

FLORAL CITY GARDEN CLUB HORTICULTURE HINTS MAY 2019

April is an amazing month in my landscape and with enough rain May promises to be just as lovely. I am harvesting green beans and blueberries every two or three days with enough to freeze in addition to what we eat fresh or give away. The tent of netting over the blueberries has done the trick to keep most of the birds and squirrels out of the crop. Tomato plants have green fruit set thanks to the cool nights. When the overnight temperature stays above 70, they will quit producing new tomatoes. Eggplant, okra, and pepper plants are doing nicely. My compact garden really doesn't have enough space for melons, squash and cucumbers. I had rescued a stalk of lemongrass (for oriental food seasoning) in the fall by planting it in the garden bed. When I moved it last week, it was a clump 3 feet in diameter. It nicely filled a spot in the lawn that was awkward for the mower, so that was a win-win transplant.

A Little Gem Magnolia we planted a few years ago is covered with blossoms. The wildflowers at the roadside are putting on a show, with coreopsis, klondike cosmos, gaillardia and (purple) in bloom now. Recently planted caladiums haven't sprouted yet, but the older bulbs have brightened the shady spots in the landscape with pink and white foliage. Loropetalum we trimmed severely this spring came back like gangbusters, putting out lots of maroon foliage. African Iris sport their white and purple blooms on tall spikes. The first of the day lilies are out. Roses are in the midst of their spring show, with a couple varieties just at the beginning of their repeat blooming season. Amaryllis just finished blooming. The shell ginger has a lovely cluster of blossoms at the end of every stem. Several bromeliads are showing off as well. Salvia, milkweed, porterweed, firecracker plant, penta and firebush are playing host to bees, and butterflies. The first hummingbird arrived this week. Plumbago plants have lots of pale blue flowers. Agapanthus (Lily of the Nile) is budding, bush daisies are dotted in yellow, hibiscus bushes have some blossoms and gardenia buds are getting fat.

My trip to the Middle East confirmed that things grow well where there is irrigation in this desert region. Higher elevations east of the Mediterranean catch clouds and catch rain, we saw families gathering spring dandelions and other greens in parks. The Nile Valley is lush, with sugar cane, bananas, date palms, citrus, alfalfa (for the livestock), corn and other vegetables like cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, onions, and garlic. Olives and sesame provide their oils. They do have Lily of the Nile in their landscapes. The bird population mirrors the waterfowl we have here; ibis, heron, moor hen, and egret. Fascinating area!

Bill Ferguson has been working hard in the memorial garden. His efforts are obvious. Stop by the next time you are in the town center for the library, community center or museum. The trail side butterfly garden is maturing, with more plants either reseeding or showing that they truly are perennials. Carol Kanka, Donna and I have spent some time tidying up that garden. The gateway garden always looks good which probably means that Amber has visited recently, although I haven't caught her in the act.

The highlight of this year's FFGC convention was of course the installation of new officers for their two-year term. For the first time, we have a gentleman as president. Al Lattina hails from Temple Terrace, which means that next year the FFGC convention will be in Tampa. The Deep South Region of the National Garden Club will hold its convention immediately before that, so we can easily make day trips for the activities we want to attend. The dates for those two events are April 13-16 and 16-19, 2020.

Although we will take a break from monthly meetings during the summer, we will still have Horticulture Hints during the hiatus, because we really never have a time when our gardens need no attention.