Horticulture Hints

for CENTRAL Louisiana — Fall 2020

Upcoming Events:

If you missed our 2020 Summer Dean Lee Virtual Field Tour, check out our videos at https://bit.ly/DeanLeeYouTube.

We invite you to visit our new Central Region Horticulture page on the Dean Lee website. Information posted includes information on home horticulture, commercial horticulture and pecans. www.lsuagcenter.com/centralregionhorticulture

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Greetings and Welcome to the Fall 2020 Edition of the Central Region Horticulture Hints!

The fall months provide a reprieve from the summer temperatures and new opportunities in the garden. Fall is an ideal time to plant cool-season annuals along with perennial flowering plants, shrubs and trees.

In the garden, one of the chores to complete between now and late winter is to dig, divide and transplant flowering perennials, such as daylilies, rudbeckia, coreopsis, yarrow and many others. Referred to as coneflowers and black-eyed Susans, Rudbeckia is a plant genus in the Asteraceae family. Native to North America, these plants are cultivated for their showy yellow or gold flower heads in bloom in mid-to-late summer and on into fall. One of my favorites in our native demonstration garden is *Rudbeckia texana*, or Texas coneflower. I'm particularly fond of the plant's tolerance to high heat and humidity levels, as the plants thrive in full sun and can tolerate dry soils. While rudbeckia has a low moisture requirement, be sure to supplement water needs if rainfall amounts are insufficient. The plant can grow to between 3 and 6 feet tall and about 2 to 3 feet wide. The flowers are composed of yellow elliptic or lanceolate petals surrounding a "cone" that produces seeds, a favorite of small songbirds. Blooming for approximately seven months and present between May and November, rudbeckia flowers contribute to seasonal interest well into the fall.

We hope you enjoy these fall months! If you have any gardening-related questions, please contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office.

Dr. Sara Shields
Louisiana Master Gardener State Coordinator
Central Region Horticulture Coordinator

Rudbeckia flowers grow in the Native Plant Demonstration Garden. Photo by Mark Carriere

Proper Planning Provides Tree Planting Success

Are you a property owner who is considering planting a tree or perhaps many trees on your property? If so, fall is a perfect time to do so; however, you have some important decisions to make to ensure your tree planting efforts will be a long-term success. Remember, planting a tree is a long-term investment that will provide benefits for years to come.

One of the two primary considerations of any successful tree planting effort is to understand or determine the true reason for the planting. This may sound elementary, but this decision is critical for the tree planting process. After all, why go through the time, effort, and expense of a proper tree planting effort if what is planted is incapable of meeting your original goals? Some common goals for planting trees include shade production, aesthetic value, wildlife habitat, timber production, food production, erosion control, personal health, clean air, clean water, privacy and noise reduction. Often, at this juncture, people have already identified a specific tree or a few different types of trees they would prefer to plant based on their identified goals.

However, an irrevocable mistake in planting efforts can occur if you fail to consider the other primary consideration in the selection process, which is to assess the area where you anticipate that the trees will be planted. A proper assessment of the area evaluates four primary factors to determine suitability of a species for planting. Think of these factors as the "4 S's of Tree Planting." The first "S" is for site and includes aspects such as topography, water availability, drainage, sun exposure and climate zone. Site also refers to the planned physical location for the newly planted tree. When planning to add new trees in the landscape, it is recommended homeowners avoid planting large trees under utility lines or close to ground transformers. Also, take the tree's mature size into consideration when planting near buildings or pavement. When planted too close to buildings and hardscapes, such as drives, walkways, and decks, limbs can damage siding, roofing materials, and foundations. Lastly, consider the planting location to minimize blocking windows or desirable views and encroaching on your neighbor if planted too closely to the property line.

The second "S" is for soils and includes soil properties such as soil texture, soil pH and soil fertility. The third "S," space, includes available above ground and below ground space, both horizontal and vertical space, and future space requirements for the home and the tree. The fourth "S" is for species and includes selecting the proper species that will accomplish the landowner's goals and match the site, soils and space in the planting location. Species also includes species availability, site preparation and planting requirements, spacing and density requirements, and long-term maintenance requirements needed for species growth and survival.

One of the many resources available from the LSU AgCenter is a downloadable publication, "Native Tree Growing Guide for Louisiana." Specifically, the publication addresses the why, where, what, when and how of tree planting in some detail. On the back page, there is a list for specific purposes for trees, such as trees preferring an acidic soil, trees tolerating dry conditions and trees tolerating less than idea drainage. Additionally, there are lists for trees based on desired mature size, growth rate, production of berries or fruit, providing good fall color, attracting birds and trees with interesting trunks.

After considering all of the factors listed above, the next step is to prepare the site for planting. It is important to understand what type of site preparation your trees will need to maximize the opportunity for survival and growth. Is there a need to conduct mechanical site prep operations such as mowing, disking, bedding or subsoiling? Will irrigation be required, and if so, will it be above ground or below ground? Will you need to apply herbicides to control invasive or competing vegetation? Does a soil test indicate there is a need to add soil amenities such as lime or fertilizer prior to planting? The dry season, typically July to October in Louisiana, is the best time to conduct site preparation operations in order to minimize or prevent soil compaction from the machinery involved in the site preparation operations.

The final step prior to planting trees is to visit local nurseries to view trees meeting your specific needs. If you are planting a large area, it may be beneficial to reserve or order the species and number of trees you will need for your planting and secure the services of a reputable tree planting contractor. This is especially true when planting grafted trees, such as pecan or citrus, because inventory of preferred varieties is usually limited. If this all sounds like a big confusing puzzle, please do not worry, the LSU AgCenter has trained extension agents and informational resources to help homeowners make the proper decisions during each step of the tree planting process.

Robbie Hutchins
Forestry and Wildlife Agent, Central Region
Keith Hawkins
Area Horticulture Agent, Central Region

American Paw Paw to be planted as an understory tree in an edible garden. Photo by Sara Shields

Dry Months Tough on Plants

Use Water and Mulch Wisely

In the fall, October is traditionally one of the driest months in Louisiana. Turfgrass and lawns will suffer in the drought and heat with weeds, insects and diseases jumping at the opportunity to bring a weakened plant down.

How do plants combat a shortage of water coupled with temperatures approaching 100 degrees? Plants' first line of defense is closing pores on the leaves and stems, preventing further water loss, followed by wilting. Eventually, plants drop their leaves in an effort to survive and go into dormancy to conserve everything they have. Ultimately, with no relief, some plants will die.

There are things we can do to help. First, select plants that can tolerate drought. Plants differ in their use and requirements for water. Some are tougher than others. Succulent plants, especially sedums, cactus, yuccas, aloe vera, crown of thorns and kalanchoe plants are some great examples.

Unlike turfgrasses, ornamental native grasses are great drought-tolerant plants. Mostly grown for beautiful foliage, many display gorgeous flower spikes called plumes. Some commonly used ornamental grasses for Louisiana landscapes are zebra grass *(Miscanthus sinensis* Zebrinus*)*; pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana)*; fireworks fountain grass, (*Pennisetum setaceum* Fireworks), which is a Louisiana Super Plant; pink muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*); and panic grass or switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*).

In general, many native plants tend to be the most drought-tolerant plants for the landscape because they are adapted to our climate. No one can predict just how long droughts and heat will occur. So, we can plan and plant for just this occasion. If things continue as they are and climate change occurs, we will continue to see swings in temperatures coupled with decreased water availability in the years to come.

Choosing drought-tolerant plants and native plants is a good place to start. Where you plant them is also important. Plants that are growing under the canopy of a large tree are the first to wilt because they are no match for the extensive root system of trees, so avoid planting there. Turfgrasses tend to especially suffer.

Incorporate organic matter into your soil, use mulch, weed regularly, and supplement with additional water during droughts to help. The best time to water during a drought and hot weather is the early morning and late evening to help prevent evaporation and allow the plants several hours without sun to take up the water into their system. Infrequent but deep water is best. Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation for watering.

Dr. Heather Kirk-Ballard
Assistant Professor of Consumer Horticulture

Pink muhly grass. Photo by Allen Owings.

Remove weeds completely down to the roots.

Vegetable Gardening

As crazy as this may sound, preparation for the fall garden begins in August. Yes, in sticky, hot, miserable August, we can start dreaming of cool-season crops. A few vegetable seeds can be planted into trays for later planting, and the ground needs to be prepared. Check out this veggie section for a few tips on growing a wonderful fall garden.

Let's get started:

- Remove all existing weeds. Even the roots! This can be tough, especially if you neglected your spring garden once the heat set in. However, weed removal is essential, especially for perennial grasses in the garden. If you simply till the grasses in and then irrigate, you will end up with a relatively nice lawn!
- Till or work the top 6 to 8 inches of soil.
- Plan for irrigation or make sure a hose will reach the garden. Irrigation is necessary, especially in September when it is extremely hot!

Vegetables to Plant

If you see transplants next to a vegetable crop, those seeds were started in August.

September...

Plant transplants or start seed:
Beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, cauliflower, collards, lettuce, kohlrabi, kale and Swiss chard.

Plant carrots in September.

Plant radishes in October.

Plant kale in November.

The crops listed next should be seeded directly into the garden:
Beets, endive, carrots, English peas, snow peas, mustard, onions (seeds, mid-to-late September), parsley, snap beans (early September), radishes, rutabaga, spinach and turnips.

Garlic toes are planted in mid-to-late September. Shallot sets can be planted all month long.

October

Plant transplants of:
Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and Chinese cabbage.

These crops can be direct-seeded or planted by transplant:
Kale, parsley, spinach, leaf lettuce, celery, Swiss chard and endive.

These crops should be direct-seeded:
Mustard, turnips, radishes, beets, onions (early to mid-October to create sets for later) and carrots.

November

In south Louisiana, continue to plant transplants of:
Cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, kale and Swiss chard.

In all of Louisiana, direct-seed:
Beets, Swiss chard, spinach, kale, radishes, mustard, carrots and turnips.

Continue to plant:
Shallots and garlic in the first part of the month.

Onion Crop Highlight

Onions (bulbing)

Onion seed may be planted for transplants from mid-September through mid-October. Keep the soil moist because seed coats are hard. It may take two weeks for onion seed to germinate to a stand. Some people start the onion seed directly in the garden (planting it thick) and later pull up and transplant into final spacings. Other people start their onion seed in germination mix in trays. I prefer the germination mix in trays because it is easier to plant and maintain on a bench rather than in the ground. However, I have also seen gardeners sow the onion seed directly into the row at proper spacing. But to me this is risky especially in clay soils.

Transplant the onion sets into the garden from mid-December through the end of January. Several drills of seed may be planted on one row. Leave 6 to 8 inches between drills. I like a spacing of 4 to 6 inches between bulbs.

Pay special attention to weed control in direct-seeded onions. Control winter weeds before the onset of wet soils and cool weather. Consider planting onion plants in black plastic mulch. The mulch controls weeds, enhances growth and keeps the onion bulbs cleaner. You will also need to watch out for cutworms and thrips. For the cutworms use Dipel dust or Sevin dust on the ground. Thrips can also be controlled with spinosad, neem oil or horticultural oils. You know you have thrips when you see gray discoloration on the foliage.

Short-day varieties to plant:

Red: Red Creole C5 or Red Burgundy

White: Super Star Hybrid (AAS), Candy (golden) or Georgia Boy

Yellow: Granex 33, Texas Grano 1015Y, Nirvana, Savannah Sweet or Sweet Melody

Fertilize plants sparingly prior to planting in the ground. This will prevent excessive growth. The thinner the set is, the more resistant it will be to bolting when the temperatures drop. If your onions begin to bolt or bloom, pinch the blooms off to continue to increase the bulb size. About 2 to 3 pounds of 0-20-20, 7-21-21 or 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row are sufficient. Side-dress onions in the spring just before they bulb. Side-dress two additional times at two- to three-week intervals.

Dr. Kathryn Fontenot
LSU AgCenter Extension Vegetable Specialist

Bulbing onions after harvest. Photo by Kiki Fontenot

Introducing the Fall 2020 Louisiana Super Plants

The Louisiana Super Plants program identifies superior plant material for Louisiana landscapes. Louisiana Super Plants have undergone rigorous trials at multiple LSU AgCenter locations across the state of Louisiana and have been vetted and approved by the Louisiana green industry. Louisiana Super Plants are considered university tested and industry approved.

As the summer winds down, we begin to look forward to fall and all the wonderful woody plants that thrive in the landscape. We generally recommend most woody plants be planted in the fall or late winter. This allows these plants to establish roots well before our extremely hot summers. In addition, many fall landscapes highlight amazing color provided by shrubs and trees. It is a perfect time to go get some Louisiana Super Plants to enhance your landscape.

The fall of 2020 inductions include two amazing woody plants that are well known throughout Louisiana and are popular among gardeners, landscapers, nursery growers and naturalists.

American beautyberry *(Callicarpa americana)* is a native woody shrub that grows throughout the state of Louisiana. They are often found in wooded areas but can be grown as specimen plants in the landscape. While sometimes considered an understory plant, American beautyberry prefers part sun or dappled shade to thrive. American beautyberry is adapted to many soils. It can thrive in moist and drier areas but prefers acidic soils. The lime green opposite-leaved foliage provides an excellent contrast to the vibrant and eye-catching purple fruit that surround the stem at leaf nodes.

While the late summer onset of fruit is often a deep purple, forms are available in a variety of attractive colors of white, pink, burgundy and more. Birds, especially songbirds, love the large berry clusters. As a result, these are the perfect plants for someone interested in attracting wildlife to the landscape as this plant will attract birds in late summer and fall while offering a marvelous pop of color. American beautyberry is a very low-maintenance landscape plant, only needing light thinning if desired. Sheering will remove the flowers and fruit. Try planting many together to create an attractive native screen or hedge. Inconspicuous flowers fill the branches in midsummer and begin to develop green berries, which ripen into the vibrant colors in late summer to early fall.

The baldcypress *(Taxodium distichum)* is the state tree of Louisiana and is already iconic throughout the state. These native trees are prominent and can be observed growing throughout Louisiana and the entire southeastern U.S. They do well in moist soils and flooded areas; however, they are also adapted to dry soils, allowing them to thrive in almost any Louisiana environment. Baldcypress trees thrive in very hot humid environments, with faster growth during hot growing seasons, making it a perfect fit for Louisiana summers. Baldcypress is a deciduous conifer, which means it is one of the few cone-bearing plants that loses its leaves in the fall. At maturity, a baldcypress will grow up to 50 to 70 feet tall and as much as 25 feet wide.

The baldcypress is known for attractive pyramidal shape with lacy green needles. These needles turn a wonderful rust color in the fall prior to dropping, where they provide natural mulch and serve as protection for a host of wildlife. Baldcypress provides some of the best fall color seen throughout the state of Louisiana. Additionally, baldcypress is desired for its ornamental bark. When grown in wet conditions, baldcypress will form "cypress knees," which provide additional aesthetics for ponds. A host of aquatic, avian and ground-dwelling wildlife rely upon these trees for nesting, food and shelter throughout the year. Baldcypress makes a great addition to any landscape, natural area or public space throughout the state and provides a conceptual connection to nature and the great state of Louisiana.

For more information on Louisiana Super Plants, please contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office or visit www.LSUAgCenter.com/SuperPlants.

Dr. Jeb S. Fields
Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist
Hammond Research Station

American beautyberry

Baldcypress

Checklist for September, October and November

1. Fall is a great time to plant! Plant bedding plants, trees, shrubs, ground covers, vines, fall vegetables and fruit trees. Go to your local nursery or fall plant sales and stock up!

2. Take soil samples from landscape beds and submit them to the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing and Plant Analysis Laboratory for analysis. Check with your parish LSU AgCenter extension office for more information. Prepare fall beds and amend your garden soil if your soil test indicates any deficiencies.

3. Enjoy fall-blooming plants. Many spring and summer blooming plants will carry over into the fall. This is a great time to enjoy these or transplant new containers to your landscapes. You can plant fall-blooming annuals and perennials, including cassias, butterfly bush, firebush, angels trumpet, marigolds, zinnias, Turk's cap, salvias and sedums. Many warm-season bedding plants, such as periwinkle, blue daze, purslane, scaevola, impatiens and begonias, are still going strong. Leave the beds alone for as long as you can enjoy the display. Once the cooler temperatures settle in it will be time to convert beds to cool-season plants.

4. Plant herbs in the garden. Herbs to plant now include parsley, sage, thyme, dill, cilantro, rosemary, oregano, borage, fennel, nasturtium, French tarragon, chives, mint and catnip.

5. Plant spring-flowering bulbs in your gardens from late October through early December. Exceptions are tulips and hyacinths, which must be refrigerated and planted in late December or early January.

6. Watch azalea plantings for early fall infestations of lace bugs. Control them with acephate, horticultural oil sprays (bifenthrin, cyfluthrin or permethrin) and other recommended insecticides. Be sure to read and follow all of the instructions on the product label.

7. Utilize fallen leaves as mulch, or build a compost pile using leaves, grass clippings and remains from your vegetable garden. We are still in hurricane season until the end of November. Do your part to be a good citizen and steward of our community by keeping storm drains free from leaves and lawn debris. If you choose not to utilize leaves as mulch or compost, bag them up, but please don't blow them into the roads or toward your neighbors' yards! I call this kicking the can.

8. September is a good time to divide and transplant Louisiana irises. Fertilize your irises in October.

9. Many of the summer-blooming perennials are finished or are finishing up their floral display for the year. Cut back the flower stalks and old, faded flowers to keep the plants looking attractive.

10. October weather can be dry. Water plantings as needed. Pay special attention to any newly planted areas. It generally is best to water direct-seeded beds of flowers or vegetables lightly every day to make sure the seeds do not dry out.

11. Prune ever-blooming roses by early September.

12. Enjoy the fall color in trees such as baldcypress, nuttall oak, shumard oak, cherry bark oak, flowering pear, Chinese pistachio, ginkgo, Japanese maple, sweetgum, sumac, red maple, Southern sugar maple and hickory. Plant some if you don't already have them in your landscape.

Storm drain clogged by leaves and lawn debris. Photo by Heather Kirk-Ballard

Fall Lawns in Louisiana

Should You Fertilize Lawn During Fall?

Louisiana usually stays warm well into the fall, and lawns continue to grow until nighttime temperatures dip into the 50s. So be sure to mow and water your lawn, as needed, to keep it healthy.

More than likely, however, it is time to put up your fertilizer spreader. Fertilizing warm-season grasses during the fall with high nitrogen (summer-type) fertilizers or winterizing fertilizers containing high levels of nitrogen are not recommended for Deep South lawns.

Stimulating fall growth of St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass and zoysiagrass with nitrogen leads to increased large (brown) patch disease and winter kill. Bermudagrass may be fertilized into September, but I would not make any more applications of high percentage nitrogen-containing fertilizers after late August on St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass or zoysiagrass.

If you would like to extend the green color in home lawns this fall, apply foliar iron spray or spreadable iron granules. This will give you a nice flush of green color without increased growth.

Do You Need to "Winterize" the Lawn?

I'm sure that you have heard of winterizer fertilizers. Potassium (the last number in the analysis on fertilizer bag) is the nutrient associated with winter hardiness and increased disease resistance with turfgrass. There is an advantage to having the correct amount of potassium in the soil. Get a soil test before applying high potassium fertilizer, however, since there is no advantage to applying excessive amounts of this nutrient. If a soil test indicates that potash is lacking, choose a potassium containing fertilizer with zero or a very low percentage of nitrogen (the first number on a fertilizer bag) during the late summer or early fall since we are not trying to stimulate growth for the reasons discussed above. If a soil test calls for adding potassium, you can apply during September while temperatures are still warm, and the lawn is still growing (very slow growth occurs as day lengths get shorter by late September and October).

An important fact to consider if you bag your lawn clippings - **the removal of grass clippings from lawns can severely deplete the soil of potassium.** Grass leaves and stems contain very high levels of potassium. Keep in mind that when a lawn is mowed appropriately, it is better to leave clippings to decompose on the lawn as a good source of turf nutrients, including potassium. Clippings from a lawn that is mowed regularly have only a small role in the overall buildup of thatch in turfgrass.

Speaking of Soil Tests …

Fall is the best time of the year to get your soil tested by the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing Lab.

Soil testing really is the first step to a beautiful lawn next spring and is the best way to determine exactly what your lawn needs to become thick and healthy. If you haven't tested your soil in the past several years, do it now.

To test your soil, submit a pint of soil to the LSU AgCenter Extension Service office in your parish. The pint should be a composite of soil samples collected from several different areas in the lawn. You only need to go about 4 inches deep. Also, to simplify the soil sampling and submission process, there are pre-addressed submission boxes with sampling instructions at several garden centers throughout the state. There is a small fee for testing.

The sample results will be sent to your home mailbox and email in less than two weeks. An LSU AgCenter extension agent can help you interpret the results from the soil sample. The sample results may indicate that lime is needed to increase soil pH. If so, fall/winter is a good time to apply lime, since it takes several months to activate in the soil. Elemental sulfur may be recommended to reduce soil pH in alkaline soils.

Weed Control

If your lawn was full of winter weeds last spring, this fall is your first opportunity to reduce infestations with pre-emergence herbicides. Pre-emergence herbicides such as prodiamine, pendimethalin, dithiopyr, isoxaben, and indaziflam may be applied in mid to late September to help manage the first flush of winter weeds like annual bluegrass, chickweed and lawn burweed. Consider reapplication in early November. These herbicides work prior to the emergence of the weeds, so timing the application before the weeds germinate is critical. Atrazine can be applied on most southern lawns for annual bluegrass and broadleaf weeds in October except for bermudagrass. Atrazine could be applied on bermudagrass after the bermudagrass is dormant. MSM (metsulfuron) can be highly effective postemergence on broadleaf weeds such as white clover and lawn burweed.

Ron Strahan Ph.D.
Associate Professor, LSU AgCenter

Annual bluegrass is the most common grass infesting winter lawns.

Lawn burweed germinates in the fall and produces painful stickers in the spring.

Wild geranium is a common winter broadleaf infesting fall lawns.

Slime Molds in Louisiana Gardens and Lawns

Home gardeners are often distressed by the appearance of slime molds during extended periods of overcast skies and warm and wet weather, which is very common in Louisiana.

Slime molds appear as crusty or powdery coatings on any surface, including wooden planks used for making raised beds, garden mulch, lawns or even on the leaves and stems of different kinds of plants grown in gardens.

The encrusted cover is usually a powder buildup that wipes off easily. This dusty coating may appear in different colors, like ashy gray, brown, charcoal gray, dark red, purple or bright yellow. One slime mold is named as "dog's vomit" because of its appearance.

During favorable weather slime molds may remain in your garden or turf for a few days to more than a week.

Slime molds are nonparasitic organisms that are classified as myxomycetes, a group of free-living amoeboid protists. Slime molds feed primarily on bacteria and other microorganisms.

Slime molds' life cycles are a bit complicated and have two different stages, an amoeboflagellate stage and a plasmodium stage. After feeding on soil microbes, fungi and organic matter, the amoeboid cells during the amoeboflagellate stage grow and multiply to form a plasmodium stage with a greasy, viscous slimy appearance.

The greasy-looking slimy plasmodium may take on one of many colors or remain clear. It creeps upward on grass leaves, low-growing plant materials and ground covers to support itself up off the ground for better spore dispersal.

The plasmodium further bunches up and develops into a fruiting or sporangium stage. This stage is the most visible and is commonly noticed in gardens and lawns.

In this elevated stage, the mature spores are released for dispersal by wind, rain or other vectors. As grass and plants dry, the sporangia dry to a crusty or dusty "crud." Slime molds tend to reappear in the same general areas when conditions become favorable again.

Slime molds are harmless to plants and turfgrass and do not cause any diseases on them. However, if the plant tissue is heavily covered with slime mold for more than a week or so, it can shade out the plant tissue. The plant tissue may turn yellow and become susceptible to secondary disease infection.

Control of slime molds is often not needed. They start disappearing with the onset of dry weather. Slime molds can be hosed or brushed off the plant tissue but avoid hosing or brushing off during wet weather.

Gardeners who desire to remove the slime molds by hand must wear disposable gloves as spores may cause irritation to sensitive skin.

Excessive thatch buildup in lawns favors slime mold development; therefore lawns should be dethatched at regular intervals.

If chemical control is desired, contact your local extension agent to find a product that can be used to manage slime molds in landscapes, gardens and lawn turf.

For information on slime molds, please call 225-578-4562 or email rsingh@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Dr. Raj Singh
Plant Pathologist and Director of Plant Diagnostic Center

Figure 1: Slime mold at base of a tomato plant grown in a raised bed. LSU AgCenter photo

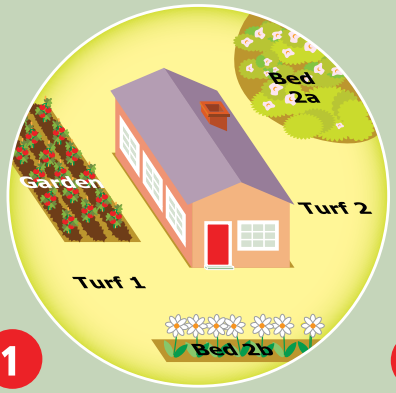
Figure 2: Slime mold growing on the leaf blades of turfgrass. Photo by Raj Singh, LSU AgCenter

Slime mold growing on leaf surfaces of Greek oregano. Photo by Leigh Ann Cabaniss

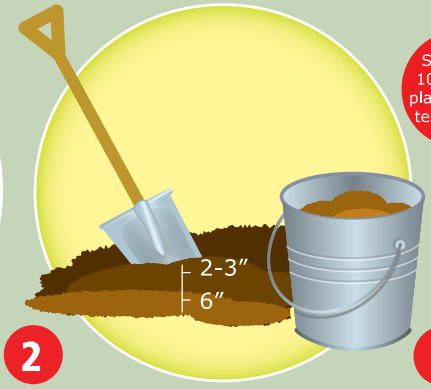
Figure 4: Slime mold growing on the surface of wet mulch. Photo by Andre Brock, LSU AgCenter

How to Take a Soil Sample

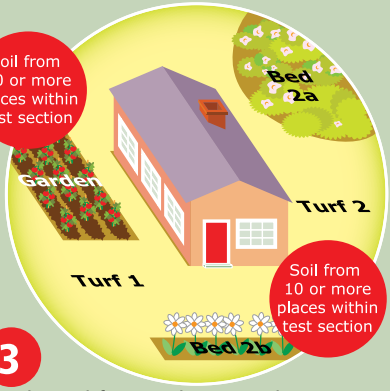
The LSU AgCenter Soil Testing and Plant Analysis Laboratory is the only laboratory that incorporates the latest Louisiana-specific soil fertility research in its recommendations system. The lab offers testing for nutritional status of plants, irrigation and pond water. Soil test kits are available at local garden centers or your parish LSU AgCenter extension office. Kits include directions for gathering soil samples, a soil test request form, a sealable plastic bag and a pre-addressed, postage-paid box.



1 Divide area into sections to be tested on basis of slope, type of plants to be grown or other variations.



2 Sample to depth of 2-3 inches for turf and 6 inches for cultivated beds.



3 Take soil from at least 10 places in each section to be tested to obtain a representative sample.

4 Combine soil for section to be tested. Mix soil thoroughly. Soil for each test section should be kept separate.

5 Place one pint of soil in a sealable plastic bag for each section to be tested. Label each bag according to soil test request form. Sample boxes are available from your parish LSU AgCenter extension office or local garden center.

6 Fill out the soil test request form, place it in the box and put the pre-addressed, postage-paid box in the mail.

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