



# GARDEN CLUB OF CAPE CORAL

PO Box 152022, Cape Coral, FL 33915

Member of National Garden Clubs, Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc.,  
Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., (District IX) and Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council

Quote of the month: *One of the pleasures of being a gardener comes from the enjoyment you get looking at other people's yards.* Thalassa Cruso, 1909-1997 (The "Julia Child of British Horticulture")  
(with thanks to Valorie Breen)

## NEWSLETTER – February 2021

### February Meeting

Our 10<sup>th</sup> February meeting will again be via Zoom, beginning at 6:30 PM. President Ann will send details shortly.

Stephen Brown, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences Horticulture Extension Agent, Fort Myers, will be giving us a presentation on *The Care of Palms*.

We will also be hearing from the Ways and Means Committee on final details for our annual March in the Park fund raising event, March 13. See information later in this newsletter also.

### February Special Event

Instead of the guided tour of the Peace River Botanical and Sculpture Gardens described in the Directory, join your fellow members at Rotary Park for a fun Valentine's Day celebration, 1 to 3 PM. Please inform Christine Prestella [if you are attending.](#)  
Bring your own chair and beverage.

### February Birthdays

Birthday wishes to all our February birthday members:

Linda Bauschek, Barb Cohen, Pam Dawson,  
Mona Hawes, Joanne Kishfy, Lynne Viacava

Many happy returns of your special day!

### We Welcome Another New Member: Denise Petersen

Originally from Massachusetts and having first temporarily moved here last March during the Covid Pandemic which forced me to stay put, my fiancé and I purchased a home in Cape Coral on a canal. He is retiring in a couple of weeks to join me. I have two children, one living in MA and one in NY, and am grandmother to Everett, aged 6 years, and another soon-to-be arriving in June of this year. I have been visiting Sanibel and the SWFL area for the past 18 or so years, as my son used to live here but has since relocated to NY. I love the weather and feel fortunate to not have to deal with the cold and snow of MA anymore.

*Welcome Denise – we all look forward to meeting you in person, perhaps at our Valentine's day gathering but definitely on zoom at our February meeting!  
Hint – we have quite a few men in the club – perhaps your fiancé would like to join also??!*

## March in the Park

March in the Park is just around the corner - March 13. Remember to wear your March in the Park t-shirt, garden hat and mask on the day of the event.

Opportunity Tickets - Can be purchased by sending your check for \$20 payable to GCCC and address labels to Kim White  
Tickets will also be available at our Valentine Social on February 13 at Rotary Park, 1-3PM.

Make sure to reach out to Sue Lawson with your choice of MIP work assignment.

We still need volunteers at the Kid's Booth, Parking, Vendors (early Saturday), Plant Carry-out, Plant Transportation, and we always want help in the plant booth. If cannot attend, please let Sue know that as well.

Help with outreach also counts as MIP volunteering, so reach out to Ginny Huffer if you'd like to volunteer for Outreach at Sunset Celebration or the Farmer's Market.

If you have grown plants for March in the Park and haven't told Dona Baliotis what they are, please let her know as soon as possible so that she can include them in the labels she prepares.

## Amaranths: Ancient and Modern - Who knew it was also a vegetable??

David Cavagnaro, National Gardening Association

Amaranths are both historic and contemporary plants. Few similarly small groups of plants are as complex and diverse, both genetically and taxonomically. Even within one species, the ranges of forms and uses are remarkable: Some amaranths are pretty, and some are plain; some

are big, and some are small; and some are weedy, and others aren't. Such diversity adds to the home gardener's challenge of predicting performance the first season, and perhaps that partially explains why amaranths are underutilized plants.

The name Amaranth originates from the Greek *amarantos* (meaning that which does not fade) and refers to the everlasting quality of the flowers. The ancients associated the long-lasting flowers with the steadfastness of true friendship or love. If you haven't grown them before, find some space in your garden this year for an amaranth. They'll earn comments from visitors, and they won't disappoint you.

Broadly speaking, *Amaranthus cruentus* and *A. hypochondriacus* are grown for their seeds; *Amaranthus caudatus*, called love-lies-



bleeding, is grown for its drooping, tassel-like flowers; and *Amaranthus tricolor* is grown for its brilliant leaf colors and spinach-like leaves. Amaranths

are naturally promiscuous plants that defy pigeonholing.

### Decorative Amaranths

Capitalizing on the tendency of *A. tricolor* toward vivid colors, gardeners and plant breeders have created some of the most brilliant foliage plants of any kind. Unlike species of amaranths more noted for their flowers, *A. tricolor* bears its flowers inconspicuously where the leaf stems meet the plant stem, so the show is all in the foliage. In addition to decorative and cooking uses, you can use *A. tricolor* varieties as a brilliant edible garnish to perk up other dishes.

Thomas Jefferson grew 'Joseph's Coat', the oldest variety in America, at Monticello. First sprouting willowlike green leaves, 'Joseph's Coat' explodes into flaming yellow and red leaves at maturity. A similar variety, 'Early Splendor', has solid red leaves. The most popular new variety is a

## Amaranths – continued

Japanese creation called 'Illumination'. At 4 feet, the plants produce a rosette of large leaves the size and shape of poinsettia leaves in sizzling red blushed with gold. For those who love hot color combinations, these decorative amaranths outpace all other plants.

The oldest of the decorative species in European history is *A. caudatus*, mentioned in sixteenth-century herbals and sold as early as 1810. Its ropelike wine-red tresses earned it the sensible common name tassel flower. But like other inheritances from the dim mists of time, it's the more evocative, if enigmatic, names that stick: love-lies-bleeding is the favorite. Or how about *discipline des religieuses*, which translates as nuns' whip? By late twentieth century standards, that name may not conjure a pretty picture, but it's a memorable one of the ropelike flowers in use.

The plant also caught the eye of William Wordsworth, who wrote a poem about the myth of Venus and Adonis involving love-lies-bleeding in 1845.

### Vegetable Amaranths

Varieties of *A. tricolor*, the so-called edible or vegetable amaranths, have been used for their leafy greens in Asia for centuries. Leaves of these heat-tolerant varieties make a nice summer substitute for cool-weather greens like spinach, and are tender enough for use raw in salads. The first vegetable variety to become widely available in America was 'Hinn Choy', also known as tampala or Chinese spinach. Recent introductions include 'Green Leaf', 'Hijau', 'Red Leaf', and 'Merah', also called coleus-leaf amaranth. 'Merah' and 'Red Leaf' have large, crinkly green leaves with vivid purple veins. Less than 3 feet in height, these plants make colorful additions to any edible landscape. The *A. tricolor* (also listed as *A. gangeticus*) 'Molten Fire' produces large scarlet and green leaves and a

dark red seed head but at 4 feet in height is best placed at the back of the garden.

## All About Air Plants National Gardening Assoc. Newsletter Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>

Michael MacCaskey, former editorial director at National Gardening.



Tillandsias, and other members of the Air Plant Database, do their best work up high. Travel in the southern United States, or Central and South America, and you see them living

way up in the trees, sometimes covering entire branches like some kind of vegetative fur. But unlike the basketball star Mr. Jordan, who is simply able to reach great heights, these plants seem to live and grow in nothing but air.

In a sense, they do live on air. Though a few are terrestrial, most tillandsias are epiphytes, a two-bit word that means they use other plants for support. But, as opposed to parasitic plants such as mistletoe, they're respectable guests and don't steal nutrients from their hosts. They have roots, but these serve primarily to hold the plants in place. Tillandsias get all the moisture they need from fog or rainfall, and all the nutrients they need from the dust, leaves, and debris that collect around them.

Tillandsias are a genus of the bromeliad family, the best known of which is the pineapple. Of the approximately 2,000 species of bromeliads, 600 are tillandsias. The best-known tillandsia is Spanish moss (*T. usneoides*), which is a common sight hanging in lacy strands from live oaks and bald cypresses throughout the Gulf Coast region. There are two main types of tillandsias, and it's easy to distinguish them: some are gray or mostly so, and some are green.

## All About Air Plants - continued

The gray kinds grow naturally in tropical forests where long droughts are common. Their gray leaves reflect sunlight, conserving moisture in the leaves and so helping the plants survive. Green-leaved tillandsias are native to rainy, humid tropical forests. You can grow either indoors, but our homes (and the care most gardeners give) more closely approximate the dry tropics than the humid tropics, so gray kinds are a better bet indoors.

### Displaying Tillandsias

As with most plants, imitating their natural environment is the best way to display tillandsias. That means attaching them to trees outdoors in USDA Hardiness Zones 10 and 11, or on branches, driftwood, slabs of bark, or similar material indoors.

The key to establishing a tillandsia on a piece of wood is to secure it firmly in place until its roots can reach out to the tree or mount and attach themselves. You must take care that the plant is firmly secured and not wobbly. Use wire ties, narrow-gauge wire, monofilament fishing line, or adhesive, whichever you find easiest to use and best adapted to the plant and support you're using - hot glue works well. Don't use epoxy or petroleum-based glues; they may harm the plants.

Once you've selected the mounting material, experiment with different placements for your plants to see if you like the look. Don't situate plants in deep pockets where water will collect, and where light and air movement are blocked. Standing water around leaves causes the plant to rot. Trim long roots to make mounting easier. Small, stemless plants are easy to glue directly to the smooth surface of a branch. Narrow drill holes are also suitable for plants with particularly narrow bases, such as *T. purpurea*. In either case, apply hot glue or other adhesive directly onto the

surface or in the hole of the mounting material, and put the plant into it. If you use hot glue, let the glue cool for 20 seconds or so before putting the plant into it.

### Caring for Tillandsias

In winter, plants need bright light, good air circulation, and once-a-week watering. In summer, provide filtered bright light and more frequent watering, as well as monthly fertilizing with a liquid product at quarter-strength. Your maintenance regime depends partly upon how you display your plants. If they're mounted or positioned so they're not easy to move, mist the plants with a spray bottle. If they are not attached to a mount, immerse the entire plant in water for up to 12 hours every other week or so. In frost-free areas, tillandsias can grow all year outdoors. Start by attaching them to the branches of trees. They'll soon adapt, requiring no additional care, and will eventually spread. Propagate tillandsias by separating offsets that are a third the size of the mother plant. Use a knife or pruning shears if they don't pull apart readily.

## Newsletter and Club Photos Online

Our monthly newsletter is always available online – go to our website at <https://www.gardenclubofcapecoral.com/getinvolved/newsletter/>

So, if you want to look up something from a past issue, just click on the link.

Also, view our photo archive at <https://www.gardenclubofcapecoral.com/archive>

to see photos of our Christmas gathering, the 2020 Small Standard Flower Show *New Beginnings* which took place in Jan. 2020, and *March in the Park* archived photos.

## Cancelled Events:

Both this year's Burrowing Owl Fest and the Pine Island Garden Club Gala have been canceled because of the Pandemic. The Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife are holding an **Owl Fest Auction** to raise money to support their mission.

You can check out a potpourri of dining, cultural, activities, and unique items at

<https://www.biddingforgood.com/auction/item/browse.action?auctionId=341697389>

Viewing starts on Feb 7, Bidding is February 17-27

## Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Flower Show, *The World is Yours to Explore*

The FMLCGC Flower show has been postponed until November when it is hoped that more people will feel able to both enter and visit the show. The actual show dates will be 18-20 November. The schedule will remain as already published – so just think of it as having more time to perfect your entries!

## Annual Directory Cover Photography Competition

Time is running out to enter our annual photography competition. The winning photo will appear on the cover of our next Directory. There is **no limit** on the number of photos you can submit. Email submissions to Nora Hoover no later than March 31.

Photos will be made anonymous to prevent bias. The winner will be announced at the May Garden Club meeting

## Upcoming Events

### Edison Ford - Sunset Celebration

**February 12, 6 p.m. – Masks required**

Visitors are invited to stroll the botanical gardens after regular hours for a special evening of music, refreshments, and a sunset view over the Caloosahatchee River. Teddy Richards, who formerly played guitar for Aretha Franklin will perform an eclectic mix of crowd favorites. Guests may also walk onto the porches of Thomas Edison's and Henry Ford's winter homes, while strolling the grounds at their own pace. The American Grilled Cheese Kitchen and Millennial Brewing Company will have refreshments available for purchase. Guests may bring a lawn chair or blanket to relax and watch the sunset. Edison Ford members: \$15; non-members: \$20. Purchase tickets online at

### March 13 Alva Garden Club

Annual Plant/Bake Sale and Strawberry Shortcake Festival 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM at Alva Museum, 21420 Pearl Street, Alva, Florida 33920

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*The next newsletter will be published in early March – please submit ideas, articles, suggestions to Sylvia Swartz, Editor, [tamarqal2@aol.com](mailto:tamarqal2@aol.com). Comments/suggestions always welcome.*