

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

December 2019

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Tues., Dec. 10, 7pm -- Wild Nite – “Right Whales”, Katie Jackson, Florida Wildlife Commission, Peck Center, 516 S. 10th St., Fernandina.

No extension events in December, but enough holiday events to keep you in the Christmas spirit all month!

Tues., Dec. 3 – White Lighting, Osborne St., begins at 5:30 pm.

Sat., Dec. 7 – 12-7:30 pm – Christmas in the Park, Gilman Park. Fun for the kids!

Sat. Dec. 7 – Plum Orchard Holiday tour – Reservations required. Call 877-860-6787, ask for Plum Orchard tour. Cost is \$10 plus \$10 park entry fee, PLUS cost of the ferry (around \$28 plus tax).

Tues. Dec. 10– Live Nativity at Orange Hall. Performances at 7 and 7:30 pm.

Sat., Dec. 14, 5:30-9 pm – Christmas Tour of Homes. \$15 in advance, \$20 day of. Tickets available at St. Marys Visitor Center.

Announcements

Our Garden Club Potluck Christmas lunch is Tuesday, December 10 at our usual meeting place. Lunch begins at 11:30.

Garden to-dos for December

Late December is the time to transplant plants if the weather has turned cold. Keep them well watered for the next few months. If it is still warm, wait till they go dormant before moving them. Annuals for winter are carnations, digitalis, pansies, petunias, dianthus, and snapdragons. Plant vegetables such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, green peas, onions, and radishes. Water plants during dry spells, especially if it is cold and windy. Purchase frost blankets or round up the old sheets and be prepared to mulch and cover tender plants for winter protection. Spanish moss makes a good protective mulch for plants. After the holidays, plant poinsettias outside, but protect from freezing.

The Garden Maven’s Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden Maven,

How do I determine which potted plants need to come in the house for the winter? I have a jade plant, a schefflera, silver queen, a dracaena, and some Christmas cactuses. I don’t have a lot of room in the house to put them.

Frostaphobic

Dear Frosty,

Because of our warmer climate, many plants do not have to come all the way into the house for the winter. Tall plants like dracaena that do well in low light can do just fine in the garage, if you keep the door open fairly often so they get some light. You can also keep plants on a porch or in a sheltered area. My jade plant has never been in the house. It lives under an overhang by my back window. Last winter the leaves got pockmarked, but it grew new ones. When it gets very cold (below 40 degrees), I huddle the houseplants together like penguins and cover them over with sheets. I have a schefflera and silver queen in the ground. They come back, but never get as big as they would in a pot that was babied more and kept a little warmer. So I’d bring in the schefflera and silver queen. My Christmas cactuses have never been inside the house. They stay on my porch, which has walls on two sides. They have done fine and bloom every year.

If you are in doubt, bring the plants in, or at least put them in the garage when it is going to go below 40 degrees. You could keep them in a wagon and roll them in and out. The trickiest part about bringing them inside is the fact that there are probably bugs (maybe even the dreaded bull ants!) in the dirt. You can submerge the whole pot for 15 minutes in a tub of lukewarm water. Add a couple of drops of old fashioned lemon dish soap to the water for added bug killing power. Skim off the bugs that come to the surface and anything else that floats. Give them as much light in the house as you can. If they are small enough, move them outside for a short vacation when the temperature is the same outside as in. We don’t have to accustom them to as much temperature and humidity change as in colder climates since the heat is not on constantly all winter. Keep an eye on them, don’t water as much as in the fall, and your plants will live long and prosper.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: My sleeping hibiscus is in full bloom like bright red Santa hats. Night blooming jasmine is finishing up this round of blooms and the bleeding heart vine is starting to bloom.