

Guided Garden Tour on Saturday



Photos by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Shirley poppies, snapdragons

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For more gardening information from the UF-IFAS Extension office, visit their website at <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>

April 18, 2004

Spring was beautiful. There were the flowers of the redbud trees, the loropetalums, the dogwoods, and the azaleas. But, now that the azaleas have finished flowering, there's a gap of color in many gardens until the flowers we plant this spring have a chance to start flowering well. Oftentimes, that's not for another month or so, though.

If your garden is somewhat in that gap right now and isn't full of color, come learn how to change that. On Saturday, April 24, at 10 a.m. , Master Gardeners and I will lead a tour of the demonstration garden on the grounds of the the Leon County Agriculture Center at 615 Paul Russell Road . You will get ideas of how to have color now as well as later in the season. You will also get ideas for decreasing maintenance requirements in your landscape and making your landscape more environmentally friendly.

Much of what you will see on the tour in flower now was planted back in the fall. The pansies are still hanging in there, blooming their heads off. The mixture of pink and burgundy snapdragons, in full glory now, is (if I may say so myself) the prettiest I've seen in town this spring. The snapdragons are flanked by dianthus and petunias.

All of these plants were planted last November. That's one of several lessons we're trying to teach gardeners with this garden tour. Sure, you can buy these plants at the nurseries now, but fall is a better time to plant them so that they will be in full bloom now. I know your next question. The answer is, no, ninety-five percent of the time you won't have to worry about these plants being hurt during by winter cold. They are cool-season annuals. That's why you don't see snapdragons blooming in the summer here.

The snapdragons and other cool-season annuals that you buy in flats or in pots will cost you a little. Flats typically cost from twelve to fifteen dollars, and you may need to buy two flats to plant a small bed. Pots,

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depending on the size, will run about three to six dollars each. So, planting a small bed, though relatively inexpensive, considering how much color you will get, is not cheap.

That's where lesson number two will come in. Many of the other flowers we planted last November were planted from seed, at only a couple of dollars per pack of seed. For example, we seeded poppies, larkspur, bachelor buttons, and sweet peas directly in the ground. We had to keep them watered as they came up. But no protection from the cold was required during the winter. And now they're flowering. The California poppies were the first to start. Then came the bachelor buttons, the sweet peas, and the Shirley poppies. The larkspur are just getting started good.

Your grandmother probably seeded many of these flowers in her garden. It really isn't that difficult, so it shouldn't become a lost art. Just come and see how beautiful they are and, if you have a sunny, well-drained spot in your yard, make plans to do it yourself next fall.

While touring the garden, we will also look at ways to decrease your garden maintenance. We will discuss plants, including perennials, groundcovers, shrubs, and ornamental grasses, that don't require a lot of fertilizer or spraying. We will show you a way to water efficiently. And we will discuss fertilizing, mulching, and other basics.

Come join us. It starts at 10 a.m. on Saturday, April 24, at 615 Paul Russell Road . If you need a map of how to reach us, visit <http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/where.htm>

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