



February 2016 Newsletter

The sometimes...

The January meeting was my version of perfect. Allen Sistrunk's presentation had us all smiling and nodding. That was a perfect way to start 2016. Also perfect was Mary Lang's coffee selections, both frothed and plain, caffeine free and not. She will bring that again in February when we begin "bring a refreshment to celebrate YOUR birthday". Chuck Nichols and I don't need you to sing, but thank these others who have promised food: Scott Abrahamson, Jane DePadro, and Jeff Sullivan. When your birthday month comes you don't need to think trouble. How about a jug of iced tea, a few bottles of water, small bags of popcorn, or whatever your favorite snack is? For most of our history Chuck Nicholls has hauled in a 200 ton+/- cooler with water and an average of \$29 was spent each month on snacks. The new board expects to lug in plants, not boxes of meeting debris! Refreshments will cost the club nothing and be every member's part time job.

Two other changes came up at the January meeting. Now you are in charge of your name badge. Wear it to the meeting and you will get a raffle ticket at the door for a chance to win a nice plant. The gold star on a badge means that 2016 dues have been paid. (Please get your star if you lack it.)

The other change is that the people who contribute to the plant raffle table will get a ticket for the plant raffle table, not a ticket for the members' plant exchange table. The raffle table needs to pay for our room rent for the night and to pay the speaker. Even though the table was varied and awesome it was about \$60 short of paying for the night. Here there are two ways you can help keep meeting nights run in the black. Pot up some divisions for future tables and buy more tickets. Even if you happen not to win the plant of your dreams, you can bring it back the following month to support the club.

Let your plants love your care and make your care easier

1. Plant only palms and large leafed plants near a pool or pond or anywhere else you don't want to deal with hundreds of tiny leaves.
2. If a plant looks wilted in the afternoon, check it again in the morning. If it wilted because of too much sun, it will have perked up. If it needed water it will still be wilted.
3. Prune flowering trees and shrubs right after they bloom. If you prune later you will probably cut off new growth that was intended for next season's blooms.
4. Don't top shade trees and never, never, never, commit Crepe Murder on a Crepe Myrtle.
5. Before you plant a tree, or anything else in the ground, Google its height and diameter.
6. Don't pile mulch over exposed tree roots or let it touch the bark of a tree.

7. Avoid wetting leaves when you hand water, if you must get the leaves wet, water in the morning.
8. Never cut lawn grass lower than 2 inches.
9. Google the chemicals put on your lawn and avoid chemicals when you can. Plants may build up immunities to chemicals and an essential chemical won't work when it is desperately needed. You know about antibiotic resistance in animals, and plants are just slow green animals.
10. Neem oil seems to be a safe control for insects and mites, as well as fungal and bacterial diseases.
11. To get dry potting soil to absorb water, add a couple of drops of detergent to some water and water the soil.
12. Hang red Christmas balls on your tomato vines to keep birds from destroying your tomatoes before you can harvest them.

Note: Some of these hints were taken from the February, 2016 issue of Southern Living.

Being mated to a fungus

According to Attenborough, 1995, three quarters of the plants on earth have fungal partners. These days you can purchase mycorrhizae to help plants grow. In nature orchid seeds won't germinate without nurse-maids of mycorrhizae. Orchid seeds have no nutrients packaged with the embryo as found in other seeds. The fungal threads penetrate the tiny seeds and furnish the nutrition needed to sprout. You may have dug up a 'neat' plant in the wild and brought it home without much soil. If you left its fungal partner behind you saw your new plant decline and have a slow and painful death. Not sure about the pain, but death is obvious. (Some of this is from *The Private Life of Plants*, Bath Press, Scotland.

Be a dead-header

Ah yes, this is the time to buy small flowering plants to replace dead or leggy plants in beds or pots. Now is a good time to remove the flowers from these new plants. Why? The young plants were forced into an abnormally early bloom so you will want to buy them, but the young plant would thrive best in the long run if it didn't have to waste energy on early flowering, but on establishment and growth. Removing spent flowers from mature plants is also good for the mother-plant. She doesn't waste energy for seed development and the ethylene gas produced by the dying petals inhibits continued flowering. I have always cut off spikes of phals and other spiked orchids that have been in bloom for a month since by putting the flowers in a vase I have let the mother-plant rest and grow. When spent orchid spikes stay green, as in *B. nodosa*, that spike will produce more blooms in season. It's best to remove the green spike on spent phals since the next flowers will be poor and the plant will put up a new spike if you cut the old one off. The cut should be about ½ inch above the base of the plant. Of course brown spikes are dead and can be removed even with uncleaned sheers. Cuts on green parts of plants should be made with sterile sheers to avoid the transfer of virus.

Baking soda might give you more plant time

I know, this is lame, but a 2006 *Sun Sentinel* gave me this filler for newsletters: You already know about putting a box in the fridge, using it for tooth brushing, and using it in the cat's litter box, but did

you know that if you put a spoon of it in a pot of dry beans, the gas will be removed from the beans as they cook and Beano won't be needed. Now for the newspaper list:

1. A half teaspoon in a glass of water is a great antacid
2. Dump it on a fresh stain and the stain will go away.
3. It will put out a kitchen grease fire
4. It will whiten laundry.
5. Shake it on fruits and vegetables to remove the wax coating and pesticides and make these foods clean. Rinse off the baking powder treatment of course before you eat the foods.
6. Sprinkle it on a damp sponge to remove ink and other scuffs on walls.