

Fall, Friends and Farewell

Written by Alice Massey

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Football and hurricanes are taking center stage again; that's how you know it is fall in the Lowcountry. The Friday night lights are ablaze in every small town and the rest of the time all eyes and ears are glued to the weather channel. As I write this we are once again waiting to see where Hurricane Florence is headed.

Do I haul all those plants in containers into the garage or do I gamble and leave them in the garden? If there was a big blow they could become missiles, not a good thing.

I think I'll give it another 24 hours and then decide on toting those heavy potted plants.

A walk around the garden today showed me that the results of our cold winter and late spring are still impacting plants. The buds on my Sasanquas still seem quite small and tight, they should be full and ready to burst into flower. Typically, they bloom from mid- September through early December and some of the first flowers should already be open but there are no hints that blooming might be imminent.

The old-fashioned watermelon pink Crape Myrtle started blooming a full month later than usual and that one is still churning out hot pink flowers. The cold didn't seem to bother the salvias; they are tough, hardy plants. The various gingers were particularly pokey but I gave them a bit of fertilizer as they broke ground – I used a natural fish emulsion – and they have been happy ever since. Their scent fills the garden in the evening. Trees have grown and shaded some of my Curcuma gingers and they did not bloom well this year. They need to be transplanted later this fall into a brighter location.

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The ill named Obedient plant, *Physostegia virginiana*, never blooms until late in the season and it appeared right on time this year. It has lovely pale pink flowers but it does spread, it is not obedient in that aspect at all. It is however, a great native plant for pollinators, which is so important this time of year when they are migrating and need some extra fuel. I got mine years ago from Daniel Payne at Naturescapes Nursery. You can turn the flowers on this plant and they will stay in whatever direction you pointed them, hence the name Obedient.

We have learned recently that gardening improves our mental health and well-being. Through gardening you connect with the soil, the basis of all life, but you also connect with like-minded people and through these friends you expand your knowledge. I have been fortunate to have some fantastic gardening buddies over the years. Laura Lee, Will, Sandra, Joe, Jenny and innumerable others, here and in Columbia, have enriched my life – and my plant collections. They are all terrible enablers.

As gardens mature and change so do the circumstances of our lives. My circumstances are about to change now as my husband and I are about to move out of state. Leaving Beaufort is bittersweet, the gentle flow of the tides here is unmatched as are her people. It is not easy to leave this lovely, very special place but it is time to move closer to family. We won't be too far away and surely I'll be back for a visit or two to the Port Royal Farmer's Market.

A huge thank-you to Margaret and Jeff for allowing me to chat with you through these articles in the *Lowcountry Weekly*. It has meant so much when you came up to me in the grocery store or at Grayco and told me you liked the articles or asked gardening questions.

A friend recently gave me a Rosemary or *Rosmarinus officinalis* plant. The plant's name is derived Ros which is "dew" in Latin and marinus or "sea" thus "dew of the sea", an appropriate plant to remind me of the salt marsh. Rosemary is also a symbol of remembrance. I won't have any problem remembering my Beaufort friends. Thank you all.