

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

March 2017

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Nassau Extension Plant Clinics (10am-2pm): March 6, 20, April 3 (Monday), Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.) Bring your sick plants in a bag for diagnosis.

Weds. March 1, 10am-11am, "Flowering Shrubs", Yulee County Bldg. (86026 Pages Dairy Rd.)

Weds. March 15, 10-11:30 am, "Bluebirds". Preregister by March 3, \$20. Call 904-530-6353 or 530-6350.

Tues. Mar. 14, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite — "Archaeology in North Florida", Peck Center, 516 S. 10th St., Fernandina Beach.

Sat./Sun. March 18-19, 10am-4pm - Jazz 'n Art, Woodbine Riverwalk. Bring bug spray.

Garden to-dos for March

Frost date is March 15. After that day, clean up dead vegetation to your heart's content. Fertilize citrus and loquats with citrus fertilizer. Fertilize tea olive with acid loving plant fertilizer. Plant poinsettias in the ground in late March, cut back to 1 foot. Prune and fertilize azaleas after blooming. You can prune azaleas until the middle of July. Plant tomatoes and most anything else you can find.

Announcements

Fairy house workshop Thursday, March 2, 10am – 4pm at Judy's house. Bring pods, lichens, etc.

The Garden Maven's Advice to the "Floralorn"

Dear Garden Maven,

I have had a couple of hundred bees flying very low to the ground in a part of my front yard for a couple of weeks. I don't see a hole, and they are not aggressive. However, I feel like I am hosting the lord of the flies. Is this a bad or a good thing?

Welcome to my Nightmare

Dear Nightmare,

These are harmless ground bees. They don't form huge colonies, but are active in the spring building their new nests. They like dry well-drained ground with thin vegetation. They build their nests, seal them up, and go build new ones. They die, and the babies in the nest grow up and emerge as adults the next spring. The ones flying around are mostly males looking for love. (Don't look too hard, some of these guys obviously didn't go to charm school.) To discourage them, you can turn on the irrigation more often during the spring, and try to increase the grass in your lawn. Or welcome them for the gentle pollinators that they are.

The Maven

Dear Garden Maven,

I recently read that planting Mexican milkweed (the one with orange and red flowers) can actually harm the monarch butterflies. Is this true?

Butterfly lover

Dear Butterfly Lover,

It is true that there is a parasite called OE that has been infesting the non- native tropical milkweed (asclepias curassavica). Also the availability of it during the winter encourages some monarchs to stay around and not migrate. Some people are advising getting rid of it altogether, but others take a more moderate approach. Since the problem occurs where the plant does not die back during the winter, and the parasite is in the green stalk, they advise cutting the stalks back to the ground in the fall and again in the spring. (Make sure to discard them.) The rationale is that native milkweed, while preferable, is not easily available, and the tropical milkweed provides valuable food for the monarchs. I have been cutting all mine back, and they are starting to rebound, ready to feed those butterflies for another season.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: The azaleas have really come out after the recent rains!