

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB APRIL HORTICULTURE HINTS

First – put the finishing touches on your homegrowns for our plant sale. Be sure you signed up to help during the sale. Shop the presale.

Next – enjoy your own garden. What a wonderful time of year to garden in Florida. The trimming and spring “cleanup” is well under way or almost finished. Azaleas are gorgeous, the winter annuals are still blooming like crazy and we can seed or set out transplants of the warm season annuals, replant containers, watch for the butterflies, listen to the birds and enjoy the multiple shades of greening trees.

Veggies are growing in my in-and-out garden close to the house. The bush bean seeds have sprouted and I'll plant okra seeds later this month. The lettuce is still prolific, but if we have lots more hot days with not much rain it will bolt. The tomato plants are taking off. I only put in small-fruited varieties; grape, cherry, patio and romas. The larger varieties just break the plants, even when caged and you can only eat so many green tomatoes. They do ripen eventually on the kitchen counter but the flavor is not as good as vine ripened. The collards continue to make tender leaves, so we keep eating and freezing them. Last year's banana and poblano peppers survived the winter and are producing again. There are new plants in the ground too. I put in cucumber, zucchini (just one) and eggplant recently. The veggies need the sprinklers on regularly when there are dry spells. Basil, thyme, rosemary, chives, mint, and parsley are in pots close to the back door for easy access when cooking. Those pots have drip lines from the veggie garden sprinklers so they don't dry out.

Roses are blossoming again after their annual trimming and fertilizing. They are hungry and thirsty plants and spring is easier than summer to keep them nice looking – no black spot with the lower humidity.

The blueberry patch is getting established and needs to have the blossoms stripped every few days to keep the plants putting effort into roots and leaves, not berries this year. They too are thirsty plants and need low doses of fertilizer often.

Blooming in my yard during the last week of March were - bush daisies, pansies, petunias, snapdragons, blue-eyed grass, azaleas, hibiscus, roses, ground orchid, lorapetalum, peace lily, African iris, creeping phlox, Valencia orange, blueberry, penta, firespike, plumbago, coreopsis, and periwinkle. My camellia did not bloom at all. Gardenias are setting buds and the wisteria vine over my potting arbor just started to “pop”.

Watch for lubbers – Jane Weber will talk to us at our April meeting about these pests. I prefer to squish them than spray. Killing a few hundred tiny ones will reduce the number of huge ones you find feeding in your garden in a few months. Found a couple snails on the lettuce last week, they too get the squish method of control.

HAPPY SPRING, HAPPY EASTER, HAPPY GARDENING

