



THE WALTON COUNTY GARDENER

by Walton County Master Gardeners

March 2024

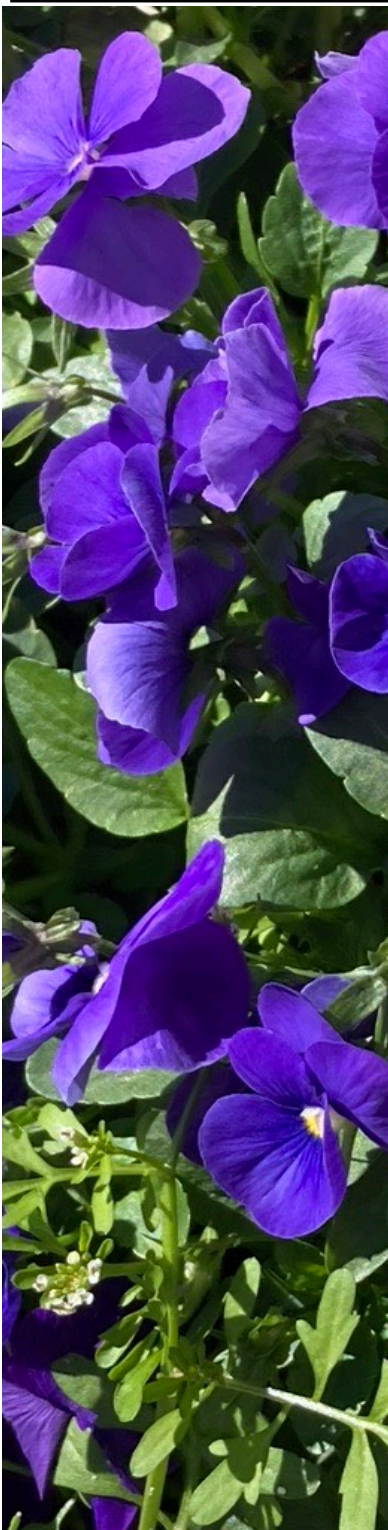
INTRODUCTION

Margaret Zonia Morrison

As you read the attached article, I would like you to keep in mind all the life experience that Master Gardeners bring to the table. Most of us are retired - old, but far from finished - and want this opportunity to give back some of what knowledge those experiences give us. Obviously, in this context the topic is limited to horticulture. However, the willingness to rise in front of a group, make a presentation, help someone find an answer to a gardening question, and be ready to share your MG training with others requires special qualities. In this introduction, I first want to take time to recognize the amazing skill sets that I have seen demonstrated by the Walton County Master Gardeners. There is a great pride for me in belonging to such a group. We must celebrate each other's triumphs and be there to support each other through our friendship when that support is needed. Celebrating triumph is what the following article will be about.



Our very own Andrea Owens Schnapp, current President of the WCMG Volunteer, has shared with us her insights into container gardening with lectures and demonstrations on previous occasions. The most recent of these was the Coastal Branch Open House on March 2, 2024. And, as this article will tell you, her methods, techniques, and eye for color combinations have now received accolades from a much broader audience, after capturing the attention of Norman Winters, a well-known garden writer. Last count of views for the article was 100,000 and counting! A least four national media outlets picked up and reprinted the article. Such an achievement should not go overlooked. So, I am exercising my sometime editorial prerogative to attach the article for all of our readers so that you may also celebrate with us Andrea's achievement. With the permission of Norman Winters, here is the reprinted article for you to read:



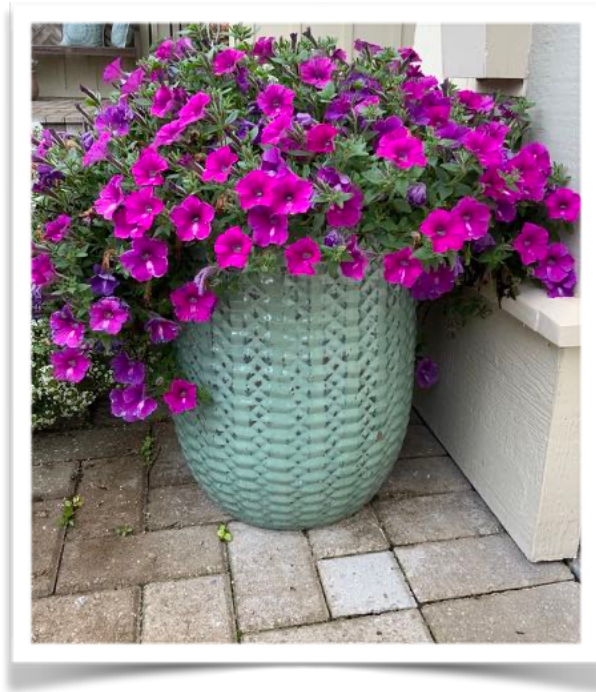
On Gardening: To avoid mixed container stress, go mono-a-mono

Norman Winter, Tribune News Service on Mar 7, 2024



The Garden Guy sees a lot of needless garden stress when it comes to choosing plant partners for your containers. After watching the excitement that Andrea Owens Schnapp created with a shared photo on my Facebook page the answer to this stress may just be to go mono-a-mono.

Obviously, I am taking a gardener approach to mono-a-mono, but Andrea taught us all a couple of lessons. First off many of us had never heard of the plant she shared. I for one am supposed to know these things. She shared with me one of her favorite petunias, Supertunia Raspberry Rush. Wow, where did this come from?



This photo that has reached well over 50,000 likes on my Facebook page should be like a megaphone shout out to both greenhouse growers and retailers alike. This is one beautiful petunia that many of us have not had the opportunity to buy.

One is also a key word as this was the only plant in a dazzling turquoise glazed container. Supertunia Raspberry Rush has won Top Performer Awards all over the place, which makes it hard to understand why so many of us haven't had the opportunity to buy it.

It reaches about 12 inches tall with a 24-inch spread. And one gets the feeling looking at Andrea's photo from Florida, it has the potential of growing even more.

The comments from my Facebook followers showed a love for both the Supertunia and the colorful container. So, one way to look at this is that the container itself served as the colorful companion. The container was also large enough to allow the Supertunia to be all it could be.

As drop-dead gorgeous as this was, Andrea hit it out of the park with another glazed container of similar color but different textural pattern. In this container, monoculture again, was the new Supertunia Persimmon. There is just something about the orange and yellow blossoms up against turquoise.



Though Supertunia Persimmon is still considered very new, it has won a lot of Top Performer Awards and Perfect Score in University of Tennessee trials. Both pictures make you wonder how another plant would have even contributed to the containers. Monoculture can really be a good option when it comes to containers.

Mono-a-mono does have an application when it comes to containers. Andrea, who is a trained horticulturist and now serves as a Master Gardener, chose to group several containers together on her patio. Though each container has only one plant, the cluster looks like a garden when placed together.

The Garden Guy has a lot of containers to maintain and to reach the look that Andrea has, especially in Florida, takes frequent watering and feeding. In Georgia where I garden, I use the best potting soil I can get my hands on, water daily and feed with a water-soluble mix every 2 to 3 weeks. It becomes like a liquid blue jug brigade.

I've got quite a few of last year's Supertunias, Superbells and Superbenas about ready to bloom. This year's plant orders will arrive sometime in April. But these early Supers in bloom will be happening because I cut back last August and trimmed a little coming out of this winter.

I want to give a shout out to Andrea Owens Schnapp in Florida for reminding us not only of the varieties out there, but that monoculture can be a beautiful style.



(Norman Winter, horticulturist, garden speaker and author of "Tough-as-Nails Flowers for the South" and "Captivating Combinations: Color and Style in the Garden." Follow him on Facebook @NormanWinterTheGardenGuy.)

LICHEN

Andrea M. Schnapp, Walton County MG Volunteer



When we first moved to Walton County, I was immediately aware of a beautiful growth of lichen - *everywhere*. I thought it was beautiful with its teal-green and grey-blue colors and wondered at its ability to grow just about anywhere and everywhere. However, my thoughts about it have changed.



BECAUSE IT GROWS EVERYWHERE! Stones,

fences, houses, but most irksome is when it grows in your landscape. Do lichens damage your plants? Some blame lichen for the decline of the plant where it lives. I believe that it is a sign that the plant is declining, but not necessarily the cause.



LICHEN REMOVAL

If lichen bothers you (it does me), it can be removed organically by improving air flow, pruning out overcrowded branches and cutting back overhanging vegetation. Lichen will also grow on dead plant material, so it is important to cut any dead matter from your plant.

Lichen can also be temporarily removed by applying a fungicide with copper like Bonide or by using ammoniated soap of fatty acids, such as Finalsan.

My plan is to improve the growing conditions of my shrubs. My azaleas have a lot of lichen and I plan to rehab them by cutting them back severely, after they have flowered.

No matter how you feel about lichen, I think most will agree they are quite beautiful.



Yellow Spring Wildflowers in Florida

by Molly Jameson, Gardening in the Panhandle



Rudbeckia hirta, commonly known as black-eyed Susan, is a vibrant and hardy wildflower with golden-yellow petals and a dark brown central cone. Photo by Jeff Talbert

Florida's diverse ecosystem showcases a remarkable array of native wildflowers that burst into vibrant colors, particularly during the spring season. Cultivating these indigenous blooms not only enhances the beauty of your lawn but also fosters biodiversity. Florida's spring landscape comes alive with a vibrant tapestry of native wildflowers, each species contributing its unique charm to the natural scenery. Yellow, a color that beckons pollinators, especially bees and butterflies, is a prevalent hue among these wildflowers. Many have evolved to showcase bright yellow tones, attracting pollinators, and ensuring the vital transfer of pollen for the continued existence of the plant species. In this spotlight, we'll explore a selection of my favorite yellow-blooming wildflowers: Leavenworth's tickseed, dune sunflower, and black-eyed Susan.

Leavenworth's Tickseed



Leavenworth's tickseed showcases brilliant yellow flowers with distinct maroon markings, contributing to its charm as a cheerful and attractive wildflower in gardens and meadows. Photo by Jeff Talbert

Coreopsis, Florida's state wildflower, boasts 14 native species flourishing in North Florida. Among these, Leavenworth's tickseed (*Coreopsis leavenworthii*), predominantly found in Florida, graces the Panhandle region with its distinctive yellow, daisy-like flowers adorned with dark centers and scalloped yellow ray florets.

Thriving in open areas, flatwoods, and prairies, this annual or short-lived perennial becomes a beacon of color in the spring landscape. Ideal for wildflower gardens, Leavenworth's tickseed requires adequate space for reseeding, best achieved by planting one to two feet apart in the spring for optimal flowering. The plant quickly establishes itself in moist soils, benefiting from occasional pruning or mowing to encourage a second flush of flowers.

Preferably rooted in sandy, well-drained soil, Leavenworth's tickseed demands full sun exposure for maximum flower production, with moist soils playing a pivotal role in reseeding and maintaining this distinctive species.

Beach Sunflower



Adapting well to both coastal and inland environments, the beach sunflower attracts butterflies and other pollinators with its vibrant blooms. Photo by Nahhan, Adobe Stock.

The beach sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*), also recognized as the dune sunflower, is renowned for its coastal charm and nearly year-round blossoms. Adapting gracefully to both coastal regions and inland landscapes, this sunflower showcases two-inch flowers resembling daisies or sunflowers, boasting yellow petals and brown centers. A captivating trait is its tendency to follow the sun throughout the day.

When cultivating beach sunflowers, it is essential to allocate ample space for their spreading nature. To maximize visual impact, consider planting them in masses, maintaining distances of three to four feet between each plant. As beach sunflowers

may become unruly over time, periodic removal of old stems is advisable. Encouraging new plants to sprout from seeds contributes to a healthier growth pattern. Light trims every three months can further enhance the foliage's vibrancy and overall maintenance. While acting as an annual in freezing temperatures, the beach sunflower generally reseeds itself and displays admirable tolerance to coastal elements, including salt and wind.

For optimal growth conditions, planting in full sun encourages abundant flowering, although the plant can tolerate light shade for part of the day. Preferably, choose well-drained sandy soils, avoiding persistently moist conditions to ensure the overall health and vitality of the beach sunflower.

Black-eyed Susan



Black-eyed Susans are not only visually appealing but also serve as valuable nectar sources for pollinators, attracting butterflies, bees, and other beneficial insects to the garden or natural habitat. Photo Jeff Talbert

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), a classic native bloom, captivates with its widespread availability and versatile nature as an annual, biennial, or perennial. This resilient plant grows to a height of one to two feet, showcasing rough-textured leaves and deep-yellow aster-like flowers with dark brown disk flowers forming a central dome.

When incorporating black-eyed Susans into your landscape, consider their suitability for mixed wildflower beds, where they effortlessly self-seed in open or lightly mulched areas. Maintaining proper spacing of 14 to 18 inches between plants, vigilant monitoring during extended dry periods, and providing deep watering, when necessary, contribute to the overall health and vitality of these iconic blooms.

Thriving in well-drained soils, black-eyed Susan showcases adaptability to various soil types. Whether exposed to full sun or partial shade, the plant optimizes its blooming potential, enhancing the visual appeal of any landscape.

Encourage Wildflowers in Your Landscape

Selecting native wildflowers adapted to your landscape's specific soil, light, and drainage conditions is crucial for success. If initial attempts fail, try different species until you find the perfect match, emphasizing the importance of using the right plant in the right place. Thorough watering aids in establishment, but once native wildflowers are established, they generally require minimal irrigation. Avoid overwatering to prevent fungal and rot issues.

Native wildflowers in Florida typically do not need additional fertilization, as it can lead to rapid growth and increased susceptibility to pests and diseases. Embrace the natural resilience of these plants by avoiding unnecessary fertilization. Encourage the persistence of wildflowers by embracing self-seeding, maintaining open, lightly mulched areas for natural germination, and being vigilant when weeding. Florida's spring blooming wildflowers, including Leavenworth's tickseed, beach sunflower, and black-eyed Susan, contribute to the state's biodiversity. Selecting the right species and providing proper care allows us to cultivate these native blooms and actively participate in conserving Florida's precious ecosystem.

Texas Primrose



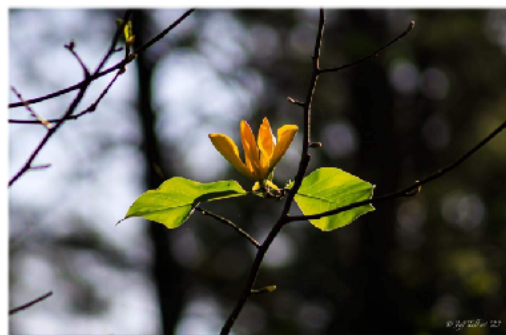
Oaxlis corniculata - Jeff Talbert



Carolina Jessamine - Jeff Talbert



Cucumber magnolia - Jeff Talbert





If you are looking for the perfect, long-blooming, low maintenance container plant, give Gerber Daisies a try. These were planted last May as I couldn't find a good combo for this container. I purchased 4 of these fuchsia Gerber daisies and they have not stopped flowering! Even through our freeze earlier this year, they kept on performing. When buying Gerbers (Gerbera) make sure to buy **garvinea** Gerber Daisies. This guarantees that your plant will not get powdery mildew, the bane of these adorable plants. The leaves are hairless so that the mildew cannot grow. They love full sun and since in a container, water each day in the summer. I fertilized weekly as well in the summer.