

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

January 2021

Ding Dong, 2020 is over!

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Friday, Jan. 8, 12 noon-1pm –Virtual Lunch and Learn, “*Winter Garden Chores*”. Presented by Camden County UGA extension office. Go to their website and preregister for the free event.

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. This has been a colder winter than the past few ones, so be alert for low temps.

The Garden Maven's Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden Maven,

My Stromanthe (tricolor ginger) has really suffered from the cold, and has lots of dead looking leaves. It is driving my wife crazy to have these unsightly plants right out by the street where everyone can see them, and she is itching to cut the dead parts off. Is this a good idea? I have hidden the pruners from her until I get your answer...

If Mama Ain't Happy's Husband

Dear Husband,

Mama ain't gonna like the answer. Stromanthe is more tender than the average ginger (like butterfly ginger or pine cone ginger, that dies back normally and comes back in the spring). Its normal state is evergreen, although it will come back from the roots in most instances if the foliage is killed off. The dead foliage acts much like a blanket to help protect the roots and any lower foliage that has escaped damage. So if you cut it off, it's like sending a puppy out in a blizzard without his pajamas (or something to that effect). The roots may die off completely. That being said, if you are willing to accept that most or all of the stromanthe might die, you can cut it back and just look at it as culling the herd. This is called the French Foreign Legion school of Gardening (March or Die). A position in between is to cut off the dead stuff and replace it with mulch that looks better than the dead foliage, like pine straw or Spanish moss. Perhaps you could interest your wife in a large jigsaw puzzle or a redecorating project that would keep her busy till March 15, when she can cut back anything she wants!

The Maven

Happy New Year from the Garden Maven!

Plant Hero of the Month: Fatsia is blooming. Enjoy the camellias for the next few months.