

Horticulture Hints

A walk in nature walks the soul back home. -Mary Davis

August 2021

If I had to put a word to the rainfall so far during this rainy season, it would have to be “spotty”. More than once, I’ve watered thoroughly in the morning, only to receive almost two inches of rain later in the day. Then, also more than once we’ve gone almost two weeks with no rain at all - go figure! Florida is nothing if not interesting! Still hoping we can make it through hurricane season unscathed...

August is a good time to look at the possibility of planting trees. The planning stage at least. It seems that trees that aren’t planted in the heat of summer get off to a better start. So plan now, plant later. Figure out exactly where your trees are to go, then when the weather cools off a little (late September or October), you can happily plant, knowing that your tree will have a better chance of establishing a nice root system before the heat arrives next summer. Don’t forget to water often during this phase. Mulch is always helpful, but keep it at least two to three inches away from the trunk of your tree.

On the subject of weeds, here’s one that always seems to be a problem, especially if you have pets with fine or long hair: heartleaf drymary (*Drymaria cordata*). This little lawn creeper has seeds covered in superglue. Superglue that stays sticky for DAYS. It’s difficult to get them off your dog or cat’s hair, and even soap doesn’t dislodge the crazy things. It’s also called West Indian chickweed, but I call it ‘a pain in the a__’. It’s an annual that only reproduces by seed, so if you can nab the little suckers before these seeds form, maybe you’ll see fewer next year. In the picture, you can see the tiny little flowers in the center of the picture, forming above the leaves of the plant. Even the flowers are sticky. Once the seeds form, they’re difficult to handle. Wear gloves if you

can. It’s weak-stemmed, so breaks off easily, and then starts forming seeds all over again. This plant prefers damp-to-wet soil, so perhaps controlling moisture can help. But this is Florida, after all....hand pulling is



Heartleaf drymary (Drymaria cordata)

always an option, but if you must, a pre-emergent herbicide, spring and fall, can help your lawn. Interestingly, India and Sri Lanka use this plant as erosion control, especially on tea plantations. It’s also common under coffee trees in Ethiopia and East Africa. This might tell you something about the root structure of this plant.

Have you thought about starting an herb garden? Herbs are defined as those plants (either all of, or part of) that are used for cooking, or flavoring foods. Fall is a great time to plant herbs, so now is a perfect time to start those seeds. Let’s look at a few that will start well this time of year. I’ll concentrate

on the growing of these herbs, as there is always Pinterest on which to find recipes.



Rosemary in bloom

Always popular and useful is rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*). This herb is native to the Mediterranean, and so loves dry-ish, well-drained soil, and at least six hours of sun a day. It's an evergreen perennial, so will last all through the winter, though it may need to be protected from freeze in our part of the state. It is a woody plant that can reach the size of a small tree or large shrub (up to six feet tall, and four to five feet wide) when planted in the ground, but will remain smaller in a container. The small needle-like leaves can be harvested any time of the year,

and can also be dried or frozen for later use. This one is best started with a plant from the nursery, as it doesn't start easily from seed.

Next is sage (*Salvia officinalis*). This one is started most quickly with a plant from the nursery, but is easy enough to start from seed. It also is a perennial from the Mediterranean, but prefers a bit more moisture than rosemary. Its silver foliage is so beautiful, it might make a nice backdrop



Sage (Salvia officinalis)

in a border bed. Container growing is also a possibility. This also needs at least six hours of sun per day, and will mature into a semi-woody plant. And one of the best benefits of both of these herbs is that pollinators love them!

I'll continue the 'herb talk' next month. Until then, happy gardening!