

# Horticulture Hints

"Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad." - Unknown

May 2021

Alas, jasmine season is almost over. I can't seem to spend enough time near the vines on either end of my house this time of year. But there is good news. As the wonderful scent wanes, it's time for mimosa strigillosa season to start. These little pink puffballs are so delightful - it took 3 years for the first



*Mimosa Strigillosa*

ones to show up in my flower bed, and the first year they bloomed, I got all of three flowers. But this year, they seem to be outdoing themselves. There are little blooms all over. And after the flower is done, it turns into a cute little, hairy old man, (am I allowed to say that?) like the one in the center of the picture. And I understand that the mimosa trees are invasive, but I think they're beautiful too. An eye-level (or higher) version of the groundcover. And in addition, my two baby roses of Sharon are covered in double lavender blooms. Spring is a wonderful time!

Also waning are the tomato plants - as the heat increases (temps over 90 degrees) the plants just kind of give up the ghost. We've

been getting tomatoes-a-plenty for just over a month now. As they fade away, I'll start putting in the okra plants I grew from seed. I started them from last year's pods. You may remember, I potted up 59 seedlings last month. They want to go in the ground: they're getting a little too big for their pots now. About 53 have survived the squirrels. So should have some good ones to put in the raised beds. Okra season! Yum!

There is still time to put in a few food crops before summer officially arrives. Besides okra, there are peppers, sweet potatoes or southern peas (black-eyed peas) still a possibility. If, like many Floridians, however, you think it's just too hot to do much outside the next few months, turn your raised beds over to nematode reduction mode in the summer. Pull out all weeds and crop vegetation, then scatter with a sprinkling of fertilizer. Following this, plant a crop of French marigolds (these are the little, dwarf varieties), hairy indigos or southern peas. These crops will help keep nematodes under control, return nutrients to the soil, and diminish weeds. After pulling out old vegetation and scattering the fertilizer, scatter your seeds over the soil, then rake gently into the ground. Keep moist to help germination, and feed once or twice during the summer. When you're ready to plant your fall season veggies, just mow down what's above ground, then till under the rest.

Here are some summer flowers that may still be put in: nicotiana, ornamental peppers, pentas, phlox, portulaca (moss rose), rudbeckia, salvia, strawflower, thunbergia, torenia, vinca and zinnia. Some are perennials, but may be grown as either perennials or annuals. I was completely unaware of the family of thunbergia when we



*Thunbergia Grandiflora (Sky blue vine)*

moved to Florida, but have since become familiar of several. Sky blue vine (*thunbergia grandiflora*) is an annual climber (a twiner, which means that it wraps itself around things), with flowers of (surprise!) a sky blue color. Black-eyed Susan vine (*thunbergia alata*), again, as the name suggests, is a yellow five-petaled flower with a dark brown or black center. This, too, is an annual climber. Both are usually available as seeds, and grow very quickly. They'll cover a porch pillar, and then some, by mid-summer. And

Summer's coming! Happy gardening!

PS: I think I forgot to mention the always-fun love bug season....

because they're annuals, will flower non-stop. Another favorite of mine is the cardinal climber vine (*Ipomoea*), also called red cypress vine. This vine is a native, and a relative of the morning glory. We have them growing wild in our yard. The tiny red flowers and ferny growth are quite beautiful. Hybrids of the native are available as seeds, with the flowers a bit bigger than the wild variety.



*Ipomoea (Cardinal Climber Vine)*

These things wrap tendrils around anything that's close, so plant carefully!