

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB
HORTICULTURE HINTS
JULY 2017

Summer is truly here, with high humidity, afternoon and evening thunderstorms, and very predictable temperatures in the low to mid 70s overnight and low to mid 90s during the afternoon. Especially as we age, keeping cool under those conditions is hard. So do your gardening in the early morning or in the evening. Watch out for pot saucers and other places where you may have standing water in your yard and be sure to empty and replace water in bird baths etc every couple of days to limit the places where mosquitoes can breed. Wear your wide brimmed hat and sunscreen, some mosquito repellent if you notice those biting insects and enjoy your garden.

I've had a bumper crop of green beans in two plantings, wonderful green peppers and nice cherry tomatoes. The passion vine is producing lots of fruit so we will be making sorbet soon. I think my sprinklers put a bit too much water on the yellow beans because they got rust, so they are a bit ugly which makes them rather unappetizing. Late July and August will be time for giving the vegetable garden a rest.

Have you ever seen a color block garden? I visited one in England that was part of the B&B at which we stayed. There was an all white section, one that was all shades of purple, one blue, another yellow, and another all red and pink. It was stunning, and of course they had some help on this many-acre estate.

If you want to try something like that yourself, start with a single planting bed area. Pick a color then start with thinking about the sun/shade mix in that location, the amount of moisture you and mother nature can provide, and the soil type, along with matching your yard's micro-climate to the cold hardiness of your plants. If you want some color all year, be sure to include foliage plants that fit your color scheme. Choose a mix of ground cover, small annuals and perennials, some shrubs or vines and perhaps a tree. Think about what plants blossom at what time of year. You will probably need several resources to come up with a plant list.

So here's an example: For a white garden in an area with part shade and well drained to moderately drained soil, you could use sasanqua camellia (fall to winter), gardenia (spring to early summer), and wild hydrangea (summer) for the tallest plants in the group, spirea for a spring flowering small shrub, confederate jasmine for a spring flowering vine/ground-cover, white caladium for summer foliage, spider lilies for spring to fall flowers, white impatiens for summer flowers, sweet alyssum for winter flowers.

If that is too much work, try a few pots in various sizes to make your color block. You can paint your pots to match the color scheme too! For a full sun pink color scheme try a mandevilla vine on a small trellis for the thrill part of the pot, then fill with vincas chosen to match the color and for the spill part, tuck in some powderpuff mimosas. Be sure those pots are well drained, but since they are full sun pots, check every day to see if they have dried out.

The winners for most-requested program topics for the upcoming year are: Native plants for home gardens, making garden art to boost sales at the plant sale, controlling garden pests, growing cactus and succulents, a floral design workshop and putting the "floral" in Floral City. So we will try to find experts from both outside the club and our own members to provide programs on those topics. Stay tuned!