

St Marys Garden Club Newsletter

February 2022

Dates and Events (events are free unless noted)

Tues. Feb. 8, 7 pm, Wild Amelia Wild Nite — “*Local Fossils*”, Zoom lecture. Get passcode a few days before the event at the Wild Amelia website, click on the “Wild Nites Schedule” tab.

Thurs. Feb. 10, 12-1pm. Jessica Warren zoom – “*Native Plants and Low Maintenance Landscaping*”. Register online on Camden County Extension website/agriculture tab.

Nassau County Extension Landscape Matters zoom presentations :

Weds. Feb. 9, 10-11 am, “*Gardens and Roses*”.

Weds. Feb 23, 10-11 am, “*Pruning Shrubs and Trees*”.

To register, go to Nassau County Extension Facebook page. Good luck scanning the QR code.... I have a call in to the new agent, Taylor Clem, to find out how they will be communicating information and maybe another way to register in the future. If you want to attend and are as clueless as I am with these arcane symbols, you can call 904-530-6353.

Sat. Feb. 26, 9:30am-2:30pm. “*A Day of Gardening*”, Duval County Extension Office. \$20. Register on their website by Feb. 18. Includes quite a bit about vegetable gardening. Past attendees say this is well worth the drive to Jax.

Fri., Feb. 18, 2pm. *St. Marys Arbor Day Celebration* at Orange Hall. Sponsored by our club and the Tree Board.

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 gingers 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. Late February is a great time to prune crape myrtles (But no Crape Myrder!).

The Garden Maven’s Advice to the “Floralorn”

Dear Garden maven,

I have some banana trees that have frost damage to the leaves. I’ve seen people cut their bananas way back in the winter. Should I do this? Can I do anything to get them to produce bananas?

Chiquita

Dear Chiquita,

Bananas are a weird plant. They have a pseudostem the size of a tree trunk that is good for only one harvest of fruit. If you haven’t had any fruit yet, don’t cut it back. The flower starts from the ground and travels up the pseudostem, so if you cut it back, you behead the flower. You can trim off damaged leaves, but leave the stem alone. If you got bananas on the stem last season, go ahead and cut it back to 30 inches from the ground, let it dry out and then cut to ground level.

Bananas put out lots of pups, and a new pup will take over for next year to produce fruit. Dig out most of the other pups, as they will compete for food with the main stem. (You can pot them up for the plant sale, they are always good sellers.) When the top leaves stand up straighter, the plant takes on a tilt, and the center “flag” leaf looks a little strange and starts to swell at the base, watch for the bloom to suddenly appear and hang down, ready to form bananas.

Bananas are voracious and need lots of food (think teenage linebacker), and lots of water. One site recommended 1 lb. of granular time release 6-2-12 fertilizer per stem per month. This is high in potassium, which they crave. Wood ashes also provide potassium, so if that is available it will help. Compost, fertilize, mulch, and compost some more and hopefully you will have some bananas next season.

The Maven

Plant Hero of the Month: The limp saggy leaves on some of the plants are making me sad, but lots of things are still blooming.