

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB
HORTICULTURE HINTS
SEPTEMBER 2018

Our garden club year is about to start, with our first meeting on Friday, September 14th. If you read the Citrus County Chronicle on Sunday, you had a preview of three of our speakers for this year; Jane Weber, Leslie Derrenbacker and Eric Hoyer. In addition, we will have presentations by Marcie Clutter, Steven Davis, Bill Ferguson and (probably) Winnie Schreiber. Their topics are ones we voted on in the spring, so we should have interesting talks for all of our meetings.

The tropics have been remarkably quiet so far this hurricane season, but the peak is coming up, so be aware of the forecast. Remember last year, we had a hard time scheduling our first meeting due to Hurricane Irma and many of us had piles of debris in our yards for weeks. One bonus I got was a patch of dead grass that I turned into a wildflower garden. Some of what came up was certainly from the seed packets I planted, some from the native plant nursery order we had for our plant sale and some were volunteers. I've decided that some of those plants are weeds, mostly because they are too "wild looking" for the front yard.

I had a chance this summer to visit the Georgia State Botanical Garden which was wonderful, except for the weather which caused us to wilt in about one hour. I will definitely go again during a cool-season trip to see the grand-kids. The Georgia state garden club has its headquarters right inside the garden, a lovely setting. While we were in the mountains, I went on a fundraising garden tour that included 6 beautiful yards (and the exterior of the homes that they surround). The cooler temperatures at altitude mean that many plants we can't grow easily thrive there, like hostas and hydrangeas.

Coming back from several weeks away, we were greeted with very weedy gardens. The most prolific weed is Chamberbitter, which goes to seed in no time. The little seed pods under the leaves explode at a touch, so pulling the weeds often helps them sprout elsewhere. Thick mulch may reduce the number of sprouts in a planting bed and you can use a pre-emergent herbicide on the lawn in the spring (April-ish), but you may never get rid of them.

Blossoming now in my yard— Gaillardia, Klondike cosmos, Blue plumbago, Zinnia, Yellow alder, Purple fountain grass, Mexican heather, Peace lily, yellow walking iris, roses, Vinca, Coreopsis, Plumeria, Hibiscus, pagoda plant, Mexican petunia, Angelonia, Penta, sunflower (Helianthus), Porterweed, Begonia, Crape Myrtle, Liriope, coneflower, firecracker, firebush, Crinum lilies, Canna, swamp mallow, marigold, narrow leaf sunflower, cypress vine, melampodium, bush daisy, bird of paradise, white Mandevilla vine, red and purple salvia, and sunshine mimosa. Plus the wisteria has blossoms, which is totally out of season. I think the only reason for the wisteria to bloom now is that we had to cut it back severely this spring in order to replace the arbor on which it rests.

When you think about adding plants to your landscape you can choose the big box stores (Walmart, Home Depot and Lowes) but their stock is not necessarily tailored to our local climate and rarely do they have staff on hand to help you select plants. Instead, check with local nurseries, with knowledgeable staff that can advise you on what grows best here, during each season and for your sun/shade mix and soil conditions. Likewise, seeds that come in packets for nationwide distribution may work when planted at the appropriate time for our zone, but choosing seeds from outlets like the Florida Wildflower Growers Cooperative, or Southern Exposure Seed Exchange (VA) gives you a better chance at success. The best source to get plant material is from a friend. Root a cutting, dig up a division, or harvest seeds from a sharing neighbor's yard and you are likely to get just what you want.

HAPPY GARDENING