2015 GARDEN TOUR: HELP US PUT OUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

By Janet Walker

The Private Gardens of Historic Orlando featuring Historic Lake Eola Heights 2015 Spring Garden Tour is on schedule for Sunday, April 19, from noon to 5 p.m.

Now that the oppressive heat of summer is (hopefully!) behind us, we can start working on our gardens ... not just for our own enjoyment, but perhaps for some of your gardens to be on the 2015 Spring Garden Tour.

The garden tour committee is in the process of "signing up" the gardens for our spring tour. We have some "for sure" gardens and three or four tentative gardens, but we do need some more gardens to fill out the tour. If you think that your garden might be ready for the Spring 2015 Tour or if you know of a neighbor's garden that would be able to participate, please let me know so that I can go check it out!! Also if you are not sure and would like some input or gardening advice, please contact me and I will round up some of my "gardening gurus" to come to your garden and offer some suggestions.

We are still planning on having our wonderful plant vendors to serve our guests. As we get closer to the time of the event, we will be contacting other groups that may want to participate. The garden committee is always working on new ideas!

As in the past, tickets will be available at the Handy Pantry and from garden tour committee members starting about a month before the tour. We are also excited to be offering tickets again through Event Brite. We will keep you posted though lehhna.com and through the Lake Eola Heights Facebook pages. Please try to help the neighborhood by "talking up" the tour and by selling tickets to your friends. This is the most important fundraiser that we have.

Now that we are not roasting in the summer heat, we hope everyone will be able to tidy up their yards so that we can "putting our best foot forward" for all those guests who come to our neighborhood.

Please also be aware that we will have many opportunities for volunteers to help. We would love to have YOUR assistance. This is an excellent opportunity to get involved and especially to meet more of our neighbors. If you have any questions, please call Janet Walker at 407.648.5394 (or email janet5058@att.net). If you do leave a message on my machine, don't forget to include your name and phone number or I won't be able to call you back!

HOLIDAY-SCAPE: NO SHORTAGE OF PLANTS TO CHOOSE

By Jeff Thompson, RLA, ASLA

The Holidays will soon be upon us … and with the rough and rowdy verdure of the summer behind us, we can look forward to lower temperatures and the luxury of time in the garden spent on something other than mowing, edging or pruning!

Plants that fit the theme of the holidays are those with bright displays of red and green. And there is no shortage of plants to choose for Central Florida.

Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) is an old standard that has been in Orlando for generations. Nothing says Christmas like a poinsettia! It will grow outside year-round, but in downtown neighborhoods, outdoor lighting can diminish their bloom cycle to the point where they may not even flower. But a species that has become popular recently is Jamaican Poinsettia (*Euphorbia punicea*). It's a dense shrub, growing up to about 6' with beautiful little red flowers against a backdrop of dark green foliage. It's native to the Caribbean, but will perform well in Orlando. It likes a lot of sun and tolerates drought well.

The camellia is the aristocrat of southern shrubs and has been grown in the south since antebellum days. The susanqua variety known as 'Yule Tide' makes a perfect holiday display. It has bright red petals with a peak bloom in December. The Turk's Cap (Malviviscus arboreus) bloom begins at summer's end but it is absolutely brilliant in the fall. The red flowers, which contrast with the deep green foliage, continue blooming into Christmas, barring a freeze.

Berries are another great source of color for the holidays. Heavenly Bamboo, Nandina domestica, is an accent shrub with bright red berries and delicate green foliage which is often tinged with red. The central Florida native, Yaupon Holly, Ilex vomitoria, has red berries as well and is one of the few Hollies that appear to be resistant to the Witches Broom malady, which will kill most other species of hollies in our area. Beauty Berry, Callicarpa americana, has beautiful purple berries left all the more evident by its deciduous foliage.

Another tropical plant ideal for shade is the Holiday Christmas Heliconia. As far a helconias go, it is fairly cold tolerant. It will do well in Orlando provided it is in a warm micro climate, either under a substantial shade canopy or near some water. It is low growing, only about 30" tall, but has beautiful red and white flower stalks starting in December and lasting though spring. Again the dark green foliage is a perfect foil.

Happy gardening!