

# Horticulture Hints

May 2020

Happy May Day, dear members!

The remainder of the Garden Club year is being a little anti-climactic. We aren't able to get together for the annual year-end banquet, a tradition that I will sorely miss. The website is missing some things because of all this quarantine stuff: no meetings, no plant sale (that WILL happen, just not this spring!), no garden clean-ups. I invite members to send in pictures of your personal gardens and any work-in-progress photos that you may have. That way, we can update our website with what we are doing "in quarantine". If you choose to do a little weeding in one of our club-maintained gardens, please take a pic or two and send to me. I will post!

The word 'jasmine' is something I had only heard of before I moved to Florida. I knew basically what it was, but that was about it. Then, not too long after we moved here, I came upon two massive chunks of root that



*Confederate Jasmine*

someone had pulled out of their garden and discarded. I didn't think much about them, but being who I am, couldn't bear to see them just tossed into the burn pile. So I put

them in the ground in two diverse locations just to see what might happen. And was pleased to see a few months later that little green leaves were starting to poke their heads out on both specimens. This was the beginning of a love affair. Confederate jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) is now one of my favorite flowers. And it's in bloom right now! As it turns out, jasmine is one of the few flower scents that don't give me a headache. I'm glad I put one of the vines just outside my backdoor. I wisely (!) placed the other one near my garden area, which is getting a lot of attention these days. I just wish the bloom season was a little longer. I have read that a slight pruning right after bloom time may trigger a second flush of flowers. I think I'll try that this year. A second chance to enjoy the flowers would be lovely. And to make this lovely plant even better, the vines are deer-resistant (I'm talking to you, Donna) and resistant to fungus, mildew, and pests. Once established, it's quite drought tolerant, and requires little in the way of pruning. A bit of balanced fertilizer once or twice a year is all it needs.

I'm experimenting with goji berries this year. And for a few years, I hope. They're



*Goji Berries, AKA Wolfberries*

supposed to grow well in central Florida, and

actually need some hours of winter cold for maximum performance. Gojis, also called wolfberries, (*Lycium barbarum*) are a perennial vine native to China, and a 'leaner' as they say. Which means that they need a trellis or fence to 'lean' on, since they neither twine around things nor have tendrils to hold them. In nature they form a ground cover, but have been cultivated for centuries in China. The vines require a full-sun location, well-drained soil and are not bothered by much in the way of pests, and of late, have found a place in western health food circles, usually in dried form, since the berries are loaded with vitamin C and various antioxidants. I'll be sure to keep you apprised.

If you haven't fertilized your citrus trees yet this spring, now is the time to do so. There is still some time to plant seeds or starts for your summer annuals: impatiens, kalanchoe, crossandra, coleus, thunbergia, torenia and nicotiana. Vegetables you can still start are okra, sweet potatoes, eggplants, southern peas, lima beans and snap beans. Most herbs can also still be started before summer hits. But don't wait too long. If you start things much past mid-May, early rains may encourage too many diseases.

Mole cricket season begins in May for lawns of bermudagrass, bahiagrass and zoysiagrass. The adult mole crickets have



*Mole Cricket*

already been laying eggs, and the eggs are starting to hatch now. These insects cause damage by burrowing under the surface of your lawn, and feeding on the roots and other organic materials under the surface. Insecticides can be found to control these

pests. Otherwise, damage could be extensive.

By the same token, St. Augustine grass can be damaged by chinch bugs starting about now as well. The damage begins as yellow areas, often starting near paths and walkways. The grass will then turn brown



*Chinch Bugs (Magnified)*

and die. The chinch bugs are tiny: ranging from pinpoint size to pinhead size. One thing to keep in mind is that once you treat your lawn, it will probably continue to decline for a few weeks. You will be left with very dead and very live areas, which will then make it easier to identify spots that need to be replaced.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy May. Garden on!