

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB  
SEPTEMBER 2016 HORTICULTURE NOTES

We hope that everyone's yard and home were not damaged by Hurricane Hermine. In our garden, we only had small branches and lots of Spanish moss come down; still it was a great plenty to pick up.

The days are getting shorter, the high temperatures aren't in the mid-90s, but the regular rainfall and high humidity are still here. Even though morning and evening have lower temperatures, they are also prime mosquito time, so cover up and use insect repellent while working in the yard.

If there are repeatedly flooded spots in your yard, consider planting a rain garden there, featuring plants that like wet feet. There are several ornamental grasses, ferns and perennials that fit the bill. As a much higher-effort alternate, if you can alter the drainage pattern, get rid of the standing water areas. Summit Chemical Company makes products that contain a bacteria that is toxic only to mosquito larvae. Look for Mosquito Dunks for water gardens and ponds or Mosquito Bits for those soggy parts of the lawn and garden to kill mosquitoes for 30 days. Also, check all of your potted plant saucers and other places that can hold water and be sure to empty them out at least twice a week. County Mosquito Control (527-7478) has been very responsive to resident complaints this year.

The summer-long high humidity means that those plants that are susceptible to fungus have probably been attacked by now with black spot, and powdery mildew I lost several black-eyed Susan that were shaded and then engulfed by a passion vine; they had no chance to dry out between rains. Concentrate on prevention - 1) be sure there is good air circulation around all parts of your plants (severely trim the roses etc., don't crowd plants that are prone to fungal infections, 2) when the weather is dry, water those plants at the base and don't get the leaves wet (not much you can do about rain) 3) get rid of all infected plant parts and rake up fallen leaves from underneath. 4) remove and replace the mulch. You can also fight the fungus with any number of fungicides; you have to be careful about reading labels to look for products that are non-toxic for humans, pets and if spraying close to water to fish. Horticultural oils work as both fungicide and insecticide; be sure you spray those when it is not too hot and sunny. You really have to get all surfaces, including the underside of leaves and retreat every week to ten days to control fungus.

Believe it or not – it is time to plant the fall/winter vegetable garden and start looking for cool-season annuals. I'm ready to plant lettuce ( a little bit every 2 to 3 weeks), Swiss chard, kale, collards, broccoli and cauliflower (again not all at once). The yummy tender greens go in my screened area to keep them from being devoured by rabbits. The collards go outside. Squirrels get into the broccoli and cauliflower, so those do best inside the cage. The eggplant that was started in the spring is fruiting again; eggplant Parmesan tonight. Okra is still going strong, but will slow down as the weather cools. No more fried okra appetizers!

Now is also a good time to plan for remodeling in the garden; hardscape projects go much easier when you are not soaked in sweat!