See Extension Garden Saturday

Photos by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Low-maintenance heritage roses and newer landscape plants can be seen Saturday morning at the demonstration garden open house.

Gary Griffin is a Master Gardener volunteer with the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County, http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/ If you have a gardening question, send it to ask-a-mastergardener@leoncountyfl.gov

Thursday, May 6, 2010
Tallahassee Democrat

This Saturday, May 8, from 9 until noon, the Master Gardeners of Leon County invite you to join us in our Demonstration Gardens for our annual celebration of spring. The gardens are located at the UF-IFAS Leon County Extension Center, 615 Paul Russell Road (opposite Jack McLean Park) in Tallahassee.

I don’t know about you, but I feel like the winter we just endured was a pretty rough one by north Florida standards. We endured day after day of sub-freezing low temperatures and many days with highs that often failed to reach the 50’s. On top of that there were plenty of gray skies and rain. I thought I had it rough! But oh how those plants must have been yearning for spring! After all, they had spent three months with their roots buried in cold, wet soil, and it was taking its toll. And as gardeners we sat and wondered what the ramifications of the wintry assault would be on our home landscapes.

Spring, in all its providence, did arrive, and along with it another lesson in the incredible resiliency of nature. The flowering trees were breath-taking, the soon-to-be nesting birds were singing their hearts out, the butterflies arrived, and yes – there was a spring weed or two as well. Florida betony, the “beloved” rattlesnake weed, is every bit as resilient as the azaleas!

At our open house Saturday, you will find six large landscaped garden beds in a variety of environments, abounding in colors and textures, and featuring some plants that are not even seen that often in Tallahassee-area landscapes. Most of the plants have proven themselves by recovering from the wintry onslaught. Some plants are coming back faster than others. But, overall, it’s a good opportunity to see a variety of plants and how they did fare this winter.

A full-color brochure of fifty-four featured plants, which provides growing requirements, time of year to expect blooms, etc., will be available for $5.00. These will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis, so it may be best to arrive during the first hour or two if you want to buy one of the brochures. Master Gardeners will be stationed around the gardens, ready to conduct informal tours of the beds and answer your questions.
In addition, there will be tours of the on-site wildlife habitat that includes bluebird, purple martin, owl, wood duck, and bat houses, and a bee hive. There will be information on creating a butterfly garden using the clearly-marked butterfly host plants in the demonstration beds. You will be able to sign up for a free yard evaluation under the Florida-Friendly landscape program. You can learn about identification and eradication methods for the abundance of invasive plants plaguing our area.

There will be continual demonstrations of the installation and use of a highly efficient and inexpensive micro-irrigation system that reduces watering costs and greatly improves plant growth during our frequent dry periods. And, there will be refreshments and much, much more.

So, please join us this Saturday, May 8 from 9 a.m. until noon for the free Spring Demonstration Garden Open House at 615 Paul Russell Road. Spring has arrived in all its glory and we are anxious to share it with you. But if for some reason you do miss out on all the fun Saturday, you are still welcome to visit the gardens any time throughout the year.

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