

# THE GARDEN TOUR'S COMING!

By Jeff Thompson, RLA, ASLA

For those who haven't heard, the tour of the 'Private Gardens of Historic Orlando Featuring Lake Eola Heights' will soon be upon us! Sunday, April 23, from noon to 5 p.m. to be precise.

The participating gardeners deserve a big thank you in advance for all the hard work yet to come and for generously opening up their gardens to benefit Lake Eola Heights. But just because you're not on the tour, doesn't mean your garden won't be part of the show.

We anticipate as many as 600 attendees to visit our neighborhood this year, with most visiting Garden Central at Amelia and Cathcart and then walking to all of the gardens. So this would be a great opportunity to spruce up your own garden and help the neighborhood put its best face forward!

March is the best month to fertilize in Florida gardens. Milorganite is great for turf; it's a recycled product that won't burn your lawn. For shrubs and trees its best to use something tailored to the specific plant material like an acidic fertilizer for camellias and azaleas or a tropical mix for palms and philodendrons. The tropical mix has a lot of minor elements that are crucial to help these types of plants to perform their best. Liquid fertilizers are great to spray directly on the foliage for a boost of nutrition to get leaves looking their healthiest and promote blooms. Weekly applications the month before the tour will do wonders.

Ironically, Spring is more like Fall in Central Florida when the live oaks drop all their leaves. But make it easy on yourself this year and make your plants

happy. Oak leaves make fantastic mulch and return significant nutrition to the soil. Rather than bagging up the leaves and then schlepping them to the curb where a truck hauls them off, skip all those steps and just rake the leaves into your planting beds. It's much better for the plants and the environment!

Spring is also a great time to add new plants to your garden. The Leu Gardens Plant sale will be held on March 11-12 -- just in time to get something before the garden tour! Some newer introductions worthy of consideration are a beautiful, tropical walking iris called *Neomarica caerulea* 'Reginae' with large purple flowers that should be blooming during the tour. A good native plant that is beneficial to wild life is wild coffee, *Psychotria nervosa*. It is a medium shrub with large glossy leaves, small white flowers and deep red berries. It has the added benefit of being low maintenance and not too fussy about soil types. *Alcantara imperialis* is a beautiful bromeliad. It gets about 3' high with a 3' spread and needs very little maintenance as well. Another option that's a real show stopper is called *Medinilla magnifica*. It is best displayed in a container, but can be planted in the ground as well. This plant lives up to its name and is truly magnificent with its long lasting flowers. It has large pink pendulous blossoms that contrast nicely against bold deep green foliage. All of these plants grow best in the shade of the high oak canopy typical of the neighborhood.

There's plenty of time left to get your garden ready and we hope to see you at the tour!

Happy gardening!

## MORE GARDENS NEEDED!

By Janet Walker

The Garden Committee has been working on the most important task for our 2017 tour -- the selection of gardens. We are very fortunate to be able to offer at least five never-before-seen gardens on this year's tour. But even better, when we approached these gardeners they offered their gardens with enthusiasm that visitors will feel when they enter these beautiful and creative settings!! We also have three returning gardens that will also offer surprises. Yes, that only adds up to eight, so we would like to have several more. Don't feel shy about recommending your own! We still have the rest of the mild (predicted to be) weather of winter to get ready, so let's get started!!

Many Lake Eola Heights garden fans come from all over Central Florida to enjoy our tour. We surely don't want to let them down!

If you have any interest or information, please contact us: Janet Walker at [janet5058@att.net](mailto:janet5058@att.net) or 407.648.5394; Jeff Thompson at [jtla@att.net](mailto:jtla@att.net)

## 'LITTLE FREE LIBRARY'

By Elizabeth Whitley

Did you know you have a 'Little Free Library' in your neighborhood?

My husband Dan and I designed a mosaic house, 'Little Free Library.' I spent almost a year planning and designing. We were thrilled to finally get it out on the fence on September 25, 2015.

This library is visited by many neighbors and even visitors from around the greater Orlando area. I've even seen library activity at 3 in the morning!

The concept is: take a book, return a book, and the activity has been plenty, exciting and so much fun. We've met new neighbors and made new friends. Please come see what's happening at 615 East Livingston Street Library. Take a look and take a book. Enjoy the read and promote reading for all.