

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB
HORTICULTURE HINTS
JULY - AUGUST 2018

My schedule won't let me do two "hints" editions this summer, so this one is combined for both July and August. Conditions are usually about the same for both months, hot, humid and rainy. Remember to stay hydrated and sunscreens while working outside during the summer.

We got good feedback from your questionnaires about programs, so I'm working on getting speakers for these popular subjects. Our member Bill Ferguson has volunteered to do the September program on PROPER USE OF MULCH. TREE CARE – Certified Arborist Eric Hoyer will present in October. INVASIVE PLANTS – what not to plant and how to get rid of the offenders is the topic for Marcie Clutter in November. LANDSCAPE DESIGN – Choosing plants for sun and shade: Steven Davis will present in February. WATER GARDENS will be a topic during the new year by Winnie Schrieber and Nature Coast Aquascape who helped her create her Floral City garden. We are still looking for presenters for GROWING EDIBLES, SMALL SPACE AND CONTAINER GARDENING or GROWING AZALEAS, CAMELLIAS AND GARDENIAS. We also plan to do some field trips during the coming year; be sure to let Donna know where you would like to go.

I hung the bee house that we all received at the banquet this year from a low branch on my backyard crepe myrtle (which is heavy with blossoms right now) It was hard to find a way to keep the openings pointed south, but a few weeks after I put it up, I found several of the openings blocked with "sand". Now some of them have broken out! Guess it worked.

We're still eating tomatoes, peppers and beans from the garden, but the rest of the raised beds have their clear plastic covers on them to reduce both the nematode population and weeds for the fall planting in September. My wildflower garden at the roadside is filled with blossoms. What an easy way to start planting natives – remove grass from a small area in the fall, generously spread wildflower seeds, water a few times to get the seeds to sprout and wait for spring and summer! If you plant thick enough, you won't even have to pull weeds. Wait for the flowers to go to seed and they will keep it going for years to come.

The colors of Provence and Tuscany (yellows, oranges, terra cotta and cobalt blue) make a smashing color combination in the sunny summer garden. The yellows and oranges are easy to produce with flowers – think marigolds, sunflowers, bush daisies, black-eyed susans, Klondike cosmos, daylilies, alamaanda, blanket flower, milkweed, ground orchid, melampodium, and some zinnias, cannas, hibiscus and lantanas. Terra cotta comes from unfinished clay pots, bricks or painted stucco. The bright blue is easiest to get with gazing balls, bottles, pots and planters, painted objects (window frame/ trellis /shed wall) and furniture. You can start small with a few pots or redesign a corner of the garden to be your escape to the look of the Mediterranean.

Is your yard water-friendly? If you live near a lake or canal, does the runoff pour directly into the water body? Does the driveway/sidewalk become a cascade during heavy downpours directly onto the street? Does that rainwater wash all your fertilizer away? Maybe you can improve the water-holding capacity of your landscape by using more permeable materials and minor improvements in the drainage pattern. Swales catch rainwater runoff and hold it long enough to soak into the ground. This is probably not a "do-it by hand-yourself" job, but a skilled operator with a small tractor or loader with a box blade can create a swale in a short time. Consider using porous pavers to replace asphalt or solid concrete driveways when the time comes. Maybe use gravel/ or grass pavers (plastic mesh forms that lets grass grow back) in seldom-used parking areas. Or try stepping stones and ground-cover instead of a concrete path.

Don't forget to prepare for hurricane season, both outdoors and in your home. See you in September.