



## 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

*I think as you grow older, your Christmas list gets shorter, because the things you want can't be bought - lessonslearnedinlife.com (thanks to Valorie Breen)*

### NEWSLETTER – December 2020

#### Holly Days Gathering Dec. 5



Our Holly Days Gathering will take the place of our December meeting – so **NO Zoom** meeting on Dec. 9!

Why not venture out and give in-person holiday greetings to fellow members at our socially-distanced Holly Days gathering at Rotary Park on Dec. 5, 1 to 3 PM.

It's just a casual get-together that we can easily socially distance and although not like our regular Holiday Party, will be a good way to start off the holiday season. There are lots of fun and games planned - - - - AND prizes!! Covid 19 restrictions certainly put a whole new meaning on a masked ball!

Please respond to Elsa Schutzman and hope to see you there.

#### Correction to new Member Bio

Many apologies to new member **Justeen Oess** for attaching the wrong bio information to her picture in last month's newsletter. Here is the update:



My husband, Matt, and I just moved to Cape Coral in September from the Atlanta area. I am a Life Coach and I love helping women who want to grow their existing business or start a new career. I am also a

retired Architect and have designed custom homes and gardens throughout the southern states. We have three dogs and love being outside, entertaining, boating, and exploring the area!

#### Newsletter Online

Don't forget, our monthly newsletter is always available on line – 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.

#### December Birthdays

Lots of birthdays to celebrate this month:

Ria Benton, Valorie Breen, Deb Clements, Diane Cook Debbie Cooper, Betsy Koscher, Cheryl Shaw, and Tammy Wilson.

Many happy returns of your special day!

## Blue Star Marker Ceremony

Our delayed dedication ceremony went off without a hitch on the 30<sup>th</sup> November, despite some last-minute anxieties due to ill-health of planned participants. There was a small audience of invited guests. Thanks again to all who made this possible. Mayor Joe Coviello accepted the marker on behalf of the City in this, Cape Coral's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year.



*Color Guard and Riflemen from American Legion Post 90*



*Our socially-distanced audience*



*Blue Star Committee proudly stand in front of the Marker  
L-R: Sylvia Swartz, Rosita Aristoff (FFGC Blue and Gold Star Marker Chair), Paula Plum, Chair our Blue Star Committee, Ann Block President, Debbie Cooper, Susan Lawson, Elsa Schutzman*

## Annual Directory Cover Photography Competition

Here's something fun to do – why not enter our annual Photography Competition? This is a great way for gardeners to show off their photos of memorable flowers, gardens, landscapes, etc. The winning photo will be featured on the cover of our next Membership Directory.

### Guidelines:

1. Competition is open to all active members of the GCCC.
2. Photos must be taken during the period **June 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.**
3. Photos must be taken within the state of Florida, preferably our gardening zone (Zone 10b).
4. Photos should include both the scientific (Latin) and the common name of the flower, tree, cactus, etc. This is not a barrier to submission. The Garden Club will research this if this information is unavailable.

There is **no limit** on the number of photos submitted by participants. Email submissions to Nora Hoover no later than March 31, 2021. Photos will be made anonymous to prevent bias. The winner will be announced at the May Garden Club meeting.

### Date Palms and Alternatives (*extract from UFL Extension Service notes*)



The date palm has been cultivated for its delicious fruit and elegant foliage for centuries. In fact, the oldest known seed to successfully sprout came from a date palm in Israel. Nicknamed "Methuselah" for its longevity, this particular date

## Date Palms and Alternatives - continued

palm seed had been buried in the fortress Masada since the famous stronghold's destruction in 70 AD. It was discovered in the 1960s during an excavation of the ruins, in a pile of thousands of date palm seeds. In 2005 a group of Israeli scientists planted three of these seeds and one sprouted. Thus, was finally born Methuselah, the 2,000-year-old date palm!

While this ancient desert species can be cultivated in our humid climate, there are a few things to consider before you purchase such an expensive plant.

Often seen in resorts and other large-scale landscapes, true date palms (*Phoenix dactylifera*, which have tasty fruit) and Canary Island date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*) can grow to be incredibly large. At 50+ feet high, these giants aren't always recommended for home landscapes, as they can dwarf other landscape plants. They also struggle in Florida humidity. But if you're set on adding a date palm to your landscape, don't be deterred. Read on to learn about moderately sized date palms that thrive here in the Sunshine State.



The Pygmy Date Palm (*Phoenix roebelenii*) is ideal for smaller homes and is cold hardy in USDA Hardiness Zone 10A and south. This is one of South Florida's most popular palms. They are widely grown in zone 9 as well, with cold protection or in

containers to move indoors for the winter. True to their name, pygmy date palms only reach a maximum height of about 12 feet. They are single stemmed but often planted in clumps. This gives the look of a multi-trunked palm as the group reaches maturity.

Palms are susceptible to a few nutrient deficiencies, especially magnesium deficiency. Perhaps the most common issue palms battle in Florida is the wet climate. Tropical palms generally come to Florida from dryer native habitats. While the humidity here doesn't faze our own native palms, like the saw palmetto, it can lead to bacterial and fungal disease issues in non-native species.

One disease currently of concern in Florida is a bacterial infection called *lethal bronzing disease (LBD)*. Early symptoms include premature fruit drop, necrotic (blackened) flowers, and leaf discoloration that advances upward. It is spread by a small insect vector called a planthopper. Lethal bronzing disease progresses rapidly and is spreading throughout Florida. We should act quickly to save neighboring palms. If you suspect a palm has LBD, please immediately contact our county extension office, 3410 Palm Beach Blvd, Fort Myers, FL 33916, telephone 239-533-4327. The staff at the Extension office can also answer any other palm questions you may have.

## Time to Make Compost Charlie Nardozi

The leaves have dropped from the few deciduous trees we have here in SW FL, our limited summer vegetable gardens are finished, and Mother Nature is providing an abundance of organic matter for you to make into compost. This is the time to make compost. Making compost is one of those "feel good" fall activities. Gardens receive many benefits from annual additions of compost. Compost helps our sandy soil retain water, makes nutrients more available to plants, and supports soil microbial activity that defends your plants against disease.

Starting a compost pile is as easy as following a cooking recipe. Just get the right ingredients together, mix them well, and let it cook. In a matter of months, you'll have "black gold" to mix into the soil of your flower, herb, and vegetable gardens.

## Time to Make Compost - continued

Compost is decomposed or well-rotted organic material. It can be made from a variety of organic materials, such as vegetable waste, leaves, grass clippings and animal manures. Making compost is very simple. Think of it as making a lasagna. Alternate layers of brown (high in carbon) ingredients and green (high in nitrogen) ingredients -- adding some water between each layer -- until you fill the container. Then let it cook until done.

Brown plant materials, such as leaves, old grass clippings, shredded paper, peat moss, hay, and straw.

Green plant materials, such as fresh grass clippings; vegetable kitchen wastes (including coffee grounds and eggshells); yard waste (weeds, small twigs); disease-free vegetable plants; and cow, horse, or chicken manure. If you are low on green materials, you also can use high-nitrogen organic fertilizers, such as blood meal and cottonseed meal.

Items that should be kept out of compost include meat and bones, large amounts of wood chips or sawdust, pet manure, herbicide-treated grass clippings, perennial and seed-bearing weeds, diseased plants and, of course, anything metallic or plastic.

To get started, find a place for your compost pile that's convenient to your kitchen or garden and has well-drained soil. Locate the pile in the shade so it won't dry out too quickly in our warm climate. Use a black plastic container to help the pile heat up faster.

Although not required, a wire, wood or plastic container keeps your compost pile looking neat and helps prevent animals from scattering food scraps. Lay a sheet of galvanized wire hardware cloth under an open-bottomed compost container to prevent rodents from burrowing into the pile.

You can make a compost bin from materials as simple as heavy-duty wire caging, wooden pallets nailed together, or old lumber formed into three walls with a removable fourth, front wall. Make sure your bin is at least 3 feet square, comes apart or opens easily, and allows plenty of airflow into the pile. Commercial composters -- made from wood, plastic, or metal -- can be more attractive and make composting neater. Compost tumblers are barrel-shaped drums on pedestals. Although they generally don't hold as much organic matter as bin-type containers, they are easy to turn and can make compost more quickly.

Once you have the container built or chosen, it's important to remember a simple composting principle: everything decomposes. It's up to you to decide how quickly you want compost to happen. Even if you made a pile of vegetable debris or leaves and just left it, it would eventually decompose. The beauty of constructing a pile properly and making sure it has the proper amounts of air and water is you can make higher quality compost more quickly.

Here are five simple steps for making compost:

1. **Add a Brown Layer.** Lay a 4- to 6-inch-thick layer of brown material on the bottom. Carbon-rich dried grass, peat moss, straw, shredded leaves, and other brown plant material make a good base for the pile. Shred the materials before adding them to quicken the decomposition process.
2. **Moisten Layer.** Dampen the bottom layer so that it's moist, but not soggy. The moisture will help accelerate the decomposition process by providing the right environment for microbes to break down the material.
3. **Add a Green Layer.** Make a second, 2- to 4-inch-thick layer of nitrogen-rich green materials, such as fresh grass clippings or vegetable kitchen scraps. If you wish, add a compost enhancer or fertilizer to help jump-start the pile.

## Time to Make Compost – continued

4. **Make More Layers.** Alternate layers of brown and green material until the pile is 3 to 5 feet high (or container is full). Moisten each layer before adding the next.
5. **Cover the Bin.** Seal the commercial bin or cover the homemade bin with a lid or tarp to
6. prevent animals from getting inside, keep wind from blowing loose material away, and keep rain from making the pile too wet.

As the material begins to decompose, the center of the pile will heat up. However, the heating doesn't extend throughout the pile. To ensure that all materials break down, you'll need to mix the pile. After the center heats up and then cools down (up to several weeks, depending on the time of year and size and composition of the material), turn the pile. Use a garden fork, composting tool, or shovel to mix the contents, blending the inside and outside materials. Moisten the pile again after mixing. Repeat turning the pile once or twice. The compost is ready to use when it's dark and crumbly -- usually in a month or two. Incorporate a 1- to 2-inch-thick layer of finished compost into vegetable and annual flower beds two weeks before planting. On poor soil, add a 2- to 3-inch-thick layer.

### **About Charlie Nardozzi**

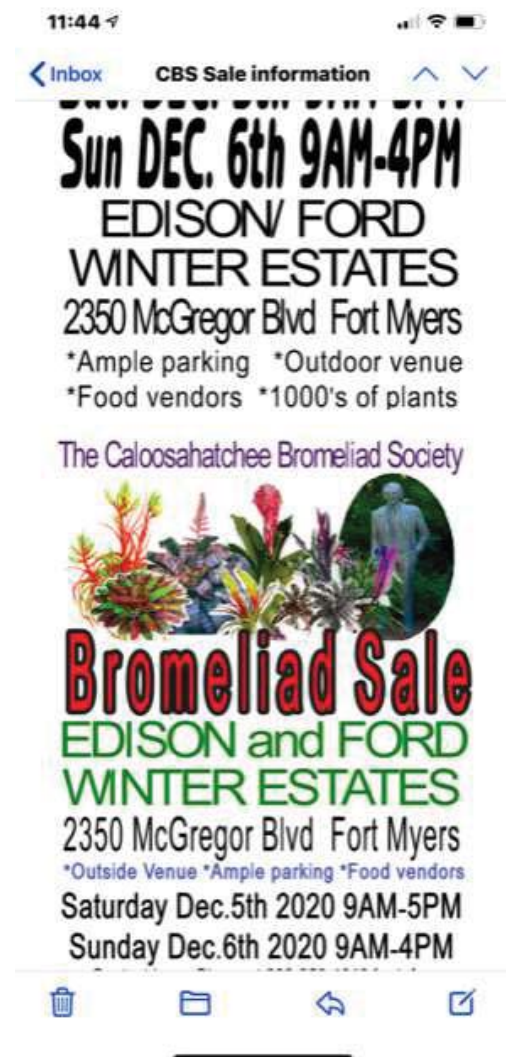
*Charlie Nardozzi is an award winning, nationally recognized garden writer, speaker, radio, and television personality. He leads Garden Tours around the world and consults with organizations and companies about gardening programs.*

## Upcoming Events:

**Dec. 5** Lake Placid Holiday Home Tour, 12 to 4 PM. Tickets \$15. The event will be Covid 19

compliant. If you choose, bring an ornament to add to the "Giving Tree" located at the Holiday Café and it will be donated to a needy family in time for Christmas. Holiday Café, open at 11:30 AM, is at the Women's Club, 10 N. Main Avenue in Lake Placid. Complimentary refreshments and several unique gift items available.

**Dec. 5 and 6** Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society Annual Plant Sale Sat. 9AM-4PM and Sunday 10AM-3PM, under the Banyan Tree at Edison Ford.



---

The next newsletter will be published in early January 2021 – please submit ideas, articles, suggestions to Sylvia Swartz, Editor, at [tamargal2@aol.com](mailto:tamargal2@aol.com) . All suggestions gratefully received!