



EQUALITY PARK GARDEN CLUB
September 2015 Newsletter

The Sometimes...

Of course, the November 7 bus ramble

The bus company has our deposit, and we do need to submit the full amount before our October meeting, so putting your \$30 down for a bus seat in September would make me a more relaxed camper. Next month I'll tell you how to find the Cardinal Gibbons student parking lot and more definite details about our route. As well as house and shade loving plants and orchids, you will be able to shop for bromeliads and tillandsias. Some other options are still being negotiated. Are you interested in decorative pots or growing supplies? If so, stop by the front table and let me know about that at the next meeting.

Falling back at last

Programed to "know" that the rainy season will be closing down, and that light is decreasing, plants will be doing their last spurts of growth before they settle down for a slower winter pace. The time is now or into October to do these things:

- A. Fertilize grass, citrus trees, and shrubs.** If you plan to use a weed and feed type product wait until mid-October for a better time for weed control. Established older native and flowering trees may not need extra fertilizer unless they are looking less than robust. By you the time you buy the fertilizer palm trees will be due their October fertilizing.
- B. Prune.** Tropical fruit trees will not produce fruit as well next year if you prune, but keeping branches shorter and trees less tall will make them more useful in the long run. If your house and shade plants are getting leggy, trim the branches or tips down so they will regrow into rounder, fuller plants. You should not groom again until spring.
- C. Remove, renew, root.** This is the right time to remove tired flowering plants. It won't hurt to leave their pots and beds empty for 2-3 more weeks when it will be a better time to replace them with cooler growing options. Some flowering plants bloom year- round, and, when they get tired, new plants can replace them anytime. Some year- round bloomers include; Blue Daze, Gerbera Daisy, Pentas, Lantana, Salvia, Mexican Heather, and African Iris.
Some cuttings won't root this late in the year, but many will. Why not try to get new plants from those cut off soft, green-stem, branches in B. above. The new plants would be ready for our annual plant sale or for one of the plant tables at our meeting.
- D. Plant seeds.** If you like to grow plants from scratch this is the time to buy and plant wax begonia, verbena, scarlet sage, marigold, sunflower, and there are others. Most seed packages suggest planting times.

E. No light after 4:00 to rebloom. If you want to try to rebloom poinsettia, kalanchoe, and Christmas cactus, cover them with a box or put them in a dark closet after 4:00 pm so their buds can form to give you holiday flowers.

Chrysanthemum time

The big box plant departments are offering them for as low as 5 for \$10. To get even more for your money, remove spent blooms and get a second smaller blooming before the season ends. You can also plant them outside in a bed with part sun, and you might get flowers again next year. Of course you could also keep the after-bloomed plants inside to reduce indoor air pollution. What a deal! What do you know about them? The Royal Horticultural Society had awarded 140 varieties. Mums are roughly divided into 'hardy' and 'exhibition'. The ones at the big box stores are the hardy kind.

Species mums are not that showy, but whether hybrid or species, they have been important symbols for centuries. Most come from China, where some leaves are used for tea. The widely used insecticide "Pyrethrum" is a mum product.

Plants on my "need that" list

A couple of grape vines: We have a few empty feet in the back yard and have not tried grapes, so why not? Back home bus-wine will never come from our crop, we plan to eat them. So far I know that they produce better if they cross pollinate, and that only some varieties will grow here. Google Willis Orchards to see what they sell for zone 10. If you have had grape growing experience, please share your experience.

More Peperomia: There are about a dozen kinds of these low-growing shade plants that are common house plants. They are grown for their leaf shape and sometimes red stem color. The rat-tail flowers are not the reason to plant them in a shady bed or pot. The Watermelon peperomia (*P. argyreia*) is fast growing, and the leaf stripes gave it its name. Emerald Ripple (*P. caperata*) has red stems and crinkly leaves. The Baby Rubber Plant (*P. obtusifolia*) is making a perfect ground cover with its dark almost blue green leaves is the third one that I've tried that was a success. I've killed 3 other kinds by overwatering them. They can be rooted by placing half leaves in damp medium, or 3" stem tips will root well.

Why are the leaves dying?

There are many reasons. Plants drop leaves to keep from losing water if they are in need of water. Even humidity that is too low may cause leaf drop. Air pollutants such as ethylene can cause leaf drop. Plants often drop a few leaves when they are moved or transplanted and need to adjust to the new situation. Plants store their solid wastes in crystals in their leaves. When the leaves need to 'go', they go. Orchids drop their leaves usually after 3 years, and other kinds of plants also have schedules for routine leaf drop. These range from a season to more than 3 years in most Gymnosperm.