

Horticulture Hints

To be happy for an hour, get drunk;
To be happy for a year, fall in love;
To be happy for life, take up gardening. - Chinese proverb

April 2021

The Floral City Garden Club Annual Plant Sale is over for another year! (Phew!!) Members again did a fantastic job. I have to send out kudos to Janie for a bang up job - she took in plants last year when our plant sale was cancelled, she took care of them ALL year, and then did a great job with purchases and collections again this year. BTW: Ralph helped a little (!) in all of this. A huge thanks to both of you. And to all the volunteers that made it work.

Last month when I told you that my tomatoes were in the ground, I don't believe that I told you that they were Campari's that I started from the little tomatoes I bought at Publix. I've never tried these before, and it



Campari's on the vine

has been an education. They seem to be disease resistant, don't grow big or gangly, and bear prolificously (a word? Well, it is now...). I think that should be prolifically. And they're just as delicious as the originals. The only caution about these is this: the fruit clusters get so heavy that they break the stem, so individual clusters have to be supported.

PS: I potted up fifty nine pots of okra (one or two plants per pot). All of them are Clemson Spineless, saved from last year's crop. The six plants that survived last year's pathetic attempt barely kept us in weekly dishes. I was determined to make sure that didn't happen again.

I would also like to say a word about Epsom salts. Or Epsom salt, if you prefer. Also known as magnesium sulfate, it's a mineral, made up of magnesium, sulphur and oxygen (MgSO₄). A brief history: Epsom is a small town in Surrey, England, just south of London, where the mineral was discovered during a period of drought in 1618. A local cowherd named Henry Wicker found that his cattle refused to drink from a puddle of water bubbling up in the middle of the town's common. He tasted it and found that it was 'bitter' water. However, he also discovered that any wounds that the cattle may have had when they waded into the water seemed to heal more quickly than normal. The rest is history. Epsom, England, was soon to become a spa town. And the mineral is now all the rage in gardening circles on Pinterest. I've had a fair amount of personal experience with the stuff, and I swear by it. I put it in every planting hole I dig, and every pot I plant. It seems to me that anything that may bring a little oxygen to the root structure might be a good thing. Studies that have

been done on the mineral, however, seem to suggest that its best use is that of a foliar spray (dissolved in water and sprayed on the



The mineral pool in Surrey, England

foliage of the plant). And, is only necessary if your soil is low in magnesium. I have not had my soil tested, and keep thinking that I should, just so I know some stuff. But I digress. The only thing that I have found that doesn't seem to benefit from its use is cacti. For some reason, when I have tried it on cacti, they have died forthwith. I would be interested in others' experience. Please let me know. Please bear in mind that this is only my opinion and anecdotal evidence. Nothing more.

April is traditionally one of our drier months. We should receive an average of 2" or so. But this usually occurs in one or two bursts. Since we haven't received an appreciable

amount of rain in over eight weeks, watering is probably already on your weekly calendar. Especially since it's been unseasonably warm (it was HOT on plant sale day!) However, the temps are moderating just a bit and becoming a little more seasonal. Now would be a good time to start your hot weather herbs: basil, dill, oregano, chives, thyme and sweet marjoram. Corn, melons, and other spring crops can still be planted. Any crop that only needs fifty days to mature can still be planted until the end of the month.

April is a good time to plant or add to your lawn. Sodding is the quickest way to get results, but seeding is much cheaper. If you prefer to seed, bahiagrass is the most popular. You'll want to pick a fairly warm day, since you want the seeds to germinate quickly. Add fertilizer to the ground before you seed, and be sure to put the seed down first in one direction, then a perpendicular direction. This will give you the most sure coverage. A lot of people like to put down a thin layer of straw (covering fifty to seventy five percent of your area) to protect the seed until germination takes place. You may have to water gently several times a day for the first week, then every other day for another week or two.

Happy spring, happy Easter, and happy gardening!