

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

February 2020

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Weds., Feb. 10, 10 am-11 am. Nassau Extension – Not listed on the website, but Gail got this in email. "Bluebirds", Please register in advance for this Zoom class:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/meeting/register/tjYldeGgrz0rE9OYXU36GFOBzidQO8-BeDRv>

Tues. Feb. 11, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite — “White Oak Conservation Activities”, Zoom lecture. If the following does not work to get in, go to the Wild Amelia website or to their facebook page.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86352272626?pwd=V2JHRjBuc0hRd0ViR0plVUV0V2d5UT09> Passcode: 607173

Garden to-dos for February

Resist the temptation to cut back dead looking perennials until March 15. The dead foliage will help protect them from cold damage and if new growth is stimulated it can be killed by a late frost. The exception is dead foliage on hard to kill plants like cannas or ginger lilies that have died completely back to the ground and can be removed without cutting anything green. Prune roses by Feb. 14. Fertilize after pruning. Apply organic fertilizer around each plant – 1 cup Black Kow, 1 cup fish meal (or use some fish emulsion instead) and ½ cup Epsom salts. Cut ornamental grass back to 6-12 inches and fertilize. Cut back liriope before it starts to sprout new leaves. Clean out dead annuals. Prune out water sprouts, suckers, and rubbing branches from citrus. Plant calendula, dianthus, dusty miller, marguerites, pansies, petunias, and snapdragons. Plant vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, parsley, turnips. Keep those sheets handy for covering plants when temperatures below 35 degrees are forecast.

The Garden Maven's Advice to the "Floralorn"

Dear Garden maven,

My crape myrtle is looking sad. It has lots of Spanish moss on it, lichens growing on the bark, and lots of spindly twigs. What can I do to restore it to its former glory?

Should I hang the crape for my crape (myrtle)?

Dear Should,

Don't give up yet. Lichens are not parasites but epiphytes, and do not hurt the plant. However, they are a sign of a plant that is stressed or in decline. High humidity plus more sun shining on the tree trunks and large branches create a condition that lichens thrive in. (You also can see them on old Knockout rose bushes, where the stems have become woody.) The Spanish moss is probably one of the causes here. It deprives the leaves of sunlight, and less leaves means more sun shining on the trunk. Drought can also cause stress in the tree. You can scrub the lichens off the trunk if you want.

I don't know why Spanish moss seems to love crape myrtles, but they definitely get more than their share of the stuff. So your first step is to get as much of it out of the tree as you can. I am dealing with this problem on my 12 foot tall Natchez crape this spring. While I normally don't do much pruning on crapes, I plan to cut back the branches (maybe to the point where the growth is 1-2 inches in diameter) so that I can get most of the moss off there. If you do this, don't get carried away and crape murder the tree (where it looks like you are growing caveman clubs). If your tree is smaller and you can reach the moss without cutting the branches back, you can just prune off the spindly stems. Some people prune off anything smaller in diameter than a pencil every year.

After you get rid of the Spanish moss, clear out any grass or competing plants from 5 feet around the trunk. Mulch with pine straw. When you start to see some leaves in spring, mix up 5 gallons of liquid fertilizer (like Miracle Gro) and pour evenly around the cleared area. Your tree should reward you with lots of greenery and blooms by the end of summer. If not, THEN it's time to give up! You can use the French Foreign Legion principle and dig it up and replace it, or most older crape myrtles will regrow if you cut them back to ground level. In fact it is hard to kill them. We cut one back to the ground, and it regrew to 12 feet tall. We cut it back to an 8 inch stump at ground level, then drilled 1 inch holes in the stump, then poured Epsom salts down the holes. Then covered it with heavy rubber. Twenty shoots came up outside the rubber. Your tree wants TO LIVE! Best wishes for its rehab....

Plant Hero of the Month: Camellias are all around us, making winter worthwhile.