

## FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB HORTICULTURE HINTS APRIL 2019

It is time to fertilize the lawn; grass is actively growing again and the County ordinance allows an application now. Shrubs, perennials and annuals can also be given a spring feeding. If spring-blooming shrubs need to be trimmed, do it now; waiting longer can cut off next year's flower buds. This year's relatively mild winter means that plants that may outgrow their spaces with a full growing season can benefit from a "haircut" to keep them reined in. Hibiscus, bush daisy, porterweed, golden dewdrop, firebush and frangipani (Plumeria) in my yard all get that treatment.

By mid-March my wisteria arbor was full of purple blossoms and the ponytail palm had 8 tall blossom plumes. Citrus blooms perfumed the air too, although there are fewer and fewer healthy trees around. Green beans seeds had all sprouted and new sets of tomato and pepper were making headway in the veggie patch. The first blueberries ripened at the beginning of April and there are lots more to pick. The birds who ate 99% of the berries last year should be thwarted by the tent of netting we constructed over the bushes. The wildflower garden has coreopsis, gallardia and milkweed in blossom, along with salvia, porterweed and pentas, bringing lots of bees and butterflies around.

This year's plant sale was a success. Many thanks to Mary Graff for organizing it all and to every member who contributed plants and time to the sale. Financial details will be available at the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup>.

April and May are the driest months of the year, so most lawns and gardens need a little extra water to thrive. Be sure to limit your irrigation to the cool hours of the day, before 10 am or after 4 pm. Addresses with an even number at the end must water on Thursday or Sunday only. Odd numbers are limited to Wednesday and Saturday only. When we get natural showers, skip the irrigation. If you have questions about how to use irrigation water efficiently, you can contact the County water conservation department at 527-7684 to get helpful hints. The Master Gardeners from the extension office have monthly classes on home horticulture topics at the library. Floral City's day is the first Wednesday of each month at 2 pm. The Southwest Florida Water Management District website <https://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/residents> has lots of helpful hints on Florida Friendly Landscaping too if you can't get to a class.

This month's program will be presented by Jane Weber on growing azaleas and camellias, those winter and spring-blooming shrubs that we all love. We will also have a questionnaire on your favorite programs and an opportunity to let us know what topics you would like included for next year. That will help Carol Wood, our incoming first VP to plan programs that appeal to you. Kathy Lingusky has volunteered to try her hand at doing Horticulture Hints. We could use another person on the Horticulture Committee, so if you are interested, please let me know.

I was interesting to see the plants that grow along the Nile River and the irrigated areas nearby. There were date palms, sugar cane, alfalfa (to feed the livestock), papyrus, bananas, and grains. Fig, citrus, melons and plums were the most abundant fruits. Bougainvillea was the most common ornamental plant. They were growing carrots, radishes, beans, eggplant, zucchini, cauliflower, tomato, cabbage, cucumber, onion, and garlic. We saw lots of small trucks carrying the vegetables to open air markets in the towns. The edge of the irrigated area is stark and turns to desert within just a few feet. Be thankful for our abundant rainfall. Now that the Nile does not flood any more, bringing fertile silt to the fields, they have to use chemical fertilizer, making agriculture much more expensive than it was 50 years ago.