

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB
OCTOBER 2016 HORTICULTURE NOTES

The days are shorter, somewhat cooler, dryer than summer time, so fall gardening is in full swing.

The hottest topic is the proposed revision of the County's fertilizer ordinance. The Extension Service Director, BJ Jarvis, made a presentation to the BOCC in September soliciting some feedback from the Board as to the direction the new ordinance should take. Extension staff members will finalize the changes and bring that back to the Board for a public hearing and adoption on October 13th.

The proposed ordinance applies to residential yard grass fertilization practices. Because of a state law passed last year, only those pre-existing local ordinances banning sales of "fast release" fertilizer can be continued. One of those ordinances is the City of Crystal River.

This proposed ordinance will apply to homeowners, renters, and contractors working on residential lawns. The allowed fertilizer products will have to include a minimum of 1/3 "slow release" components. The ordinance should clarify what product types comply. A setback of 25 feet from water bodies will be required – so if you live on a lake or drainage-way, no fertilization will be allowed close to the water. The most significant change is a ban on fertilizing lawns between July 1 and the end of February. The rationale behind this is that during the winter, grass is not growing either above or below ground and can't take up the fertilizer that is on/in the ground, thus the fall through winter ban. Also, in the height of the rainy season, July through September, if there is a heavy rain event, the fertilizer that may be present in the root zone will quickly wash down through the soils without a chance for the grass to take it up. This information was gleaned from listening to the BOCC meeting, not by reading a final draft of the ordinance.

The County doesn't have staff enough to go around checking folks who are spreading fertilizer on their lawns, so they will depend largely on education to get compliance with the new rules. Staff from Extension and Water Resources will put on workshops for the public, and presentations at garden clubs and homeowners association meetings to spread the word. We should schedule one of those presentations either at the Floral City Library for the general public or at one of our meetings.

The big box stores are full of chrysanthemums to make all the northern (human) transplants feel like it is fall. They are just annuals here. Several of the bromeliad varieties have put on a show in the past few weeks. Cassia are in blossom too.

The vegetable garden has green beans coming up, all sorts of cruciferous veggies (broccoli, kale, collards), new herb plants, a cherry tomato and a pepper. Lettuce seeds go in the ground after we have consistent cool mornings, probably mid October.

The new butterfly garden near the trail has filled in over the summer and looks good now. We have space for a few more plants.

If you are growing your own poinsettias and want them to turn for Christmas, be sure they don't get any artificial light. Or just order some from the club this month for your display!