

The Year that Was

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At this time every year I like to look back at what challenges or "opportunities" there have been over the past season. Every year I learn something new, whether it is a new plant that pleasantly surprised me, or an unwelcome pest that has come to the area. Added to these challenges was the fact that this was a new job for me this year.

Challenges

One of my first hurdles (as it is for everyone) is to guess how spring is going to unveil itself.



Getting the annuals in by Memorial Day is a given at a golf course, but losing your flowers to a late frost would be devastating. Watching the long range forecast is a daily occurrence so I can coordinate my delivery

with the grower. This year late frost was not my biggest challenge but the very cool nights into the summer were. For me, these conditions were especially detrimental to impatiens. Added to the cold nights was the fact the location where they were planted was among the coldest on the golf course. In fact they never really recovered, but thankfully I had planted companion plants including Browallia and Nicotiana that did wonderfully. Needless to say, impatiens will not be planted at that location next year.

Then came the pest of the year for me - Sawfly. First there was the Pine Sawfly who eat on the last year's growth and devoured the Mugho Pines, then came the Spruce Sawfly who eat on the new growth and have been threatening a large stand of Colorado and Black Hills Spruce at the club. Working with an arborist is a must when you manage a large amount of trees. He gave me the heads up to look for the Pine Sawfly, and assisted me on scouting for and spraying the Spruce Sawfly.

During the height of summer came a chlorotic issue with my hanging baskets and containers. First signs were seen with the calibrachoa, then the snapdragons. It actually started to show itself within the



Limon Talinum

in-ground beds as well. My grower helped me to determine the PH of the well water was exceptionally high and that I was not using the proper fertilizer. Although I couldn't deal with it as well as a greenhouse, the program definitely turned things around. I love using calibrachoa, so I hope to try it again next year, using the correct fertilizer immediately after planting.

Successes

I did have several positive experiences like finding my new favorite container plant this year. Limon Talinum also known as Jewel of Opar has beautiful, long airy panicles of rosy buds and glossy chartreuse leaves. I received numerous compliments by visitors and staff. This plant works well with flowers such as blue wave petunias or purple foliar plants. They took a hit early in the season with some hail we had at the course, but bounced back beautifully.

A fun experience for me was the large number of frogs that visited me this summer. I would find several gray tree frogs basking in the sun inside daylily flowers, or toads relaxing within the in-ground flower beds. I actually had one even visit me in my kitchen at home. Frogs and toads are considered an indicator of a healthy environment, so the abundance this year was a positive sign that I hope will continue in the future.

Well I hope you have learned as much as I have from this past season. Be sure to look closely at your environment and document throughout the season. I document by taking pictures every month and making notes along the way. It helps to see the progress month to month and to give archival history to look back upon. I also rely upon the network of fellow MNLA members that I have met over the years and the continuing education provided by the MNLA.



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