# Horticulture Hints





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LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

## Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

### Roses

Roses are generally pruned around mid- to late August in North Louisiana and in late August or the first week in September in South Louisiana. This pruning is not as severe as the one done in late winter, and it prepares roses for the October/November blooming season. For vigorously upright-growing hybrid teas and grandifloras, this pruning is particularly important to control height and produce a more pleasingly shaped shrub. These types of roses should be pruned back to about 2-3 feet (cut back larger, more vigorous cultivars at the lower level). Remove any dead canes, and thin weak canes the size of a pencil or smaller.

Old garden roses, such as China, Bourbon, Noisette, Tea and others, would likely benefit from a late summer pruning, but it is more optional. Trim these roses as needed to keep them shapely and the desired size. Modern shrub and landscape roses also may be pruned now. Generally, these roses are cut back about one-third their height, but the amount of pruning is generally determined by the situation and desires of the gardener. It is particularly important to cut back any especially long, vigorous shoots that make the shrub look less shapely. Bushes that are pruned to keep them smaller will need more pruning than those that can be allowed to grow to their natural size.

It is also a good idea to fertilize roses at the time they are pruned. Choose a controlled-release fertilizer that will feed the roses over an extended period. Using fertilizers that contain systemic insecticides and fungicides may help control these pests during the fall bloom season.

### It's Still Not Too Late to Plant Colorful Summer Flower Beds

Despite the heat, you can continue to add bedding plants to provide color in your landscape. A great selection of heat-tolerant plants comes in a wide variety of colors and growth habits. Here are some of the best.

Low Growing (less than 2 feet). Choose Mexican heather, ornamental peppers, ornamental sweet potatoes, dwarf angelonia, coleus, impatiens, periwinkle, dwarf cosmos, begonia, dwarf pentas, dwarf globe amaranth, ageratum, salvia Victoria, marigold, portulaca, blue daze, perennial verbena, purslane, dusty miller, rudbeckia, abelmoschus, narrow-leaf zinnia, wishbone flower, dahlberg daisy, caladium, balsam, gerbera daisy, gaillardia, celosia, dwarf lantana, scaevola or dwarf melampodium.

Taller Growing (over 2 feet). Choose butterfly weed, angelonia, shrimp plant, cleome, pentas, melampodium, four o'clock, perilla, cosmos, hardy hibiscus (mallow), sunflower, salvias, lantana, cigar flower or Mexican sunflower (tithonia).

### Guidelines on Using Color

Creating an attractive, colorful look with bedding plants is easier than ever, but it's a good idea to do a little thinking and planning before you go to the nursery, and you will generally be more pleased with the results.

Lots of warm-season bedding plants are added to landscapes in April and May to provide color through the summer months. Now, and through the summer, you can evaluate the colors you chose and where you used them. If the color scheme isn't as great as you thought it would be, it's only there for a season. You can always try something different next time. Here are some basic guidelines for using color in the landscape.

Combine cool colors together (reds with a blue tint, burgundy, rose, pink, magenta, purple, violet, lavender, blue, navy and any variations of those colors) or warm colors together (reds with an orange tint, orange, gold, yellow, rust, peach and any variations on these colors) for reliably harmonious results.

Use color where you want to focus attention, such as at your front door. Never use color to "beautify" an unattractive feature in your landscape such as a trash can area. You will simply make sure everyone notices it.

Generally, reduce the number of colors you use for best results. In other words, use the colors you like in combinations that you like, but don't use every color you like at the same time in the same bed.

It is also important to plant individual colors in masses or groups, especially if the bed will be viewed from a distance (as in a front bed being viewed from the street).

Use pastel colors in area that will be viewed primarily in the evening as they show up better in low light. Pastel colors make a space look larger and more open and tend to create a serene, restful mood. Vibrant, rich colors, on the other hand, energize the landscape and can help make a larger area seem smaller and more intimate.

The large amount of green foliage that appears in the landscape makes it more forgiving of wild color combinations, but it's best not to push it too far.

## Dealing with Snails And Slugs

Snails and slugs can be a major problem in summer gardens. They damage plants by chewing holes in the leaves and flowers of ornamentals, particularly of low-growing plants with tender leaves, like impatiens and hostas. Using commercial baits per label directions is helpful in reducing their population. Baits containing metaldehyde have been a standard and effective treatment for years. Metaldehyde, however, is toxic to dogs and cats and care must be taken when using it. A newer, much less toxic and safer active ingredient is iron phosphate, commonly sold as the brand name Sluggo. This type of bait is safe and no special precautions need to be taken when using it.

Trapping also works if you are persistent. It's a good way to monitor population levels. A trap is easily constructed using a small, disposable bowl and some beer.

## How to Trap Snails and Slugs

In the early evening place several bowls around the garden where snails and slugs have been a problem. Sink the bowls in the soil or mulch up to their rim and fill half full with fresh beer. Snails and slugs are powerfully attracted by the yeasty smell of the beer. They crawl into the bowl and, once the beer washes off the slime from their undersides, cannot crawl out again. Each morning empty the traps noting how many you caught.

Continue to put out traps each evening until very few of the pesky critters show up in the beer. Toads are an excellent ally in this fight and should be welcome in the garden (even if you are squeamish about them).

## Soil Fertility Major Goal of Organic Gardening

Growing vegetables organically is a long-term process that involves a number of practices carried out over the years instead of a single-production practice. The major practice is the improvement and maintenance of soil fertility. Soils and the biological microorganisms in the soil are essential to successful organic gardening.

Many organic gardeners consider the living biotic life of the soil to be crucial, and practices such as adding organic matter by working in a green manure or applying compost to soils is essential. Healthy soils are the key for successful organic vegetable production.

Animal manures are often used in organic gardens and are an excellent source of nutrients and organic matter for garden soils. Different manures range in fertilizer value. It is best for the manure to be partially broken down, aged or composted before being applied to soils to "stabilize" the nitrogen and to decrease the viability of weed seeds that may be in manure. Fresh manure, or manure teas, should not be applied directly to growing plants and should not be applied within three months of harvesting vegetables.

Compost is often used by organic gardeners because is an acceptable source of organic matter and nutrients. It improves soil tilth, which makes the soil easier to work, enhances soil microorganisms that are involved in making nutrients more readily available and improves the soil environment for good root growth.

Compost is easily made by homeowners in their backyards from layering various organic materials such as leaves, grass, kitchen table scraps, etc. in piles, plus adding lime, topsoil, manure, organic fertilizer and water.

Mulch is an important component of successful organic gardening. Mulches help control weeds, prevent erosion and soil compaction, conserve soil moisture and prevent crusting. Different mulch materials are used for gardening. The amount used depends on the material used. It is important to realize that when using mulch materials with a high carbon content such as sawdust, woodchips and bark, their incorporation in the soil can cause problems, since the soil microorganisms can out-compete plants for limited soil nitrogen.

Organic gardeners use natural products and follow practices, such as using disease-resistant cultivars, crop rotation to other plant families, incorporation of organic matter, proper plant spacing, mulches, planting in the correct season, reducing plant stress, rouging (removing) infected plants, organic pesticides, biodiversity, cultivation, use of transplants where possible, habitat for beneficial insects, proper fertilization, sanitation, clean and healthy transplants, intercropping, cover crops, trap crops and environmental modifications, such as row covers and high tunnels or primitive greenhouses.

Organic gardeners use a wide array of practices as well as organic pesticides to manage pests and encourage natural predators by creating habitats and allowing the buildup of predator insects. They also use biological diversity, planting many different crop species and using companion plantings. The last resort for organic gardeners is organic pesticides, although organic insecticides often work well under average conditions.

Organic gardening topics will be covered in detail in future Extension publications.

***Carl Motsenbocker***

## A Gardener's Most Valuable Tool

Since it's too hot now to do much work, take some time now to wander around the yard. It looks aimless, but, in fact, the more you can do it the better. During these walks you can mark gaps and note which plants are doing poorly. You then can make plans and decide which plants might need to be transplanted or replaced this fall. You can see the beginnings of pest and disease attacks, the onset of weed problems, the need for water, the overgrown plants that might need to be pruned back or supported and the faded flowers that need to be removed. If you catch these problems early, you will have a much easier time correcting them, and the plants will be better off as a result.

Most important, I think it gives you a chance to savor and appreciate what your efforts have accomplished. Don't let life's hectic pace keep you from enjoying what you have worked so hard to create. Take the time.

The gardener's most valuable tool, you see, is these moments of undivided attention you give to your garden. And, I think, you will find they benefit you as much as they do the garden.

## Beware the Heat

Working outside in especially hot weather places extra stress on the body. Gardeners working outside may lose up to 2 quarts of water each hour. To prevent dehydration, drink before, during and after working outside. Drink before you're thirsty and drink cold liquids because they are absorbed by the body faster. Drink water. If you choose other liquids, make sure they contain only a small amount of sugar, as it slows down liquid absorption by the body. Avoid beverages containing alcohol and caffeine.

Work in your garden in the early morning or late afternoon when it is cooler and stay in shady areas as much as possible. Follow the shade in your landscape as the sun moves across the sky; leave areas as they become sunny and move into areas as they become more shaded. Since we will tend to work in the cooler early morning and evening hours, don't forget to apply a mosquito repellent. West Nile virus is still a concern.

Wear a hat, loose, comfortable clothing and use sun screen. Also, take frequent breaks and try not to stay outside in the heat for extended periods.

## Prepare Trees for Hurricane Season

Well before the possibility of a hurricane, evaluate shade trees to make sure they are in good shape. Trees that have large dead branches or are totally dead should be dealt with as soon as possible. Dead branches should be pruned off and dead trees removed entirely.

Look at the overall condition of your trees. A tree that is sickly, low in vigor and shows significant signs of rotten or decayed areas in the trunk may need to be removed if it poses a threat to buildings. Trees whose trunks have large cavities with extensive decay should be considered for removal because rot weakens the trunk.

Trees that are one sided or lean significantly may need attention. Selective pruning can relieve the weight on the heavier side, balancing out the weight distribution of the canopy. After the prolonged rain associated with hurricanes, the soil may be so soft that trees topple over if the weight is not proportioned properly.

Selective thinning of the canopy can reduce the wind resistance of the tree. This can lessen the chances of its being blown over or of branches breaking. The idea is to preserve the natural shape of the tree, but to thin out branches to reduce the weight and allow for better wind movement through the tree.

Also, look for branches that hang over the house near the roof. Although the branches may not touch the roof under normal conditions, the high winds of hurricanes can cause trees to bend and branches to flail around considerably. These branches can cause extensive damage to the roof and generally should be removed.

## ✓ Checklist for Summer

1. Control thrips, aphids, cucumber beetles and spider mites on roses by using a recommended insecticide or miticide. Also continue blackspot control by using a recommended fungicide at seven- to 10-day intervals.
2. When irrigating, water the soil area thoroughly. Try to irrigate less often, but irrigate well each time. Light, overhead sprinkling is not the best way to water.
3. Continue to plant warm-season bedding plants. These include coleus, celosia (cockscomb), periwinkle (vinca), blue daze, scaevola, zinnias, melampodium, portulaca and begonias. Lantanas can still be planted. They thrive in Louisiana's hot summers. Try lantanas in containers, too
4. Dig and store gladiolus corms in a well-ventilated, freeze-proof place for planting next spring. Also, remove old foliage on caladiums.
5. Plant sunflowers in late summer for fall flower arrangements. Flower colors include yellow, orange, red, bronze, white and combinations of these. It usually requires about 60-80 days from sowing seed until first flower color.
6. Prune azaleas no later than mid-July. Pruning azaleas after early to midsummer may remove next season's developing flower buds. This applies to most spring-flowering shrubs as well as hydrangeas and gardenias.
7. In early summer, gardenias may have aphids, whiteflies and the associated black sooty mold. For optimum plant performance, control the insects with Orthene or a summer horticultural oil spray.
8. Camellias and azaleas need care to set a good crop of flower buds for next year. Healthy, vigorous plants will set buds, but weak plants may not. If plants lack vigor, fertilize, provide moisture during stressful periods and control pests. Remember that these acid-loving plants need a pH of 5.5. Submit a soil sample to your county agent's office if you are unsure of your soil situation.
9. Louisiana irises are semi-dormant in the late summer. Prune off seedpods and yellow or brown foliage to help keep the plants more attractive. You may transplant or divide Louisiana irises beginning in August.
10. Cut faded flowers from flowering annuals and perennials to encourage new growth and flowers. Old blooms and seed heads left on the plants can retard continued flower production. Finish any pruning you may need to do to shrubs in the landscape, particularly those that bloom in winter or spring. Pruning later (after June) may interfere with flowering.

***Allen Owings and Dan Gill***

# Fruits and Nuts

## Apples

Louisiana is generally not considered an apple producing state since most of the major commercial apple varieties are poorly adapted to Louisiana growing conditions. The development of apple varieties with low chill requirements has opened more areas of Louisiana to apple production.

Dorsett Golden and Anna are two low-chill apples that will produce in south Louisiana. Fruit will ripen mid-June to early July. Dorsett Golden is yellow with slight pinkish blush. The flavor is sweet. It is self fruitful. Anna is green with approximately 30%-40% red blush. The flavor is mild and is sweet to semi-acid. Anna requires a pollinator variety. Dorsett Golden is a good pollinator for Anna.

Red apples in Louisiana do not produce the bright red on the fruit that are seen in grocery stores. Apples require bright, sunny days and cool nights to become bright red. Louisiana does not have these conditions during the summer.

Apples ripen late June to mid-July in South Louisiana and mid-July to late September in North Louisiana. The question, "When is an apple ready to harvest?" has no sure answer for all varieties. An apple is generally ripe when the ground color of an apple's skin changes from leaf green to yellowish green. The ground color may be more golden in yellow varieties. The ground color is the color of the apple's skin without any red.

Do not harvest apples that do not have dark seeds. The shell of the apple seed turns dark as the apple ripens. This is a good ripening indicator, although seeds may turn brown several weeks prior to fruit ripening. Apples will improve after harvest if the fruit is mature when harvested. Apples will not sweeten properly if picked too green.

There is always the taste test if all else fails. If an apple has an astringent taste and is puckering, it is too green.

## Blackberries

Blackberry canes live for two years. The new shoots are primocanes. They grow through the first season and produce no fruit. Prune primocanes at 36 inches high early in the growing season to encourage branching on erect blackberries. The next year, the second-year canes (floricanes) flower, produce fruit and die. Old floricanes should be removed and burned immediately after fruiting. This will help control insects and diseases.

Rosette, or double blossom, is caused by the fungus Cercosporella rubi. It is a serious disease of erect and trailing blackberries. Some thornless varieties such as Arapaho, Navaho, Ouachita and Apache seem to have good resistance to rosette.

Buds on new canes are infected in the early summer, but no symptoms develop until the next spring. Numerous leafy sprouts (witches' brooms) appear from infected buds in the early spring. These shoots are stunted, pale green and later become bronze. Flowers are pink, and the petals are twisted.

Kill wild blackberries in the area. They frequently carry the disease. Rosette can often be effectively controlled by removing the bunchy witches' broom portion of the plants in the spring before they bloom. Where blackberries are severely infested with rosette disease, mow both old and new cane growth near the ground immediately after harvest. Fertilize with two to three tablespoons of ammonium nitrate per plant. Adequate water and fertilizer will ensure ample regrowth of canes needed for fruiting next year. This practice of removing all top growth does reduce yield the next year.

## Figs

Figs should be fertilized only in early spring. Summer fertilization can cause excessive vegetative growth and reduce fig production as well as cause late-season growth that will be sensitive to winter damage.

Fig trees sometimes drop their fruit because of drought stress during hot, dry weather. Periodically apply water slowly over the root system of figs, and allow it to trickle for several hours during periods of dry weather. Heavy organic mulch will reduce drought stress.

## Peaches

Eating fresh tree ripe peaches is one of the joys of summer. Although each peach variety produces ripe fruit for one to two weeks, a careful selection of peach varieties can yield ripe fruit most of the summer.

The most reliable indicator of peach ripeness is the change in under color (ground color) of the fruit. The change from dark green to yellow indicates the fruit is firm ripe. This color is most apparent at the stem end. The amount of yellow ground color varies slightly among peach varieties. A red blush often develops over the green ground color before ripening.

The firm ripe stage of maturity is the stage at which most commercial growers harvest fruit. This stage allows the growers to pack and ship fruit without bruising and to store peaches a short time without loss of quality.

Peaches left on the tree until the soft ripe stage of maturity (usually one to two days after firm ripe) will be sweeter and slightly larger. Unfortunately, peaches in the soft ripe stage cannot be shipped and handled without bruising. They must be used quickly.

# Turfgrass and Lawns

Turfgrasses need to make good growth during this time. If they don't make it now, don't push them in the fall so they will store carbohydrates for the winter. Keep up a good fertility program through August only, then slow down. Water deeply only once or twice a week as needed.

Watch for chinch bugs in St. Augustine and Bermuda grass. There's still time to dethatch through July if it's needed. Water and fertilize after dethatching.

Centipede should receive its second and last fertilizing in late July or August. It needs the most moisture of all the turf grasses. On centipede, apply only ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. as a complete turf fertilizer or 17-0-17. Other types of grass can use about twice this rate. A slow-release turf blend fertilizer is best and worth the extra cost. Carpetgrass only needs one fertilizing in spring.

If your last fertilizing is in early September rather than August, add some potash with or shortly after only a light (¼-pound) nitrogen application. You will need about 1 pound of potash equivalent per 1,000 sq. ft. You can apply this as 1 ½ pounds muriate of potash. Apply all granular materials on a dry lawn, and water in. A winterizer fertilizer should be low in nitrogen and high in potassium, or just use 0-0-60 (muriate of potash). Don't just go by the name 'winterizer,' because it may be a northern type of fertilizer or fescue blend.

Except for Bermuda or zoysia lawns, postemergence weed control should not be attempted any more until the grasses are near dormant (winter) or in the mid-spring growth season. High temperatures can cause excessive herbicide damage on permanent grasses, even if they are listed on the herbicide label as tolerant. On Bermuda and zoysia, try MSMA, DSMA, 2-4, D three-way or Image herbicides now before mid September. Delay this if very hot and dry.

Make the most of your water by irrigating in the early morning, if at all possible. This limits the duration of leaf surface moisture - a contributor to disease development. It also assures a better distribution of the irrigation water, since wind likely will be low to nonexistent, and it reduces losses because of evaporation. Municipal water pressure is usually best in the morning. When you do irrigate, water so that the root zone is moistened to several inches. Light daily irrigations will cause roots to accumulate only in the top inch of soil. Heavier clay soils hold and require more water than do sandy loams; they should be watered longer, but less frequently. They usually require watering in 'cycles'. A cycle is ended when surface water begins to run off into the street. Wait a while and water again. Check with a shovel how far down the moisture has penetrated and continue these cycles until the moist zone is at least 3 to 4 inches deep. Make a note of this and then move the sprinkler. Go back to the well watered area and push a screw driver into the soil several inches. Note the force needed. As the soil dries, it gets harder to push through. The amount of resistance to penetration can give you and idea of how dry the soil has become and can help you to schedule the next irrigation event.

As we ride out these weather conditions, you should keep in mind that many standard cultural and chemical practices must be altered because of the stress the grass is under. Pesticides should be applied only with assurances that the desirable turf can withstand the treatment. If the pests and weeds are not active, there is no reason to apply the pesticide in the first place. Chinchbugs are often more active in hot, dry conditions; most weeds and diseases are not.

The same concepts apply for fertilization at this time of year. If you have ample irrigation, your warm-season grasses will continue to respond to nitrogen. However, there is no point in fertilizing grasses under moisture stress that cannot be irrigated sufficiently to support active growth. Under these conditions, the plant is basically inactive, the fertilizer is unavailable since water is the carrier of the nutrient, and about the only thing you are doing is increasing the salt content of the soil.

***Thomas J. Koske***

# Semi-dwarf Crape Myrtles for Louisiana Landscapes

Crape myrtles are one of the most widely used summer flowering trees in Louisiana landscapes. June, July and August is the time that crape myrtles are outstanding performers.

Many of us are not familiar with the tremendous array of varieties available. Many sizes are available also. One group of crape myrtles being used more because of their smaller size and excellent flowering performance are semi-dwarf varieties.

Semi-dwarf varieties of crape myrtles normally have slower initial growth rates than medium and large growing varieties. These plants reach heights of 10-12 feet in the landscape and fit better into today's smaller residential lots. Some recommended semi-dwarf crape myrtles include Acoma, Tonto and Sioux. All of these are hybrids and were released from the USDA National Arboretum's ornamental plant breeding program.

Acoma is a beautifully shaped variety. The canopy matures to a weeping, umbrella shape on a 12-foot tall tree. White flowers appear in South Louisiana starting in early June and continue for 70-80 days. In LSU AgCenter studies, powdery mildew, a major disease in crape myrtles, has not been significant. The bark of Acoma crape myrtles exfoliates after five to seven years.

Tonto is a nice semi-dwarf, red flowering crape myrtle. Plants reach 10-12 feet tall in the landscape, although some people have reported plants reaching heights of 14-15 feet. This variety is more upright growing than Acoma. Disease resistance also is good for this variety.

Sioux produces hot pink flowers and is probably slower growing than Acoma or Tonto. It is similar in growth habit to Tonto and has good resistance to leaf spot and powdery mildew.

***Allen Owings***

# Vegetable Gardening

## Vegetables to Plant in June...

Transplant heat-set tomatoes for fruit production in August through October. Plant collards, cucumbers, melons, cantaloupes, okra, southern peas, pumpkins and summer squash. Transplant eggplants, all the peppers and sweet potato slips. Start seed of fall tomatoes and bell peppers. Good pest control practices are necessary because of the high pressure of insects and diseases now.

## ...and in July

Transplant tomatoes and bell peppers in mid-July for fall production. Also, plant okra, southern peas, cucumbers, squash, cantaloupes, pumpkins and watermelons.

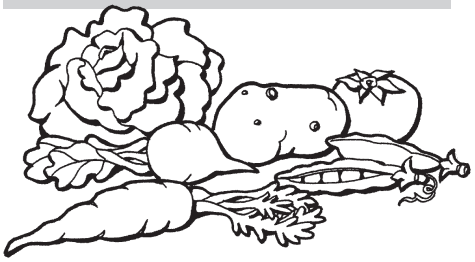
Mid- to late July. Seed broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, cabbage, collards, winter squash, transplant bell peppers and tomatoes.

## ...and in August

This very hot time may experience damaging droughts. Start bush snap beans and bush limas. Plant seed for cucumber, collards, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, summer squash, southern peas, mustard and green shallot sets.

Mid-August. North Louisiana can plant Irish potatoes, start seed for head lettuce and beets. Transplant broccoli and brussels sprouts.

Late August. South Louisiana can now do the above (mid-August).



## Crop Highlights

**Broccoli and Cauliflower.** Both can be direct seeded beginning in mid-July through September or transplanted from early August through early September. It takes four to six weeks to produce transplants from seed. In general, broccoli and cauliflower will require 5 to 6 pounds (pints) of a complete fertilizer such as 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row.

These crops, especially cauliflower, require fast, continuous growth for proper head development. Keep them well watered and fertilized. Sidedress plants with ¾ pound (1 ½ cups) of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row three to four weeks after transplanting and again in 14 days.

Varieties that will produce in about 60 days from transplanting reduce the chance of cold weather damage. Recommended varieties are:

| Broccoli | Cauliflower |
|---|---|
| Premium Crop | Snow Crown |
| Green Cornet | Majestic |
| Packman | Candid Charm |
| Arcadia | Incline |
| Patriot | Cumberland |
| | Wentworth |

**Snap Beans.** Late August through early September is the best time to plant. Normally 50-55 days are required from planting until harvest. Don't let beans suffer from drought. Choose Provider, Bluelake 274, Roma II, Derby, Top Crop, Royal Burgundy, Green Crop, Strike or Gator Green. For a yellow wax bean, choose Golden Wax. Bush beans usually will produce more successfully than pole beans in the fall because of their earlier maturity.

**Butter Beans.** This crop is harder to produce in the fall than are snap beans. Plant early enough to produce before frost and late enough so they're not blooming while temperatures are too high for fruit set. Plant early August through about mid-August. Plant bush beans for fall production (Henderson, Thorogreen, Jackson Wonder, Cangreen, Dixie Butterpea).

**Irish Potatoes.** Plant small whole potatoes saved from the spring crop from about mid-August to early September. Good soil moisture is essential. The seed potatoes may not sprout readily after planting because of a physiological rest period of about 90 days that they have to go through after harvesting in the spring. After this rest period is satisfied, the tubers should sprout. Fall yields are lower than spring yields. Use seed potatoes for seed pieces.

**Cabbage.** Plant seed beginning in mid-July, and seed through September. You also may transplant beginning in early August through mid-October. Fertilize the same as broccoli and cauliflower. Space cabbage, cauliflower and Chinese cabbage about 12-14 inches apart and broccoli 6-12 inches apart. Double drills (two drills of plants spaced 10-12 inches apart on single row) will help maximize yield. Try Rio Verde for late plantings. Recommended early maturity varieties include Green Boy, Stonehead (AAS), Dynamo (AAS) and Pacifica. Maturing a little later are Rio Verde, Solid Blue 780 Blue Vantage, Blue Thunder, Cheers, Gourmet, Vantage Point Lynx, Savoy Ace (AAS), and Savoy King (AAS).

**Squash and Cucumbers.** These two crops can be planted in June, July and August. Summer plantings will normally be ready to begin harvesting after about six weeks. Yields are usually lower than spring plantings. A fall crop of yellow summer squash, zucchini and cucumbers can be grown by planting seed in August. Squash vine borers may be a more severe problem in fall than in spring, so be prepared to control them with an insecticide. Viruses are a problem in the fall, so spray regularly to control insects that transmit them.

**Pumpkins.** Pumpkins for Halloween should be planted in early to mid-July. Apply 3-5 pounds of a complete fertilizer for each 100 feet of row before planting. Plant five to six seed in hills about 4-5 feet apart on rows 6-8 feet apart. Thin to one or two plants per hill. Apply a sidedressing of 1 pound (1 pint) of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Keep soil moist for best production.

Howden is an excellent variety to grow for Halloween. It has an attractive, deep orange skin. The Connecticut Field is popular. Recommended varieties of giant pumpkins are Big Moon, Atlantic Giant and Prize Winner. The medium-size varieties that have done well in research trials are Spirit, Jumpin Jack, Big Autumn, Gold Rush, Autumn Gold, Small Sugar and Spookie. Frosty and Aspen produce a dwarf vine that should be tried in home gardens. Many ornamental pumpkins like Wee B-Little, Jack-Be-Little, Baby Bear and Baby Boo can be planted.

**Greens.** Begin planting greens, mustards, turnips and collards during August. Keep the soil moist to ensure a good stand. Try some of the white turnips, like White Lady and Tokyo Cross, for roots and Seven Top and Shogoin for greens. Also good are Just Right, Royal Globe and Purple Top WG.

**Shallots.** Dry sets of shallots can be planted from August to April. About 50 to 60 days from planting, tops will be ready to harvest.

**Fall Bell Peppers.** If plants from the spring are still in good condition, they can be nursed (sprayed or dusted and watered) throughout summer. They will set fruit again as the temperatures become more favorable. If seeds of bell peppers haven't been planted by early July, buy transplants.

**Fall Tomatoes.** Transplant fall tomatoes in July to early August. Be prepared to spray with insecticides and fungicides; insect and disease pressure is usually worse in the fall than in the spring. The heat-set varieties that have produced well in recent trials are Sun Leaper, Florida 91, Sun Master, Sun Chaser, Solar Set and Heat Wave II. These varieties have the ability to set some fruit in high temperatures, allowing the fruit to mature before cool weather. Row covers to protect the plants from the first frost have prolonged the harvest period, and they enhance fruit maturity. Also worth trying in fall are Bingo, Summer Flavor 5000, Spitfire and Mountain Pride (late), Mountain Delight (late) or cherry tomatoes.

Since fall tomatoes are such an unsure crop, it's interesting to try several early varieties. There is such variation in climate and soils that certain varieties may produce better in some parts of the state than others. Start early, and get a strong bush.

**Lettuce.** Head lettuce can be grown in Louisiana in late August. A common mistake is planting the seed too deeply. Lettuce seed require light for germination, so scatter the seed on the row and lightly rake into the soil. Plant leaf lettuce in September. Keep the soil moist until the seed have germinated and are well established. Head types are tougher to grow. Keep lettuce growing actively to keep it from becoming bitter.

Recommended varieties of lettuce are: head lettuce – Ithaca, Mavrick, Great Lakes 659, Imperial 847, Minerro, Lake Superior; leaf lettuce – Sierra, Red Sails, Salad Bowl, Simpson, Nevada; romaine lettuce – Parris Island, Tall Guzmaine and Green Towers; butterhead or bibb lettuce – Buttercrunch, Oak Leaf, Butterhead, Everglades, Florida Buttercrisp, Florida 202; batavia types (leaf lettuce with a unique flavor) – Nevada, Sierra.

***Thomas Koske and James Boudreaux***

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LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

**Department of Horticulture**
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# Horticulture Hints

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**Parish agents, please adapt these suggestions to your area before disseminating.**

Thomas J. Koske

**Tom Koske, Horticulture Specialist**