

# St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

## March 2022

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

**Tues. Mar. 8, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite** – Original speaker cancelled, check website closer to the date for zoom link.

**Thurs. Mar. 10, 12-1pm** – “Welcoming Wildlife”. Register at Camden County UGA Extension website.

**Nassau County extension** – register on address below:

**Weds, Mar. 9, 10am** – *Florida Hummingbirds* <https://bit.ly/Hummingbirds2022>

**Weds. Mar. 23, 10 am** – *Building for Bluebirds* <https://bit.ly/Bluebirds2022>

**Sat. Mar. 12- 9 am – 3 pm** – “Connecting People with Nature”, Coastal Wildscapes members \$60, non members \$75.

Lunch included, Richmond Hill City Center. Register at [www.coastalwildscapes.org](http://www.coastalwildscapes.org)

**Fri. 18. Mar. Amelia River Sunset Cruise.** (*Fernandina*) Fundraiser for Wild Amelia. \$35 members, \$50 non members.

Book at [ameliarivercruises.com](http://ameliarivercruises.com) (look for Wild Amelia Fundraiser).

### **Garden to-dos for March**

Frost date is March 15. After that day, clean up dead vegetation and cut back to your heart’s content. (Except for things that will be blooming in spring or early summer). Fertilize citrus and loquats with citrus fertilizer. Fertilize tea olive with acid loving plant fertilizer. Prune and fertilize azaleas after blooming. Plant tomatoes and most anything else you can find. Don’t yank out things that look dead, cut back, but give them a chance. **THEY WANT TO LIVE!!!**

### **Announcements**

Start growing your plants for the plant sale. When cleaning up your yard, clip 4- 6 inch tips from the newly sprouting branches and stick in a pot with dirt in it. Keep in the shade where it will get watered. Don’t give up if they drop their leaves. Sometimes they do this before sprouting new growth.

### **The Garden Maven’s Advice to the “Floralorn”**

*Dear Garden Maven,*

My azaleas are pretty scraggly looking and definitely need some love. What would make them happier?

*Iggy Azalea*

*Dear Iggy,*

It’s March, and Azalea Love is in the air! So let’s take an azalea to Lunch! If your azaleas have been neglected, you can start now by removing the vines that are trying to choke them. **Wait until they are done blooming before pruning them.** You can prune them until the middle of July without hurting next year’s bloom.

Jumping on my soapbox and shaking my fist at the heavens, **SHEARING IS EVIL!** My heart breaks when I see poor little boxed up azaleas, with their sparse stunted spaced out blooms and sad little sticks jutting out. (Almost as bad as boxing up camellias, which is an offense that should draw jail time.) Azaleas need some air circulation and when sheared, over time they become an outer layer of leaves with an impenetrable mess of twigs on the inside. Eventually the bush dies. When an azalea blooms it should be breathtakingly covered with blooms, showing its joy in just being itself. Boxing them up or shearing them prevents this.

Heed the Pruning Princess’s advice. (I channel her when pruning any bush. ) When pruning, don’t just cut off the stem a few inches down. Take out the branch down to ¼”-1/2” above the next joint. You shouldn’t have any cut wood showing on the outside of the bush. You should have natural looking leaves there. Try to keep a rounded appearance, the natural shape of the bush. The goal is to say “That bush looks good” rather than “Someone just pruned that azalea”.

If your plant has been very neglected or you are moving it to a better location, cut it back and it will revive itself. This may take a while. Try to improve the shape if possible. If it is way too big you can do a rejuvenation pruning by cutting it back to 10-12”. This should be done in late winter if possible, although I have done it after they have bloomed. Keep it well watered the first season. It may take a few years to look like itself again. If it is leggy cut the leggy branches close to the ground. After the plant recovers from hard pruning, you can cut at least 1 of the oldest stems close to the ground every two years or so to keep it looking its best.

Please, let your azaleas be themselves. If they are a big Formosa, don’t plant them under your window. They want to be tall, and while they will take a lot of punishment, you will be pruning several times a season because they want to be 6 feet tall. Grow an azalea of an appropriate size for its location. And do take them to lunch by fertilizing now and then.

*The Maven*

**Plant Hero of the Month:** Azaleas are looking good all over town, and the camellias are still at it.