

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB SEPTEMBER 2017 HORTICULTURE HINTS

Welcome back to the garden club meeting season! We hope to see all of our year-rounders at the September 8 meeting. Then later on, we'll look for our snow-bird members to return.

Did you know that the largest producer of neem oil (a natural insecticide) in the US is in Brandon, Florida? According to their website, neemtreefarms.com, they sell a product called NeemBioSys in addition to straight neem oil and an outdoor botanical spray that can be used with the neem oil. This product indicates it will control aphids, beetles, stinkbugs, leafhoppers, white flies, mealybugs, weevils, scale and thrips. I have not ordered from them, but they have a wide variety of products not only for the garden. Have a look!

If you have palm trees in your yard, now is a good time to fertilize them with a 8-2-12-4 fertilizer (the last number shows the magnesium content) designed specifically for palms. You can prune palms in the fall, but don't remove any green foliage, just the dead or browned out fronds. Especially if there are signs of disease, sterilize the pruners after each plant with a bleach/water solution.

It is time to start your fall/winter veggie garden now, starting with warm-season plants like peppers, tomato, cucumber and beans. Later on you can add broccoli, cauliflower, radish, lettuce, and collards. Plantings of new flowers for early fall can include marigolds, celosia, salvia and zinnia. Later on you can plant the cool-season annuals.

You can start cuttings of cold-sensitive plants like poinsettia, and copper plant now if you have a way to protect them from winter cold. That way, if we have a hard freeze, you have replacements ready for replanting in the spring. If there are extras, we have some more plants for our sale in March.

If you want tropical-looking plants that are more cold-hardy in our area here are some that can be planted in the ground (using more protected areas of your yard if you live in a frost/freeze-prone spot). The most hardy of these "tropical" plants include Elephant Ears (alocasia and colocasia) that are good for part shade to full sun and Cannas and Lily of the Nile (agapanthus) which blossom best in full sun. The Oaxaca variety of anthurium is one of the group that are slightly less cold tolerant; along with cast-iron plant (aspidistra), Australian tree fern, Crinum lilies, most ferns, gingers, and for spots that are hot and dry in the summer, Yuccas. The next group are even less cold tolerant and include Angel's Trumpet, banana, begonia, Bird of Paradise, Bouganvillea, Cordyline (Ti plant), crotons, Fatsia (shade only), hibiscus (sun), philodendron, pineapple, and stromanthe (tricolor). This last group may do best in areas close to the lakes, river or swamp where winter temps don't plunge as far or as fast as elsewhere.

Fall is a good time to divide many plants, although wait until spring to separate ones that go dormant like caladiums. Some plants can be divided any time. So when you do this, if you really don't have space for all of your divisions, let them grow in pots and bring them to the plant sale. Some prime candidates for growing by division are: Ajuga coreopsis, day lilies, gaillardia, iris, rudbeckia, canna, wandering jew, pinecone ginger, peacock ginger, mondo grass, swedish ivy, lirioppe, perennial peanut, aloe, amaryllis, and blood lily.

Our flex-time activity for November will be to make dried arrangements. Please look through your yard (and house) for items that can be used and start saving them now. We might use fall-color silk flowers, grapevine, cotton, magnolia leaves, dried palm fronds, wheat or oat heads, dried hydrangea, bare branches, pine cones, waxed fall-colored leaves.... Use your imagination. You should also select a container to use for your own arrangement. Bring your own frog or block of florist foam if you have that too.