



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

Every day may not be good, but there is something good in every day. Alice Morse Earle.
(with thanks to Sherie Bleiler via Valorie Breen)

NEWSLETTER – May 2021

May Gathering

Yea! Hear ye, Hear ye! Our May birthday celebration meeting will be an **in-person, socially distanced** gathering at Rotary Park, Saturday, May 8th, 10 am to noon. Bring a chair, beverage, and sunscreen – maybe bug spray too! And let's all have a good chat.

We will also be installing our new Board at that gathering so not a meeting to miss. I'm sure our incoming officers would welcome some rousing support to begin their new administration.

We congratulate our 10th Annual Marty Ward Merit Award and 2nd Annual Donna Conway Scholarship Winners



L-R: Sarah Jiang, Julia Lin, Kayla Hoagland, and Morgan Russell

What a pleasure it was to meet this year's winners at our Zoom club meeting. They are all so impressive. Just in case you missed the details, here they are:

Kayla Hoagland of Oasis High School: After graduating, Kayla will attend University of South Florida, majoring in mechanical engineering. Her unquenchable interest in exploring how things are built explains her career choice. Spending two summers as a junior counselor at the Rotary Park Nature Exploration Camp is only part of her long list of commitments in our community. She is particularly proud of Paul the pelican, the main character of the pop-up children's book she has conceived as part of a group project to raise awareness about the use of non-renewable resources. Pollution and waste are her main environmental concerns.

Julia Lin of Cape Coral High School: The University of Florida is Julia's next step after graduation, to study Biology and Business Administration, and subsequently obtain a Pharmacy degree. Her dream is to open a pharmacy in a rural community with a high density of seniors to ensure easy access to medication, even without insurance. Lin wants to put emphasis on the healing power of herbal medicine. She is concerned about universal access to potable drinking water and has been

raising funds for the non-profit international organization Thirst Project.

Morgan Russell of Mariner High School who has no time to lose. Immediately after graduating she wants to start this summer studying Environmental Engineering at the University of Florida. Following the steps of her father, who works as a scientist for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), her main concerns are climate change and the current state of the environment.

Sarah Jiang, who received the 2nd **annual Donna Conway Award**, made possible by the generosity of Donna's husband Jerry and family.

Choosing a university was easy for Jiang. After learning that the University of Missouri in Kansas City offers a direct pass to their own graduates to enroll in their medical school, Jiang decided to apply to earn a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Concerned about the water quality in Southwest Florida, when red tide and blue-green algae affected our local waters in 2018, Jiang started volunteering and then obtained an internship as research assistant in the chemistry department at Florida Gulf Coast University.

May Birthdays

What a lot of May birthdays: Happy birthday to:

President Ann – hope you're feeling better!
Frannie Cox, Andrea Garlanger, Nora Hoover, Linda Keirstead, Judy Lindhorst, Betty and Jim McCullough, Cynthia Mahoney, Sue Nagy, Mary Robbins-Kralapp, and Elsa Schutzman.
Take time to enjoy your special day.

New Feature Coming Soon!

Beginning in September (the start of our new season), each month we will turn the spotlight on one of the committees that undertakes specific features of the Club's business. So, listen up

Committee Chairs: if you want to recruit new members to your committee; explain what the committee does; or simply blow your trumpet, please contact Editor Sylvia and she will be pleased to include information on your committee.

Sign up on AmazonSmile!

You can now sign up for AmazonSmile using your smart/iphone. Simply:

- Open the Amazon app on your phone;
- Select the main menu and tap on "AmazonSmile" within Programs and Features;
- Select Garden Club of Cape Coral as your charity;
- Follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile in the mobile app.

The club will benefit every time you make a purchase – it costs you nothing!

Retaining some of our Summer Storm Rains

At the risk of repeating earlier information, it's timely to remind ourselves how our gardens can benefit from our summer storms.

Here in SW Fl with the big summer thunderstorms that drop lots of rain in a short amount of time, all that water often runs off into the nearest storm drain and from there eventually to local waterways, or it goes directly into nearby streams, rivers, and lakes. Even when the rain lands on lawns, gardens, or other vegetated surfaces, so much comes down so quickly in a thunderstorm that much of the needed water runs off rather than soaking into the ground. The problem with runoff is that it can pick up and carry all sorts of pollutants as it makes its way into the watershed, from nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous that fuel algal blooms to pesticides, herbicides, oil, grease, heavy metals, and

Retaining some of our Summer Storm Rains - continued

harmful bacteria. Equally important, water that runs off is water that is not available in the soil for take up by thirsty plants.

Which brings us once again to the topic of rain gardens. Rain gardens are shaped like shallow bowls designed to capture storm water and hold it until the ground can absorb it. By capturing a sudden deluge of water before it becomes runoff and letting it soak into the ground, a properly designed rain garden helps protect the environment and recharges the groundwater. It can also be an attractive addition to your landscape and many of the plants that are suited to a rain garden are natives that attract beneficial and pollinating insects, butterflies, and birds. It's a win-win situation all round!

Location

Locate your rain garden where downspouts or swales can direct water from roofs, driveways, and other impervious surfaces, but place it at least 10 feet away from the foundation of your house, at least 30-50 feet away from septic tanks, leach fields, and drinking water wells, and away from any other underground utilities.

When siting your garden, it's also important to remember what a rain garden is not. It's not a bog or a swamp; it's a **temporary** water holding basin, so it doesn't belong in a spot that is naturally wet or where water stands for long periods after a rain. A low spot that is fairly flat with soil that allows any standing water to drain within a day or two after a storm is best. To check if the soil drains fast enough, dig a test hole about 10 inches deep and fill it with water. If the water drains away within 48 hours, you're good to go. A common concern is that a rain garden will become a "mosquito garden" as well. But because it's filled with water for only brief periods of time, you don't need to worry about a rain garden adding to the local skeeter population.

Similarly, the plants that are appropriate for a rain garden are not wetland plants that need constantly wet soil. Instead, choose plants that can tolerate both temporarily saturated and drier soil. Both herbaceous and woody plants can be appropriate choices. Specific plant choices will depend on the size of your garden, and your site's exposure. There are many online resources with information on designing, planting, and maintaining rain gardens or contact the Extension Service or Master Gardeners program for advice.

How big should you make your rain garden? Ideally it should be about 20-30 percent of the size of the area draining into it; for example, a 300 sq. ft. garden to hold the runoff from a 1,000 sq. ft. roof. The deeper the garden and the more freely draining the soil, the greater the volume of water a given area will be able to accommodate.

Drainage in our sandy soil is good, so excavate the area about 6 inches deep; then level out the interior and add compost to the soil. Choose both woody and herbaceous plants to provide a changing display of seasonal interest.

Your new garden can be a lovely spot that will help the environment, wildlife, and the water table -- and add beauty and color to your yard.

Fertilize with Epsom Salts

Charlie Nardozi, *Senior Horticulturist at National Gardening.*

After working with home gardeners for more than 10 years, I know that they love to use home remedies on their plants. From setting out beer traps for slugs to hanging bars of soap to repel deer, if the household product seems to work, gardeners try it. That's why I was intrigued by the often-mentioned idea of using Epsom salts as a fertilizer.

Gardeners apply it to tomatoes, peppers, and roses, hoping to produce more flowers, greener plants, and higher yields. You can use it

Fertilize with Epsom Salts – continued

to improve magnesium content if you know you have a soil that's deficient in that element. This natural mineral, discovered in the well water of Epsom, England, has been used for hundreds of years, not only to fertilize plants but to treat a range of human and animal ailments. Chemically, Epsom salts is hydrated magnesium sulfate (about 10 percent magnesium and 13 percent sulfur). Magnesium is critical for seed germination and the production of chlorophyll, fruit, and nuts. Magnesium helps strengthen cell walls and improves plants' uptake of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sulfur.

Sulfur, a key element in plant growth, is critical to production of vitamins, amino acids (therefore protein), and enzymes. It's also the compound that gives vegetables such as broccoli and onions their flavors. Sulfur is seldom deficient in garden soils in North America because acid rain and commonly used animal manures contain sulfur, as do chemical fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate.

The causes and effects of magnesium deficiencies vary. Vegetables such as beans, peas, lettuce, and spinach can grow and produce good yields in soils with low magnesium levels, but plants such as tomatoes, peppers, and roses need high levels of magnesium for optimal growth. However, plants may not show the effects of magnesium deficiency until it's severe. Some common deficiency symptoms are yellowing of the leaves between the veins, leaf curling, stunted growth, and lack of sweetness in the fruit.

Magnesium tends to be lacking in old, weathered soils with low pH. Soils with a pH above 7 and soils high in calcium and potassium also generally have low magnesium levels. Calcium and potassium compete with magnesium for uptake by plant roots, and magnesium often loses. Sometimes, a soil test will show adequate magnesium levels in soil, but a plant grown in

that soil may still be deficient because of that competition.

Epsom salts' advantage is its high solubility. When diluted with water, and especially when applied as a foliar spray, Epsom salts can be taken up quickly by plants. Epsom salts' magnesium content, high solubility, and ease of application as a foliar spray are the main reasons for the positive results many gardeners see in their plants.

Scientists are beginning to test its use. Although many studies confirm that magnesium sulfate is a good way to supply magnesium and sulfur to soils deficient in those elements, little research has been done on the use of Epsom salts as a supplemental fertilizer on soils with adequate levels of these nutrients.

In their studies, researchers applied Epsom salts directly to the soil. Foliar applications appear to be a better way to guarantee that the plants get the benefits of the added magnesium. Before you try Epsom salts, test the soil to determine its magnesium content. Don't rely on Epsom salts to correct large soil magnesium deficiencies, but rather use it as a supplement to soils with adequate or slightly low magnesium levels to boost plant growth, flowering, and fruiting. For severely magnesium-deficient soils, use dolomitic lime or Sul-Po-Mag. Foliar applications of Epsom salts seem work better than adding it dry or mixed with water, directly to the soil. Plants may not efficiently take up magnesium sulfate in granular form.

Roses

Many rosarians agree that Epsom salts-treated plants produce more new canes at the bottom of the plant (bottom breaks) and darker green foliage. Recommendations on how much to use vary, but generally you can apply 1/2 cup of granules in spring before buds first begin to open and 1/2 cup in fall before leaves drop. Apply a foliar spray (1 tablespoon per gallon of water per

Fertilize with Epsom Salts – continued

foot of shrub height) after the leaves open in spring and again at flowering.

Tomato and Peppers

Magnesium deficiency in the soil may be one reason your tomato leaves yellow between the leaf veins late in the season and fruit production slows down. Test your soil every 3 years or so to check on nutrient levels. Epsom salts can keep plants greener and bushier, enhance production of healthier fruit later in the season, and potentially help reduce blossom-end rot in magnesium-deficient soils. Apply 1 tablespoon of granules around each transplant, or spray a solution of 1 tablespoon Epsom salts per gallon of water at transplanting, first flowering, and fruit set.

Epsom salts is available in drug and grocery stores and works best on soils that are...

- Slightly deficient in magnesium
- Alkaline (show high pH)

Lakes Park Reminders

1st Saturday Bird Walks year-round – 8 AM-10 AM. Meet at shelter A7

2nd Saturday Guided Garden Walks - Oct-April 9 AM– 10 AM Meet at Community Garden Sign; end of parking lot #3

Wednesdays Farmers Market runs October through April 9 AM– 1 PM

Tuesdays & Thursdays Volunteer Workdays year-round 8 AM-10 AM

Upcoming Events:

May 5 FFGC District IX Spring meeting via Zoom, 10 AM. Log in from President Ann's upcoming invitation.

May 8, 10 AM: Growing Citrus – a class on how to grow healthy citrus avoiding citrus greening
Cost: members \$10, non-members \$15. No registration required.

May 14 9:30 AM via Zoom: Fort Myers-Lee County Garden Council Installation of Officers – invitation will be emailed by President Ann. Log on to see our members Susan Lawson installed as President, Sylvia Swartz as Second VP, Charlene Anderson as Recording Secretary, and Fran McIntyre as Assistant Treasurer.

Sunday, May 16 1-4 PM - American Hibiscus Society Annual Show and Sale Araba Temple, 2010 Hanson St., Fort Myers, FL

Ford Edison Estates Events:

June 12 10 AM Garden Talk: Pruning Shrubs and Trees - cost: members: \$10; non-members: \$15 Advance registration not required.

Newsletter Online

Our monthly newsletter is always available online – go to our website at

<https://www.gardenclubofcapecoral.com/getinvolved/newsletter/>

The next newsletter will be published in early September – please submit ideas, articles, suggestions to Sylvia Swartz, Editor, tamarqal2@aol.com. Comments/suggestions always welcome.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

