In winter, cut back to 3 or 4 inches. Even with the best of care, some years are so hot that the poor mums succumb, but hopefully these tips will give you an edge and that they will be more beautiful next year and in years after.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: The roses are deepening their color in this cooler weather. Blue gingers, butterfly gingers, and pinecone gingers are blooming, and the Mexican sunflowers will be blooming soon.