I asked our Santa Rosa County Master Gardener Volunteers (SRCMGV) what are some of their favorite flowering plants that bloomed in either red, white, or blue. Quite a few articles were sent in with some great tips for growing these plants. We hope you enjoy this special edition of the Gardening Connection and hope that you had a marvelous and safe 4th of July. Rachel Coggins—SRCMGV and newsletter editor

RED Flower Favorites

Coral Honeysuckle
by Suzanne Spencer, SRCMGV

My favorite red flower is the coral honeysuckle, Lonicera sempervirens. If you enjoy attracting wildlife to your yard, this is one of the best Florida natives to plant.

This evergreen, woody vine will produce a flush of scarlet red to reddish-orange, tubular shaped flowers in the spring. It will continue to bloom into the late fall. Hummingbirds and butterflies are attracted to the flowers. The small, bright red berries, produced in the fall are enjoyed by birds.

The leaves have an interesting oval to oblong shape that are dark green with silvery-green undersides. This gentle growing vine grows best on a fence, trellis or arbor in full sun to moderate shade.

AMARYLLIS by Kay Ottley, SRCMGV

Amaryllis are a reliable and hardy perennial for our area of the south. Not only do they put on a spectacular show in the spring, their foliage remains green throughout the summer. Full sun for about 4 hours a day is recommended, however they do well in morning sun with shade in the afternoon.

Plant bulbs so that the top of the bulb is just above the soil surface. They grow best in well-drained, moist, fertile soil. Use a balanced fertilizer after blooming to promote growth and store energy for the next year’s blooms.
White flower favorites

**White Azaleas by Kay Ottley, SRCMGV**

Azaleas of all colors and sizes love Northwest Florida. They grow well in partial shade and full sun. The white azalea below grows out in a field and gets watered only by the rain. It loves the natural soil and performs beautifully every spring.

![White Azalea](image)

**Walking Iris (Neomarica gracilis) by Kay**

This interesting self-propagating plant grows best in moist, well-draining soil in areas with light to full shade. They will grow in NW Florida with protection from the north winds of winter. Winter damage can be pruned in early spring. The blooms eventually bend over to the soil and will root and become a small plant in just a few weeks. Numerous blooms continue to follow over an extended time during spring and summer.

![Walking Iris](image)

**Gardenias by Rachel Coggins, SRCMGV**

The delicate bright white flower of the gardenia will be a highlight in your garden. Planted at the entrance of my garage, where I can smell it often, is my favorite aromatic plant, a *Gardenia jasminoides*, more commonly called a gardenia. When it blooms in the spring, the pleasant aroma of this lovely white flower is unmistakable. The aroma wafts its way out to the passerby and draws you in to further partake of the lovely smell. One can hardly resist picking a flower or two to grace your home and add its pleasant fragrance to small spaces. It is a big hit with the youngest of my friends who want to take something special to their mommies.

Gardenias are an evergreen shrub, meaning they will maintain their waxy deep green leaves through the winter. It needs full to partial sun and space between plants for good air circulation. Gardenias like an acid soil of between 5 and 6.5, and they will like two or three applications of fertilizer a year, typically around March, mid-summer, and September. Amend it with your homemade compost and it will reward you.

Prune now, in the summer after the blooms stop. Cut the leggy stems back to create a nice shape and control the height. Some cultivars can grow as tall as your house. Giving them a cut will refresh the plant and give it a better chance for blooms next year.

There are over 200 species of gardenias. For the name of the best performers for our area and more information on the Gardenia see the University of Florida publication [https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep338](https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep338)
Blue Salvias by Lois Scott, SRCMGV

Some people call them sages but remember the name salvia, and open your world to huge group of plants that are well suited to our northwest Florida climate. They come in various colors but there are many that are blue. My favorite is a great bedding plant called Salvia farinacea 'Victoria' (or mealy cup sage). It comes back every spring and blooms its little heart out growing up to 18-20 inches tall.

Agapanthus by Kay Ottley

Also called the Lily-of-the-Nile, this perennial grows well in our area. It needs full shade to light sun and the leaves are evergreen.

Agapanthus loves moisture, but endures drought. Keep it mulched for best results.

Blue Sky Vine Ellie Mascara, SRMGV

The color blue is often associated with sadness and dejection. We refer to some music that evokes melancholy as “The Blues”. We also use the term “feeling blue” if we are depressed. However, when I see a blue flower called blue sky vine climbing up my pagoda, I can’t help but feel happy. Whenever someone visits my garden they always remark about its powder blue coloring that contrasts so well with its yellow center.

This plant thrives in full sun and moderate amounts of water. It needs the support of a fence or other structure to reach its full potential. If you can meet these criteria, you will be rewarded throughout the spring and summer months with an awesome display of blue sky vine flowers.
Blue Flowering Favorites

The Passion Vine Flower is one of the most beautiful native flowers we have here in North Florida. This gorgeous, exotic-looking purple flower is a showstopper for anyone who comes into my yard. I love it, but the big reasons I love it is because it is the host plant for the Gulf fritillary butterfly. My summer yard is filled with the beautiful orange butterfly that it attracts. It is very easy to grow, but aggressive. I cut mine back periodically to stay ahead of it or it could take over.

By Rachel Coggins, SRCMGV

Hydrangea by Kay Ottley, SRMGV

The large flowers of Hydrangea macrophylla have an old fashion charm that draws the eye. These beautiful shrubs are easy to grow. They prefer dappled sun in the morning and shade in the hot afternoons. Well-drained, moist soil that is rich in organic matter is best. Keeping the bed mulched helps retain moisture in the summer, protects from the cold in winter and adds organic matter. Pruning should be done after the flowers have declined. The pH of the soil determines the color of the flowers. Soil with a low pH (acidic) will produce blue flowers, a higher pH (alkaline) will produce pink ones.

Blue Plumbago by Rachel Coggins, SRCMGV

One of my favorite plants for blue flowers is the plumbago. This easy to care for shrub is covered with beautiful blue flowers from spring till fall in north Florida and can bloom all year long in southern Florida. The plumbago loves the sun and can handle the intense heat that we have here. Water thoroughly when first planted. It’s beautiful on the ground as it spreads out and up and in a planter, it cascades down showing off its brilliant foliage. Pruning will control the size and shape.

It’s not fond of cold weather and could die back in the winter. Don’t give up on it if a freeze kills the branches, the roots can survive. Cut off the dead parts in the spring and it will likely come back. The plumbago is one of my go-to plants when I need something dependable. I think you’ll love it.
Where can I find more information?

The UF/IFAS Extension Solutions for Your Life website and Gardening Solutions website offer online material, including pre-recorded webinars and videos, that can be accessed at your convenience.

https://sf.yl.ifas.ufl.edu/lawn-and-garden/
https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/

In addition, we have our Master Gardener webinar page and our Gardening in the Panhandle web archives full of educational content.

https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/volunteers/education/webinars.html
http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/

For a listing of local offices visit
https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/

Follow us on Facebook for updates
https://www.facebook.com/SRCExtension/ Santa Rosa County Extension FB page:
https://www.facebook.com/GardeningInThePanhandle/

The Santa Rosa County horticulture agent, Mary Salinas can be reached at maryd@santarosa.fl.gov

To contact the editor of this newsletter, write to Rachel at PBHscribe@gmail.com