

Horticulture Hints

Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful: they are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul. -Luther Burbank

June/July 2021

For those of you who have not read the latest issue of "Florida Gardener", Summer 2021, (put out by the FFGC), please take a gander through it. Many of the people in the magazine were at our spring meeting in May. Jeanice Gage (District V Director) had a nice write-up concerning our District. Also, there are pictures of our intrepid members who took part in this year's annual convention throughout. Nice to see US being noticed for all the good work that we (you!) do.

Well, summer is truly upon us! My okra forest has taken over the raised beds. However, the slightly cooler temps and a lot of rain has slowed production of pods. Still hoping, though! The north side of my house (side yard) has been a much neglected part of the yard since we moved here in '12. I had



Okra Forest

decided that this summer would see that remedied. Several weeks ago, I planted three pineapple guavas (feijoa - zones 9-11) along

the fence east of the raised beds. I happened to be at everyone's favorite nursery (Color Country) when they got a shipment from their supplier. They were beautiful! The silvery foliage is lovely. And extremely healthy, these have already started to put out new growth. From what I've read, the flowers are beautiful (also edible) and the fruit is usually abundant. I'll keep you posted.

Have I got a weed for you guys this month! Our 'weed of the month' is called 'tread-softly' (*Cnidoscolus stimulosus*). I've also



Tread Softly (Cnidoscolus stimulosus)

seen it called 'never touch'. Also 'nose-burn' or 'finger-rot'. (How descriptive!) The plant, flowers and fruit (I don't know what the fruit looks like - I've never let one live long enough to see that) are all covered with stinging hairs that break off in your skin, where they release several different irritant compounds. Though the effects don't last long - under an hour - they're pretty miserable until they do wear off. I handle

only with leather gloves (even though I'm wearing nitrile gloves in the picture, I'm holding it *very* carefully) as the little hairs go right through the nitrile gloves that I wear for gardening. And the pulled-up plants go straight into the burn pit, so no one else has to touch them. Don't take these things lightly, but definitely get rid of them - you don't want to find a patch of them by accident while wearing sandals and shorts.

If you haven't planted any summer or cover crops, now is the time to apply solar therapy to the area to kill any pests that may be a problem. Contrary to what you may have heard, the best plastic to use for this purpose is clear, and not black. Back in the olden days, black plastic was recommended, but researchers have found that black doesn't get as hot as once thought, and some things (most notably, nematodes) may survive the treatment. Clear, on the other hand, garners quite a bit of heat, and the direct solar gain is more effective on things like nematodes.

July is also a good time to prune shrubs that may have bloomed in the spring. As far as your azaleas go, you have about a week in July in which to prune. Later than that and you start cutting off next year's flowers. So if you can't do it in the first week of July, better to wait til next year. If your lawn is looking a little yellow (months of drought notwithstanding), now is a great time to apply an iron- or nitrogen-only product. This is also the time to give your roses a good grooming, and apply a fungicide to control black spot. Sow tomato, eggplant and pepper seeds to put in the garden mid-August. Be sure to fertilize bananas and mangos monthly.

Enjoy your summer! Happy gardening!