



The Gabby Gardener

Garden Club of DeLand

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Presidents Corner



This winter's long hard freeze was a stark reminder that gardens are never static. While my native wild coffees look like roasted coffee beans, those truly dead plants create opportunities to redesign and try new ones . March does bring plant and bulb sales to the area. Look for GCD's caladium bulb sale at the Wildflower Festival and native milkweed sold by the Milkweed Circle as well as two sales by the Master Gardeners at the AG Center and Leu Gardens.

In the meantime I have been energized by new ideas. Wendy Anderson talked to us about subdivision design and the importance of nature. There's a new aagrihood movement afoot where houses, standard amenities (pool, clubhouse, gym), walking trails and parks have added a working farm for food production. It's much more than community gardens – the HOA pays the farmers and produce is shared. She also spoke to developers' clear cutting, leveling and compacting soil, and landscaping with non-natives. Each one of us has a role in protecting the Earth that we can no longer ignore.

GCD, not to be left behind in the new ideas area, now has a Book Club and much interest in the Wild Coffees, a new evening group focusing on Florida specific gardening, especially for wildlife. Promise of better times is in the air.

GCD General Meeting

Thursday, March 3, GCD General Meeting on Zoom, 9:30am Social / 9:45 Meeting (Educational Gathering)

Speaker: Dr. Jason Evans
Topic: **Harnessing Nature's Intelligence for Resilient Green Infrastructure Design**

** Member participation is the key to getting excellent speakers and helping them feel appreciated for sharing their valuable time with us.*

Circle Around:

- Daisies** focused on friendships.
- Firecrackers** put their floral design skills to the test with make and take arrangements.
- Magnolias** made lovely Valentine vases.
- Marigolds'** field trip to the AG Center was rained out.
- Milkweeds** learned about Permaculture.
- Roses** held their business meeting to plan next year.

We were happy to see some members-at-large participating in circle activities. Remember you can join any circle for an activity providing space is available – please check first with the president.

Vegetable Gardening in Florida

Growing tomatoes is by some the “Gold Standard” of being a true home vegetable farmer. Tomatoes are not the easiest crop to grow and have a successful harvest, so many things need to be overcome, but a bite of a fresh sun warmed tomato just picked out of your garden is so delicious.

First to look at is what type of tomatoes to grow, there are 2 main tomato varieties “DETERMINATE” and “INDETERMINATE” “Determinate type tomatoes will grow to a determined size” [1] and usually only produce one or two fruit harvests all at once.” Indeterminate varieties will continue to grow until killed. Either by your hands, disease, thirst, frost or eaten alive by pests”. [1] Indeterminate varieties, sometimes referred to as “everbearing” tomatoes, set fruit along a vine stem that continues to produce all season.” [2]

Secondly are temperatures. Tomatoes grow and produce best in only a certain range of temps. “Tomato plants grow best when temperatures exceed a specific base temperature for a certain number of days. Tomatoes are heat-loving plants that need a long warm growing period to grow from seed to fruit. Optimum fruit set occurs within a narrow night temperature range. Tomatoes produce the largest yields of highest quality fruits when day temperatures are in the range of 80 to 85°F and when night temperatures remain above 62 but below 72°F.” [2]

Finally consider some of the diseases tomatoes are susceptible to by choosing the right seeds. “It’s a good idea to select varieties that are resistant to known tomato diseases (including verticillium wilt and fusarium wilt) and pests (including nematodes). These qualities are usually noted on the label by two- or three-letter abbreviations.” [3]

Here are some great varieties to try at growing:

Indeterminate (Large Fruit): Better Boy, Bonnie’s Best, Striped Cavern

Indeterminate (Small Fruit): Everglades (summer friendly), Husky Cherry, Sweet 100 (Summer friendly),

Determinate (Large Fruit): Celebrity, Tasti-Lee

Determinate (Small Fruit): Floragold

Dwarf Varieties: Patio, Small Fry, Tiny Tim [1]

[1] <https://www.flgardening.com/growing-tomatoes-in-central-florida/>

[2] <https://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/2017/02/25/keys-to-growing-tomatoes-in-florida/>

[3] <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/edibles/vegetables/tomatoes.html>

Florida Native Gardening

This year early March in the Central Florida garden is still a time of waiting, the time of inactivity for us gardeners. We await the temperatures rising, the first green shoots of our frost and freeze damaged plants, the smell of the earth coming alive with growth.



Our **Carolina jessamine** (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) went into bloom right on time in mid-January and has stayed in bloom, during all the cold, feeding the hummingbirds, butterflies and hungry native bees in

the yard. Its bright yellow flowers give a glimmer of what is to come in the garden in the coming months.

Wild pennyroyal (*Piloblephes rigida*) has also come into bloom, it is a much quieter flower, but still a powerhouse for bees. Pennyroyal is endemic to Florida and supplies both pollen and nectar to late winter- early spring pollinators.



The Shiny blueberries (*Vaccinium myrsinites*) are in bloom and the Chickasaw plums (*Prunus angustifolia*) are leafing out.

I have many native plants that made it through this winter with no damage and stayed green or already have great spring growth. Forked bluecurls (*Trichostema dichotomum*), Pink beardtongue (*Penstemon australis*) and many-flower beardtongue (*Penstemon multiflorus*), tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*), and lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*), helmet skullcap (*Scutellaria integrifolia*) crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) and coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) all stayed green and have no frost/freeze damage. My three native golden-rods are all green with new growth. My giant ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*) and my tall elephantsfoot (*Elephantopus elatus*) have new basal leaves.

I am looking forward to spring in my gardens to see what new exciting plants that I can add to my assortment to natives. I have a bucket list of plants that I will hopefully find and tell you about in future essays.

Articles by

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Why Wild Coffee?

Over the last two years many of us have had the pleasure (or displeasure) of being home more often. While we were home we started to notice the things about which we used to not give so much as a second thought.

We became curious about the birds flying in and out of the oak trees, the bees stopping to take a drink on the birdbath, the butterflies hanging around “that one plant with the red flowers...what’s it called,” and suddenly we found ourselves only parking at the garden entrance of Lowe’s.

This spark of curiosity had ignited into a full blown obsession. We started conversations with strangers at plant nurseries about what plants grew well in our yards and chatted with our neighbors over the fence line about birds spotted in the yard. From facebook gardening groups, and yes even The Garden Club of DeLand more and more of us were seeking ways to improve our green spaces so our favorite garden visitors would be happier and maybe stay a little longer.

We scoured the internet for hidden secrets, and we learned that our favorite winged visitors required very specific plants to perform their necessary functions. They had to have specific plants to

feed on, specific trees to nest in, a source of water, and shelter. Little did we know that what we were really doing was scratching the surface of ecology - studying the relationship between organisms (plants, mammals, birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles and humans) and how they all interact with each other.

This viral sensation of gardening for wildlife and pollinators alike isn’t going away anytime soon. More and more of these new and seasoned gardeners are environmentally conscientious and take their part in preserving and protecting wild Florida very seriously.

Thus the need for a circle in The Garden Club of DeLand to cater to those with such interests arose and the formation of a new endeavor began.

Wild Coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*), a Florida native plant that loves the shade of oak trees and a favorite of pollinators, will serve as the circle name. A wonderful plant that is perfect for this circle’s namesake. Wild invokes the wildlife, the untamed and the freedom that can be found in nature and coffee which provides us gardeners with sustenance (and caffeine) to get up and work outside in our gardens like the plants we choose for our green spaces provide nourishment for our garden guests.

Wild Coffee Circle will meet in the evening to provide those that work during the day one more opportunity to be involved

in the wonderful things The Garden Club of DeLand has to offer.

Please join us on the second Monday of the month at The Garden Club of DeLand clubhouse, 865 S. Alabama Ave. at 6pm to share with us what you have learned about gardening for wildlife.

Your Wild Coffee President,
Lance Harding

THE GARDEN CLUB OF DELAND IS EXCITED TO INFORM YOU
OF THE LAUNCH OF A BRAND NEW CIRCLE

Wild Coffee Circle

OBJECTIVE: THE WILD COFFEE CIRCLE WILL PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE THE USE OF FLORIDA NATIVE PLANTS THAT INVITE AND ATTRACT WILDLIFE TO OUR GREEN SPACES, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES. THE CIRCLE WILL LEARN ABOUT USING NATIVE PLANTS TO PROVIDE FOOD, NECTAR AND SHELTER IN OUR OWN BACKYARDS.

To encourage the transformation of our green spaces to accommodate wildlife with a focus on Florida native plants.



The first gathering/meeting of persons interested in exploring being a part of this new venture are invited to meet at the Garden Club of DeLand clubhouse 865 S Alabama Ave, DeLand, FL 32724 on Monday, March 14 at 6pm. Please email gcdmembership@gmail.com to RSVP or for more information.

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