

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB NOVEMBER 2016 HORTICULTURE NOTES

The Board of County Commissioners adopted a fertilizer ordinance on October 25th after a lot of public input prior to and at the public hearing. They also had a presentation by a UF professor who does turf grass research. The ordinance is somewhat different than the one I reported on last month.

The adopted ordinance will apply to residential lawns. Commercial applicators will have to take and pass a class on Best Management Practices and adhere to those requirements for amount, type and timing of fertilizer application. For residents, the allowed fertilizer products will have to include a minimum of 1/3 “slow release” components. 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 the ban on fertilizing lawns between November 1 and March 31, which is a change from the earlier version; this covers the dormant period for the grass. There remains a ban on fertilization when heavy rainfall is forecast (tropical storm or hurricane watch or warning). There was discussion but no action on offering classes to residents so that they could follow the same rules as the commercial applicators. We can ask BJ Jarvis about what classes may be offered.

What's blossoming in my yard now includes: Muhly grass, marigold, passion-vine – including fruit which is not yet ripe, butterfly milkweed, plumbago, roses, vinca, plumeria, bush daisy, hibiscus, mexican heather, salvia, coreopsis, porterweed, bat-face culpeha, firebush, firespike, pagoda, walking iris, canna, and some encore azaleas. I haven't put in the winter annuals yet, waiting for cooler weather.

The vegetable garden has green beans, kale and collards ready for harvest. Broccolini is starting to make tiny heads, so it may be ready soon. Hubbard squash are forming on the vine. There are a few tiny green cherry tomatoes set. Lettuce is coming up from seed.

With a dry October, the veggies, flowering plants and cool season annuals need supplemental irrigation. The lawn grass has slowed its growth considerably, so it really only needs water if it looks wilted, which may happen if the warm dry weather continues. The lawn mower (both the machine and its operator) will get a break soon from those chores. That's a good time to do a tuneup and blade sharpening. The dry weather may also bring ant mounds to the driveway, sidewalk, and planting beds. If they are in a spot that means you're getting bit, you can use Amdro (but not in the veggie garden). Orange oil products like Safer Brand Fire Ant Killer can be used on the edible garden.

As the temperatures cool, you can plant shrubs and trees. Be sure the hole is saturated before you put the plant in the ground and get the root ball wet too. These new plants will need water every few days to help them get established. They may not put out new twigs and leaves, because they are about to go dormant, but their roots will start to grow to give the new plants a head start in spring.

Plant cool season annuals like ornamental cabbage and kale, pansies, petunias, snapdragons and dianthus new. A good dose of organic material to supplement the soil before you plant them will help hold moisture and provide some natural fertilizer. A little slow release fertilizer will keep them blossoming all winter.

Give thanks that we can garden in November, unlike those folks up north who are getting freezes for the next many months.