

FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS

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Dr. Jamie Gibson, University of Florida, Assistant Professor of Environmental Horticulture, Assistant Coordinator of the Milton Gardens

Mrs. Amy Compton
Pensacola Junior College
Assistant Professor



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Many things have happened since last we met. Our organization is growing and beginning to make a noticeable difference in the garden, on campus and in the community. Please allow me to highlight our activity thus far:

*The March general meeting was informative and entertaining. Those in attendance enjoyed the program given by Dr. Gibson on "Ornamental Vegetables" and many of us took home beautiful containers full of his plant examples. We will continue to offer door prizes and educational opportunities at every meeting. The scholarship tree was re-leaved with \$75. Many thanks to all who donated. For those of you who signed up for a T-shirt or name tag, please understand that I will wait until enough members sign up before ordering so we can keep the cost down.

*A meeting with the Provost of the Milton campus and the PJC CPA yielded beneficial information concerning our application to become a 501 c 3 organization. The name of our organization will be modified slightly, eliminating the word 'Milton' and our address will change to an off-campus PO box.

We will now officially be known as the "Friends of the Gardens". Our charter and by-laws will be amended to reflect the change. Our purpose will become more global to be more inclusive of all of Northwest Florida. These are just procedural changes and will not affect our work at present.

*The tour of 180 third grade students from West Navarre Elementary School was full of energy and just a bit wet. The much-needed rain laid waste to a wonderful program scheduled by Sonya Robinson but the students, teachers and chaperones didn't seem to mind. Great work Sonya and many thanks to those volunteers who helped.

*The University of Florida has graciously agreed to co-sponsor a Landscape Design Study and a Gardening Study Program offered through the National Council of Garden Clubs, Inc. Look for more information and an application on the web site. We hope you will take advantage of this educational opportunity.

*For those of you who remember Dr. Schoellhorn, we

Ornamental Vegetables for Northwest Florida

James L. Gibson, Lindsay Mullinax, and Shannon Crowley
University of Florida-Milton

Landscapes that become battered and worn looking following summer's heat is a gardening reality in Northwest Florida. This leads to a heightened disinterest in gardening at that time, but great anticipation for ways to enjoy the garden in fall and winter. Planting mustards and kales in the landscape is a great way to garden in the cool season. Several mustard cultivars, which have been traditionally used in oriental stir-fry dishes, and kales, which have been used as fodder for cattle, have outstanding foliar and cold hardiness traits that make them ideal "winter annuals". Other leafy vegetables like Swiss chard and lettuce can be used as bedding or container plants. Listed in (Table 1) are specific cultivars with their appropriate botanical classification. Below are cultivar descriptions of ornamental vegetables that were or will be trialed in the Milton Gardens.

'**Red Bor**' is a curly leaf kale that has potential as a pansy companion plant. A tall growth habit and outstanding ability to proliferate in the cold makes 'Red Bor' an excellent performer. 'Red Bor' also "colors up" 2 to 4 weeks earlier than any of the curly ornamental kale cultivars. Planted in a mass or used just as a specimen in the garden, the purplish-red foliage of 'Red Bor' will provide any dormant shrub or perennial garden with vibrant color. 'Winterbor' is very similar to 'Red Bor' in terms of foliage characteristics and cold tolerance, but has olive green leaves.

'**Red Russian**' is a tall growing, cold tolerant kale, which has silvery blue-green colored foliage with wavy leaf margins and reddish-pink colored stems and midribs. An interesting characteristic about this kale cultivar is its late bolting response, which still makes it attractive in early spring when accompanied by flowering bulbs and pansies. 'Red Russian' develops a mild reddish tinge on the foliage when temperatures drop below 45°F.

The kale cultivar '**Lacinato**' or '**Toscano**' or Italian kale is a unique plant with narrow strap-like leaves which possess a bumpy and crumpled texture. The blue-green foliage and white midribs of this tall kale are very attractive in the early winter, but as temperatures drop below 20°F, the outer foliage may develop necrosis due to cold damage.

The '**Giant Red**' mustard or '**Red Giant**' has been one of the most popular ornamental vegetables used by landscapers in the Southeast. This vigorous growing plant has white midribs with bronze foliage. The plant does well in protected areas away from winter winds. As temperatures increase in the spring, the fleshy leaves expand rapidly, making the plant attractive with spring pansies and bulbs. 'Red Giant' grown in mass has a striking display, and when used as a specimen, this sprawling plant represents a focal point in the winter garden. The cultivar Osaka Purple has a similar leaf color to 'Red Giant', but differentiates itself with 1-inch wide midveins and lobed leaf margins. Unfortunately 'Osaka Purple'

bolts early and rapidly in the growing season, but gardeners can pinch the flower stalks from the crown without affecting plant form.

The potherb mustard '**Mizuna**', '**Early Mizuna**' or '**Kyona**' is a finely textured plant with bright green leaves arising from a fleshy tan crown. Potherb mustard's mounded growth habit makes it an excellent plant to be used in masses or as a specimen plant. Early fall is the optimal planting time for potherb mustard due to dieback from freezing temperatures. Three other Japanese greens that have performed well in the winter trials include '**Komatsuna**', '**Misome**', and '**Miike Giant**'.

Flat Pak-Choi or '**Tatsoi**' makes an excellent border plant in pansy displays. 'Tatsoi' may reach 6 to 8 inches in height, and with its flat, dark green foliage, the plant in mass creates a dense mat. Another type of Pac Choi called '**Joi Choi**' has bright white petioles with large fan-like leaves.

The All America Selections winner '**Bright Lights**' Swiss chard is not only a plant ideal for the cool season garden, but it also performs well during the heat of the summer. This widely used cultivar has red, purplish-red, yellow, or white petioles and stems and robust foliage with crumpled leaves. '**Ruby Red**' or Rhubarb chard is very similar to 'Bright Lights' in terms of growth habit, but only expresses red or purplish-red stems.

Table 1. Suggested ornamental vegetable cultivars for Northwest Florida.

The President’s Message continued from Page 1

will be hosting a dinner in his honor following the Tri-state Horticulture Short course on 20 August. Again, check the web site for more information and to sign up.

I am looking forward to seeing each of you at the next general meeting on 10 June. Join us at 6pm for a light dinner. The business meeting will begin at 6:30 and our program will be Emily Peterson, owner of The Garden Gate Nursery, speaking on “Herbs”. We will offer door prizes and another opportunity for you to donate toward the Schoellhorn Scholarship. Please bring a friend and continue to tell others about our organi-

zation and its mission to “grow something new to Northwest Florida”. Thanks for letting me serve you. Sincerely, Tina Tuttle



Pictured below are the students from West Navarre Elementary School listening to Volunteer Leader Ann Jeffcoat. The photograph was taken in the newly planted children’s garden.

Crop	Cultivar	Common Name	Botanical Name
Kale	Red Bor	Red Bor Kale	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
	Red Russian	Ragged Jack	<i>Brassica napus var. pabularia</i>
	Winterbor	Green Kale	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
Mustard	Lacinato/Toscano	Italian Kale	<i>Brassica oleracea</i>
	Red Giant	Red Mustard	<i>Brassica juncea var. rugosa</i>
	Mizuna/Kyona	Potherb Mustard	<i>Brassica rapa var. nipposinica</i>
	Tatsoi	Flat Pak Choi	<i>Brassica rapa var. rosularis</i>
	Southern Giant	Mustard Greens	<i>Brassica juncea</i>
	Osaka Purple	Red Mustard	<i>Brassica juncea</i>
	Misome	Japanese Green	<i>Brassica campestris narinosa</i>
	Miike Giant	Japanese Mustard	<i>Brassica juncea</i>
Pac Choi	Komatsuna	Japanese Mustard	<i>Brassica rapa var. pervidis</i>
	Joi Choi	Spinach	
Pac Choi	Joi Choi	Pac Choi	<i>Brassica rapa</i>
Swiss chard	Bright Lights	Swiss Chard	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>

Seed Sources

CG = The Cook’s Garden, PO Box 535, Londonderry, VT 05148; Ph: (800) 457-9703; Fax: (800) 457-9705

J = Johnny’s Seeds, 1 Foss Hill Rd. RR 1 Box 2580, Albion, ME 04910; Ph: (207) 437-4301; Fax: (800) 437-4290

P = Parks Seed, 1 Parkton Avenue, Greenwood, SC 29647; Ph: (800) 845-3369; Fax: (800) 275-9941

S = Shepherd’s Garden Seeds, 30 Irene St., Torrington, CT, 06790; Ph: (860) 482-3638; Fax: (860) 482-0532



A FACE FROM THE GARDENS

Fifty odd years ago, I met the former Norma Jean Casper, one of five daughters, raised by her father, Ernie, and Step Mother, Gladys. Born in South Bend, Indiana, Norma spent the summers of her formative years on her aunt's and Uncle's farms where she took to her passion of horticulture in an obvious natural way. While cultivating her gardening skills at an early age, Norma an avid reader and student, also found time to be a starting guard on the girls' basketball team. When not racing up and down the hardwood floors, Norma began terracing banks and using her vast imagination on forming unique styles of rock gardens as well as raising tulip beds.

Upon entering college, at Indiana University and Colorado College, Norma's gardening was put on hold as she branched into theater arts including plays and musicals such as: Cabaret, Neil Simon's 6 Rooms Rivue, and later, in her young married life, directed and performed in several minstrel shows and other types of theater productions.

One of Norma's special talents is carving flower beds and landscaping ground out of dense woods and underbrush. Two examples of this are during a 20-year-period of living in Southern Alabama and commuting to Milton, Florida, on the weekends. While attending to her vast yard and fish pond in Repton, Alabama, she found time to clear two full acres of ground and plant various flowers, shrubbery, and stylish

water gardens. Norma's talents are not just confined to horticulture. Her college journalism studies landed her a position as a copywriter and announcer at a large radio station. Later, in collaboration with husband, Ransom James English, they founded the first FM stereo station west of the Mississippi, KLST, 93.5 on your FM dial. After leaving Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the flip side of Norma's journalism skills were on display as a news writer for The Ironwood Daily Globe newspaper. During this busy period, Norma, as always, found time for her gardening passion through her tireless community involvement. In the late 1960's, First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson, launched the American Beautification Project. Along with her duties as President of the P.T.O. organization, Norma headed up the local beautification committee and transformed a rather dreary Main Street into a beautiful and aromatic wonder with many beautiful plants and flowers set in ornate, natural wood boxes. In addition, Norma worked with the contestants in the local preliminary contest for Miss Michigan. After retiring from Vanity Fair as a Credit Manager for 17 years, Norma and husband, Rance, have settled in Milton, Florida. Norma can now devote most of her time to her lifelong love of gardening, both at home and in the community. Norma makes our life a haven of natural

wonder and displays her kind and generous traits in these reflections of nature. Her only fault is her dubious taste in men, (me).

By Ranch English as told to his son, Ric English.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- JUNE 7 BOARD MEETING 1:00 p.m.
FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS
- JUNE 10 GENERAL MEETING 6:00 p.m.
FRIENDS OF THE GARDENS
LITE SUPPER AVAILABLE \$3
SPEAKER-EMILY PETERSON
ON "HERBS" FROM GARDEN
GATE NURSERY
STUDENT ACTIVITY CENTER
- JULY 15 PLANT SALE 6:00 a.m.
by Friends of the Gardens
SANTA ROSA COUNTY
FARM TOUR 6:00 a.m.
- AUGUST
6 & 7 SCHOOL-LANDSCAPE DESIGN
COURSE #1
COST \$55. PLUS TEXTBOOK
SEE FLYERS FOR DETAILS
- AUGUST 20
TRI-STATE SHORT COURSE
"Homeowner Track"
Professors: Dr. Jamie Gibson and
Dr. R.K. Schoellhorn
MASTER GARDENERS \$65
8:30 a.m. -
5:00 p.m.
- AUGUST 20
DINNER IN THE GARDENS
WITH RICK SCHOELLHORN
sponsored by Friends of the Gardens
"The Downwind Garden and Other
Less Savory Plant Selections"
\$25 6:00 p.m.
Phone 983-5216 Ext 113
- SEPTEMBER 30 & OCTOBER 1
SCHOOL—GARDENING STUDY
COST \$55 PLUS TEXTBOOK
COURSE #1 Milton Campus
See flyer for details

This is the end of the second newsletter, Friends of the Gardens. Check us out again on website <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/WFREC/miltongardens>
Phone: 850-983-5216