

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB HORTICULTURE HINTS FOR OCTOBER 2017

We finally had our first meeting of the year after postponements due to Hurricane Irma. It might be good to write down the "lessons learned" from your experience and make a file so you remember what to do the next time we have a major storm. My list would include: make lots of ice blocks while the power is still on, to keep the cooler stocked as long as possible; put potted plants on the ground and packed tightly together to reduce wind damage; keep a 5-gallon can of gas on hand (use it in the mower etc during the year, but keep it full).

Now that mother nature has stripped all of our landscapes of the weakest limbs, lots of foliage and maybe whole trees, you may find more sunshine in your yard. Also, with the rainy summer over, those remaining wind-blown plants may need some supplemental irrigation and trimming to recover. Before planting in newly sunny spots, check books, online and/or your nursery's recommendations for plants that can thrive in that location. If you are looking for a ground-cover for sunny spots, perennial peanut or sunshine mimosa may do the trick; both have blossoms in addition to foliage.

Also, there may be ragged breaks on your trees that need a clean trim to protect the health of the remaining parts. If the breaks are too big for the tools and manpower you have at home or in the neighborhood, choose a reputable local contractor to assist.

You may have noticed that we have changed the raffle to a single nice specimen of the Plant of the Month. We will present information on that plant during the meeting so that the winner will know what to expect from and how to care for their prize. Please support the club by buying tickets during our social time starting at 11 am.

Remember, that according to the ordinance enacted last year, October is the last time during the calendar year that you are allowed to put fertilizer on your lawn. Be sure you purchase a formula that has at least 1/3 of the nitrogen content in "slow release" compounds. Look at the label and ask your dealer to interpret that label if you don't understand what it says. Also, stay away from waterways at least 25 feet. If you need to redo a section of lawn, this is a good time of year to do so, but don't fertilize new grass until spring. You will need to water it regularly to get the roots established.

October is a good time to give your shrubs and perennials a dose of slow release fertilizer for the last time this year, until they show new growth in the spring. If you wait too long, they will sprout just before it gets cold and the new shoots will get frosted off when we get have an overnight freeze. Citrus trees should be fertilized now too; they may also need watering a couple times a week in the fall to keep the ripening fruit juicy. When there is a new flush of foliage, inspect trees for insects and if/when those aphids show up, spray according to the label instructions.

Perennial vines can add vertical color if you have space and support for them to climb. Here are some ideas: blue-flowered Sky vine; orange flowered Cape honeysuckle, Coral honeysuckle, Florida flame vine, and Mexican flame vine; white flowered Confederate jasmine; red or purple flowered passion vine; and red and white flowered bleeding heart. You have to be willing to keep these in check with occasional drastic pruning or they can get out of hand.

Did you know that there are about 900 species of salvia? Many are suited to growing in Florida. Most like the sun, but might take some mid-day shade in the summer. You may not see a lot of varieties in the nurseries, but keep a look out for unusual ones. Belize sage, (*salvia miniata*) has glossy leaves, fuzzy orange red flowers and hummingbirds love it. Sinaloa sage, (*s. sinaloensis*) is a small blue-flowered species. Bolivian sage, (*s. oxyphora*) has fuzzy magenta blossoms and likes wet soil.

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