

The Big Island: It's not just lava!



In December, husband Erik and I traveled to Hilo, on the east side of Hawaii's Big Island. Compared to the arid Kona-Kohala coast on the island's west side, Hilo was a revelation of tropical riches. The countryside is lush and gorgeous alpinia (right) and 2 red-crested cardinals (left).



According to lovebigisland.com, on average, downtown Hilo receives 142 inches of rain a year! It rained every night we were there.

We went to Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park and hiked the Kilauea Iki crater trail. We learned about the colonization of the island's volcanic surfaces more than 70 million years ago, resulting in amazing biodiversity today. Unusual plants such as mint-less mints and nettle-less nettles exist there. We saw giant tree ferns (hapu'u), (right), ti (cordyline fruticosa) (below), and bottlebrush-like 'ohi'a lehua trees. **(See Hawaii, next page)**



Ti plant



Erik among the tree ferns

Hawaii, cont'd



The next day we visited a Hilo senior center where members have created beautiful raised beds (left) filled with tropical herbs and mango trees. In downtown Hilo, we shopped at a farmers' market (below, right) for papaya, guava, and delicious apple bananas



Northwest of Hilo in the upcountry, Akaka Falls (right), is surrounded by lush rainforest. Akaka free-falls 442 feet. In Hilo itself, Rainbow Falls is bordered by philodendron and banyan trees.

Next time, we will make time to visit the Hawai'i Tropical Bioreserve & Garden north of Hilo in Papaikou, which hosts rare and endangered flora overlooking beautiful Onomea Bay. (htbg.com) In the meantime, a peek at its social media account (@hawaiitropicalbioreserve) will inspire you to book your own trip.



By Anne Mazur Fay

WINTER/SPRING/SUMMER COLOR FOR YOUR GARDEN

If your gray/brown garden is giving you the winter blahs, add some early color with things you can plant now. They'll give you color now and continue through Spring, and some even through summer.

Violas and Pansies – These are available at nurseries already in bloom and ready to plant. Violas (left) have smaller but more numerous flowers than Pansies but both can add a lot of color as they come in almost every shade. All Pansies are Violas but not all Violas are Pansies. Both can take full late winter and early spring full sun. If planted in a pot they can then be moved to a shadier area when the heat starts to arrive. They will die back from the heat but can come back when it cools off in the fall.



Ranunculus and Anemones - These can be planted from corms but if it is too late to do this they are available at nurseries already in bloom. They come in all the colors of the rainbow plus bi-colors and picotee forms. If planted in the ground, they can come back next year.



As spring warms up plant the following:

Begonias – Besides the old standby bedding begonias, there are quite a few double begonias that are fairly new on the market. Two that are available from Proven Winners are Double Delight and Surefire Begonias. The Double Delight comes in Apple Blossom, Blush Rose and Primrose Yellow. The Surefire comes in red, pink and white.

These can take more sun than most begonias, but in our area, not the hottest afternoon sun. Although these are sold as annuals, mine lived through our mild winter this year. Proven Winner plants are hard to find here, so I ordered mine online.



Angelonia - Also called "summer snapdragon," these prefer full sun, moist rich soil and are non-stop bloomers in the garden, plus they do not need to be deadheaded. Most are about one foot tall and they come in blue, purple, pink, white and bi-color. Planted in drifts, they make a real statement in a garden.

(See Color, next page)

(Color)

Zinnias – these can easily be started from seed or planted out from nursery starts. They are highly attractive to all the pollinators. There are three kinds of blooms -- single, double and semi-double. There is a wide range of colors and heights to choose from. If left in the garden after the blooms fade, they will readily reseed the next year. My favorite last year was Parks Picks Purple from Parks Seeds. I planted the seeds in pots that had early blooming bulbs that had died back. The seeds germinated in a few days and I had flowers within a few weeks.



Dahlias – Easy to start from seed or from tubers, they can be planted in late spring but will not really take off until we get summer heat. The flowers can range in size from small two-inch pompoms to giant “dinner plates” over 16 inches across. They come in almost every color, including pink, red, lavender, purple, white yellow and black. Many are variegated and bi-color with subtle shading. They can grow up to 5 feet and require staking to hold up their spectacular heavy blooms.

By Therese Ruth

NOTES:

Spring Sale at Shepard Garden and Arts

Our club has a booth at this semi-annual sale, this year from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 16 and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. March 17 at 3330 McKinley Blvd., Sacramento. Members are encouraged to donate gardening items such as tools, plants, books, pots, vases and art. Call Ron McCormack at 916-826-2984, if you need items to be picked up. Volunteer are needed to staff the booth for two hours either day. A sign-up sheet will be available at the Feb. 15 meeting.

Garden Tour

The annual River Park Garden Club tour of neighborhood gardens -- “Seven Special Garden Spaces” -- will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 20. We need volunteers to host and guide people through each garden, sell advertising for the program, and tickets on the day. We also should have an official photographer to record the event. Anyone interested? Please call tour chair, Pat Smith at 916-425-3993, with any questions or suggestions.

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