

# St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

January 2016

Happy New Year!

## **Dates and Events** (events are free unless noted)

**Nassau Extension Plant Clinics (10am-2pm): Jan 4** (Monday), Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.) Bring your sick plants in a bag for diagnosis.

**Weds. Jan. 6– 10-11:30am** – “*Cold Hardy Citrus*”, Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee)

**Weds. Jan. 20– 10am-11:30** – “*Pruning Fruit Trees*”, 86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee.

**Weds., Feb. 3, 10am-11:30** – “*Roses*”, Demonstration Garden, 96135 Nassau Place, Yulee. (note different address.)

**Tues. Jan. 12, 7 pm**, Wild **Amelia Wild Nite** — “*Local Fossils*”, Peck Center, 516 S. 10<sup>th</sup> St., Fernandina Beach.

**Sat. Feb. 13, Feb. 20 – 8 am - 12** – “*Crash Course in Florida Gardening*”, Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd., Yulee). **Registration deadline Feb. 5.** \$50/person, \$75/couple. Phone 904-530-6353 ask for Winifred Favors. More information is on Nassau County extension website.

## **Garden to-dos for January**

Plant flowers such as carnations, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, dianthus, foxglove. Vegetables - peas, beets, broccoli, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, radishes, turnips, and cauliflower can be planted, as well as fennel, garlic, borage, lavender, parsley, rosemary, and thyme. Don't fertilize flowers this month. Plants need less water in winter, but if a hard freeze is predicted watering 24-48 hours in advance will help protect your at risk plants, especially citrus. Don't do any major pruning, especially on flowering trees, but you can prune dead limbs, suckers, and crisscrossing branches. You can also transplant dormant plants, but be sure to water. If you had a real Christmas tree, consider using it in the garden. Sink the trunk into the ground (you may need to stake it to have it stand up straight). The birds will enjoy using it for cover and in the spring you can use it as a support for vines such as morning glory, moonflower, and cypress vine. Or peas and cucumbers. Protect plants that are marginally hardy with mulch, sheets, or even cardboard stapled around the trunks of grafted trees to prevent dieback. Even just putting them on the porch will help. Spanish moss is a great (and free) insulator. You can use Christmas lights under a cover to help keep very delicate plants warm.

## **Announcements**

Karen is looking for the plastic sleeves that the newspaper comes in.

## **The Garden Maven's Advice to the "Floralorn"**

*Dear Garden Maven,*

I recently moved and have some azaleas that are overgrown, rather tired looking, and seemingly in need of discipline. What can I do to get them looking their best? If they don't shape up they are outta here....

*Garden Dominatrix*

*Dear "Dom",*

Love is what they need! Avoid the temptation to prune excessively before they bloom. If you must cut before they bloom, just cut those branches that are definitely way out of line and cut them off as far down in the bush as you can. During the winter, fertilize with an organic (it needs to be organic) fertilizer like milorganite or fish emulsion as often as possible (maybe every couple of weeks). Chelated iron may also help (one application).

After they bloom, and about 10 days before the last flower drops, give them azalea fertilizer and water it in well. After blooming, you can prune. Don't take off more than 1/3 of the bush (unless you are moving it). Follow the branch as far down as possible and cut there. Never never never shear them. Fertilize right after pruning. The beauty of large azaleas is their largeness, so don't try to keep a bush that wants to be 6 feet tall at 3 feet. If it is blocking a window, move it. Keep the loosely rounded shape that makes them look their best, and don't torture them into squares or columns. Azaleas are pretty carefree around here. Be good to them and they will reward you with years of beautiful blooms.

*The Maven*

**Plant Hero of the Month:** What's with all these confused azaleas blooming in January? Too much love?