

Basic Horticulture Letter, Redbud District, GCG, Inc. NGC. Inc.
February 8, 2017

Computers are indispensable! Mine has been indisposed for nine days therefore there has been no Basic Hort....but all is well now and there are some interesting topics to discuss in February.

The New Year always brings countless 'new plants' to use in the garden. Some are exotic with multiple petals, gorgeous color, but don't forget the tried and true which have flourished in our gardens forever! This is mentioned because it is many of these old time favorites which attract pollinators and this is a very important environmental necessity if continued pollination plus food for the butterflies and other 'good bugs'. Multiple tight spaces petals make it difficult for the pollinators to find the nutrition they need.



Some new cultivars that interest me: Proven Winners Supertunia and Superbells have several new and not so new cultivars that are very successful in our climate. Let's talk about vegetables for a change. 'Cherokee Purple' heritage tomato; 'Carolina Wonder' bell peppers are winners. Pike County's very own Bob Westerfield has some excellent vegetable suggestions for us. (Bob is a UGA Extension horticulturist) Some of his tips include partnership planting—for example plant nitrogen-fixing species such as peas, beans, clover and follow the next year with heavy feeders such as corn or leafy greens will benefit from the extra nitrogen. Rotating crops is a necessity—don't plant tomatoes in the same place every year. (Rotate the crops frequently to help avoid disease. Use Google to read information [search: *rotating crops in the vegetable garden*]) Try planting some really simple annual flowers where veggies have always grown. Let the flowers draw pollinators to the garden, allow the soil to rest a bit, and you can enjoy table flowers all summer. There are some vegetable plants that should not be planted together: bulb vegetables (onion etc.) with legumes (beans etc.); solanaceous (tomatoes etc.) with broccoli etc. or okra. Tomatoes should not be planted close to corn—diseases are common. Think about sunshine—don't plant tall plants close to short plants for shade reasons. Don't plant crops together if they attract the same insects or diseases!! If you are a new gardener read a couple or good garden books! I tried to pick some suggestions for you, but the list is too long! Check local library, amazon or google and make your own decision.

Of course as we enter the very early Spring weather with the forsythia, daffodils, and the camellias in bloom right now we must also consider some of the spring chores. Roses need pruning from now until right before they start showing buds. My five rose bushes are pruned. It is too early to put down mulch (mulch will only keep the ground cold and delay growth. This is just about the end of the option to plant bare root specimens or to move and replant dormant plants. We've done some moving of smaller shrubs in my effort to make the garden more easily sustainable and they all are doing well. The wonderful rains we have had here in central Georgia have been a big help to replenish the hydration of the soil. A welcome Christmas present was a really good rain gauge. It is installed and keeping track of rain fall. I do need to start recording it

It is time to clean up all the garden equipment you didn't get done in the fall. The best fun is dreaming over all the seed and plant catalogs—it takes several searches through the catalogs to make



final decisions. I have two perennials on my must have list—*Aster frikoria* or any



perennial late summer fall blooming aster. I lost my bed of asters two years ago by dividing them too late in the season...wonderful hardy perennials. Gaillardias are another favorite — vivid colors, deer won't touch them, and they reseed very nicely.



Succulents are another group of plants to which we should be giving more attention.



There are numerous choices all of which are winter hardy in zone in our climate. (Not all succulents are winter hardy so check this before purchase. They have some challenges but are delightful ground covers, border plants and some are excellent back of the border plants. The deer don't like them and they are drought tolerant! Succulents do require well drained soil. They are good in containers—just all round good plants. More about succulents in March.

*Happy Gardening
Gail, the Happy Gardner*