GNO Gardening
LSU AgCenter Research · Extension · Teaching
Garden Show
LSU AgCenter Research · Extension · Teaching
April 2018

Alligator Pear

The avocado (*Persea americana*) has a long and interesting history. Avocado is derived from the Aztec word "ahuacatl" which translates to a certain anatomical feature. I'll leave you to research the meaning but the fruit was considered an aphrodisiac (that's a clue). In Mexico it is called "aguacate" and the word "guacamole" is derived from the word "ahuacamolli", which is ahuaca "avocado" and molli "sauce." The story is that an early English description of "avocado" called it the "avogado pear," which was misunderstood to be "alligator pear". And probably the bumpy skin of the fruit helped the term to persist.

Although it is easy and fun to watch an avocado seed sprout, You will have better results purchasing a grafted tree of a selected variety.

According to Medical News Today, avocados contain a lot of fiber, and very little sugar. Avocados are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids, mainly oleic acid. Avocados are rich in many vitamins and minerals, such as B-vitamins, vitamin K, vitamin E, vitamin C, potassium and copper. Avocados are rich in plant compounds, such as carotenoids, antioxidants and a sugar called D-Mannoheptulose. The carotenoids are well absorbed because of the high fat content of avocados. Avocados are very filling, incredibly nutritious and taste really good. They are a good source of several vitamins, minerals and plant compounds, and may have benefits for heart health and arthritis. All things considered, avocados are an excellent addition to a healthy diet.

With all that going for it, why aren't avocados growing alongside our citrus trees in every backyard of southern Louisiana? Well, following this past winter's freeze, one could drive around a see that avocado is truly a tropical fruit. The most commonly available types of avocados that we regularly consume are very sensitive to temperatures below 30°. On top of that, ever since the 70's people have been saving the pit from their avocados and growing their own little avocado tree. Of course, that little tree is still cold sensitive and a tree grown from seed will take up to 10-15 years before it starts to produce flowers and fruit. Like most fruit and nut trees, commercially produced avocado trees are grafted and will begin flowering and fruiting in as little as 2 years. What's the difference? Most avocado is budgrafted onto young (ca. one year old) avocado seedlings. The buds are taken from mature fruiting mother trees. Therefore, the bud is genetically and physiologically as old as the tree it came from and will begin to grow and flower just like a branch on the mother plant. Buying commercially produced fruit and nut trees is always a great time-saver as well as surety that the tree will be what you expect.

Most avocado trees are also large trees. Hass (the most common supermarket avocado) trees grow to be 30-40 ft. trees. Fuerte (another common variety) grows to over 40 ft. They really do need a lot of space. It's hard for most of us to justify giving that much precious space of our landscape to an avocado tree. And now the real kicker, to get the best fruit production you need two avocado trees – a type A flowering tree and a type B flowering tree. What is type A and B flowering? Avocados have a very unique flowering quirk that helps to ensure genetic diversity. Avocado *(Continued)*

April Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Snap Beans (bush or pole)	Bush-Blue Lake 274, Bronco, Derby, Lynx, Strike Pole-Blue Lake, Kentucky Blue, McCaslin	½ inch	2-3 (bush) 12 (pole)	48-55 (bush) 60-66 (pole)
Sweet Corn	Merit, Silver Queen, Honey 'n Pearl, Ambrosia	½ inch	10-12	69-92
Summer Squash	Gold Rush, Justice III, Multipik, Patriot II	⅛ inch	36	50-90
Hot Peppers (transplant)	Grande, Tula, Mariachi, Mitla,	-	--	140
Cantaloupe	Ambrosia, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Vienna	¼ inch	18-24	80-85
Southern Peas	Queen Anne, California #5, Quickpick, Colussus	½ inch	4-6	70-80
Tomato (transplant)	Better Boy, Big Beef, Cupid, Pink Girl, Juliet, Sweet Milton, Bella Rosa, Carolina Gold	-	--	100-115
Collards	Champion, Flash, Georgia, Top Bunch, Vates	⅛ inch	6-12	75
Cucumbers	Dasher II, Diva, Fanfare, General Lee, Indy, Olympian, Sweet Success, Sweet Slice	¼ inch	12-18	50-65
Cucuzza	None Given	½ inch	24	65
Lima Beans (bush or pole)	Dixie Butterpea, Jackson Wonder, Thorogreen Florida Speckled, King of Garden	½ inch	3-4 (bush) 12 (pole)	60-67 (bush) 77-90 (pole)
Bell Peppers (transplants)	Aristotle X3R, Jupiter, Lilac, Plato, Tequila	-	15-18	70-80
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner	⅛ inch	6	55-75
Okra	Annie Oakley, Cajun Delight, Clemson Spineless	½ inch	12	60
Pumpkins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Prankster, Sorcerer	½ inch	36-60	90-120
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross	⅛ inch	1	22-28
Swiss Chard	None Given	¼ inch	6-8	45-55
Winter Squash	Honey Bear, Sweet Mama, Table Queen, Tivoli	½ inch	18-24	100
Eggplant	Dusky, Night Shadow, Epic, Santana, Calliope	⅛ inch	18-24	80-85

April Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Honeydew	Honey Max, Rocio, Summer Dew	½ inch	18	80
Luffa Gourd	None Given	½ inch	48	90
Cushaw	None Given	½ inch	24-36	110
Malbar Spinace	None Given	¼ inch	12-18	Ongoing
Mirlitons	None Given	Special	-	30 from flowering
Peanuts	None Given	1 inch	6	130
Sweet Potato	Beauregard, Evangeline, Hernandez, Jewel	Special	12	90-120
Watermelon	Seedless: Cooperstown, Gypsy, Matrix, Millennium Seeded: Mickey Lee, Sugar Baby, Amarillo	¼ inch	48	90-110
Yardlong Beans	None Given	1 inch	24-36	75

Warm Season Herbs

Basil	Lemon Balm	Lemon Grass
Perilla	Mints	Lemon Verbena
Sesame	Vetiver	Rosemary

Flowering Perennials

Perennial Salvia	Caladiums	Daylily	Shasta Daisies
Bee Balm	Coreopsis	Physostegia	Sokesia
Butterfly Weed	Four O'clocks	Mallow	Verbena
Chrysanthemums	Gaillardia	Rudbeckia	Yarrow
Coneflowers	Gerbera Daisies	Sedum	Violets


Hot Lips Salvia


Butterfly Weed


Physostegia


Rudbeckia


Four O'clocks

flowers are perfect (have both male and female structures); however, maturation is out of synch. Type A plants produce flowers with mature female structures in the morning and mature male structures in the evening. Type B plants produce flowers with mature male structures in the morning and mature female structures in the evening. Self-pollination is therefore difficult. In the morning, mature pollen from a type B plant is flying around looking for a mature female structure to land on. Only type A plants have mature female structures in the morning. Then in the evening, mature pollen from type A plants is flying around looking for mature female structures to land on. Only type B plants have mature female structures in the evening.

Avocados are bee pollinated. If there are type A and B trees near each other (neighbors) then there should be fairly good cross-pollination. However, if you are going to grow only one type, you should check around the neighborhood to see if there are any other avocado trees being grown and what type they are. Without both flowering types available, pollination and fruit set will be minimal.

Right: Hass avocado flower during the functional female stage, the first opening stage. Left: Hass avocado flower during functional male stage, after dehiscence, the second opening stage. Photos by Department of Agriculture and Food, Government of Western Australia

Now, just to add a wrinkle to the story. The two flowering types behave with clock-like exactness only when the average temperature (night minimum and day maximum) is above 70°F. As temperatures fall, the daily openings become delayed and become irregular, so that a single tree may have flowers in both female and male stages at the same time. This helps to explain how blocks of just one variety sometimes set heavy crops. It is also why many varieties are described as self-fertile when grown in certain regions. But, as the average temperature falls below about 70°F, the flower parts function less well. Below about 60°F, there may be zero set. Isn't nature fun!

If you are interested in growing your own avocados, a quick primer on varieties will help you make a more informed decision. West Indian type avocados produce smooth round, glossy green fruits that are low in oil and weigh up to 2 pounds, but are not cold hardy. Guatemalan types produce medium ovoid or pear-shaped, pebbled green fruits that turn blackish-green when ripe, but are not cold hardy. The fruit of Mexican varieties are smaller (8 - 12 ounces) with paper-thin skins that turn glossy green or black when ripe and are moderately cold hardy once established. The flesh of avocados is deep green near the skin, becoming yellowish nearer the single large, inedible ovoid seed. The flesh is hard when harvested but softens to a buttery texture. One of the large nurseries in our area currently produces four varieties of avocado for sale in Louisiana and Texas. Let's look at those first.

Hass Avocados

Hass – A Mexican variety that is the most popular avocado variety in the world. Hass has a type A flower, makes a 30-40 ft. tree, and has a pebbly dark skin when ripe. It is one of the best tasting varieties making 8-12 oz. fruit. However, Hass is tender to temperatures below 30°F.

Fantastic – Mexican variety with green paper-thin skin. The fruit has a creamy texture with great flavor. Very cold hardy variety, supposedly the most cold hardy of all avocados. Can take temperatures down to 15°F for a short period of time without significant damage. Type B flower. Mature trees may be over 30 ft. tall.

Fantastic Avocados

Joey – Mexican variety that produces medium size, egg shaped purple-black fruit. A heavy bearer with excellent flavor. Can take temperatures down to 15°F for short a period of time without significant damage. Type B flower. Mature trees

(Continued)

Alligator Pear *(Continued)*

may be over 25 ft. tall, usually 10-15 feet.

Lila – Mexican variety that produces medium size, green fruit. Can take temperatures down to 15-20°F for short period of time without significant damage. Mature trees may be over 25 ft. tall, usually 10-15 feet. Type A flower.

A cursory search for avocado varieties will reveal just how popular avocados are. There are over 100 listed avocado varieties. Many are available to order but remember to always get a cold hardy variety for our region. Some other cold hardy varieties include:

Bacon – Type B flower. Cold hardy to 24°F. Good tasting.

Jim Bacon – Type B flower. Cold hardy to 22°F. Good tasting and heavy fruit set.

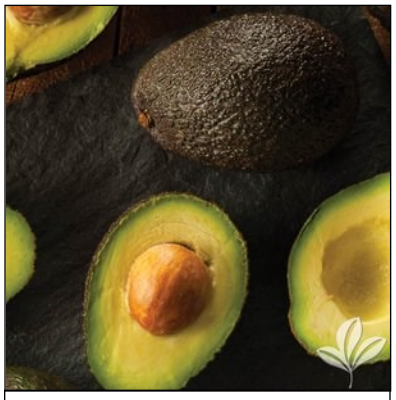
Mexicola – Type A flower. Cold hardy to 18°F. Small tree with shiny black fruit and rich nutty flavor. Large seeded.

Mexicola Grande – Type A flower. Cold hardy to 18°F. Slightly larger tree and fruit than Mexicola but with same rich nutty flavor.

Stuart – Type A flower. Cold hardy to 18°F. Compact tree with small good tasting fruit.

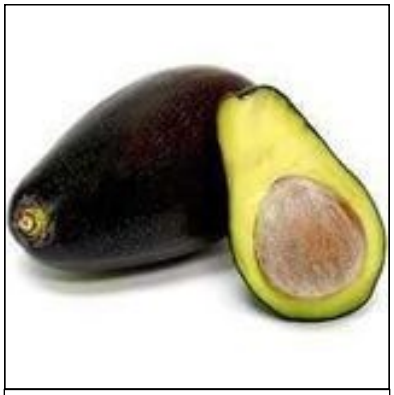
Brazos Belle – Type B flower. Cold hardy to 15°F. Mexican variety with purple-black fruit with a rich nutty flavor. Tree is medium-sized.

Poncho – Type B flower. Produces a smooth-skinned light green medium fruit. Cold hardy to 18°F.



Joey Avocados

Lila Avocados



Mexicola Avocados

When growing avocados, site selection is very important. Choose a south to southeast exposure to protect from winter blasts. Cold hardiness is in reference to a mature tree (6 years old or older). Younger trees will always need protection if the temperature is going to drop below 30°F. They absolutely must have well-drained soil, and NO seasonal wetness! Improve the soil with a good compost. Fertilize the first two years with a 6-2-4 or similar fertilizer at least 4 times a year and as often as once a month beginning after fruit has set. Avocado trees that have been fertilized regularly are more able to deal with cold temperatures in the winter. Avocados prefer infrequent deep watering, once established. DO NOT OVER-WATER! It is a good idea to apply a 3" layer of mulch to avocado trees each year to conserve moisture and improve soil quality.

Avocados can also be grown as container trees. With a large container (25 gal. or more), you can grow an avocado and maintain smaller size easier. It can also be moved inside if a severe freeze threatens. Remember, plants in containers are more susceptible to cold than those in the ground. Avocado bark is green and may be susceptible to sunburn when young.

Pruning an avocado is done primarily to control the shape and size and to remove any dead or damaged limbs. You can lightly prune an avocado almost any time but heavy pruning should be done during the late winter to early spring after danger of frost. Flowers are produced on new growth.

Avocados do not ripen on the tree, nor do they fall to the ground when ripe. Avocado maturity can be determined in the early fall by picking a couple of fruit and setting them on the kitchen counter. A mature fruit will soften in three days to two weeks. If the fruits don't soften, try again every week or two until they soften and achieve good taste. Pick the fully grown fruit first and allow the smaller fruit to grow larger before picking.

So maybe growing avocados isn't such a bad idea after all. With the multiple varieties to choose from, finding one that fits your space and hardiness level should be possible and most years there should be good fruit set. What could be better than making guacamole from homegrown avocados! ~Dr. Joe Willis

Join us for the 39th Annual

New Orleans Spring Garden Show

An Educational Experience for the Home and Professional Gardener

Saturday, April 7, 2018 - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. &

Sunday, April 8, 2018 - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

New Orleans Botanical Garden

Victory Avenue, City Park

Admission: $10.00 Adults / Children 5-12: $5.00

Children under 5 & Friends of City Park enter free

Plant and Garden Products, Exhibits & Sales

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CITY PARK

NEW ORLEANS BOTANICAL GARDEN

Basil Downy Mildew: Tips and Tricks

The smell of fresh basil in my summer garden reminds me of picking fresh leaves right off the plant as a child, wrapping them around a cherry tomato, and popping the whole thing in my mouth as a delicious snack. Growing basil used to be very easy, unfortunately now there is a disease issue to be on the lookout for. Preventing basil downy mildew begins before you even plant your basil for the summer, here are some strategies to ensure that you get enough to make at least a few good batches of pesto this year.

Basil downy mildew (*Peronospora belbahrii*) attacks all varieties of sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), and is relatively new in the United States. Since becoming established in Florida in 2007, it has traveled quickly up the east coast and through the gulf south. Basil downy mildew was first confirmed in Louisiana in 2009, and is common throughout the greater New Orleans area.

Downy Mildew on Sweet Basil.

Moist, hot air pockets spread the pathogen, making our climate highly favorable for it. Moving infected seeds or plant material also can spread the pathogen to uninfected sites. Yellowing begins on the lower parts of the plant, usually in between the leaf veins. This can mimic certain nutrient deficiencies, but the leaves turn completely yellow quickly, transforming to irregular black blotches, leading to the leaves falling off the plant.

Bacterial Spores on Basil Leaf.

Preventing basil downy mildew begins with choosing seed that is certified and free of the pathogen, all commercially available seed has been tested. All varieties of culinary sweet basil (*O. basilicum*) are highly susceptible, however some other species of basil are somewhat resistant. Dark opal basil (*O. basilicum purpurascens)* is moderately susceptible, Lemon basil (*O. citriodorum*) is moderately susceptible, American or "hoary" basil (*O. americanum*) is the least susceptible. Ornamental varieties such as holy basil (*O. tenuiflorum*) also show good resistance. Thai basil (*O. basilicum var. thyrsiflora*), seems to be a bit more hardy when faced with basil downy mildew as well. The "Spice" basils such as 'Blue Spice', 'Spice', and 'Blue Spice Fil' seem to also be resistant, however consumers don't like the tougher leaves, darker color, less appealing basil flavor and rougher texture of these varieties. In a pesto, these basils can work well, and pollinators love the multitude of flowers produced by the 'Spice' varieties.

Plant basil in trays or pots, being careful to water from the bottom as overhead watering can encourage basil downy mildew growth. Ventilate the greenhouse well, keep humidity low, and space pots and trays apart to encourage airflow. This really helps to open the plants up and discourage the pathogen from growing and getting established. Monitor your transplants at least weekly, removing any infected plants. Discard them in the trash, composting can spread the pathogen to future crops. Wash and sterilize hands and tools after handling diseased basil plants.

Plant basil in full sun, and water using a drip tape or soaker hose. Again, overhead watering can lead to wet leaves, the perfect habitat for basil downy mildew growth. Leave plenty of space between plants, some varieties are bushier than others, but a good estimate is to leave two or three feet between transplants as space allows. More space is better. Mulching with plastic sheeting helps to prevent the pathogen from splashing onto the lower leaves from the soil. Water in the mornings, so that any water splashed on the plants has a chance to evaporate. Be sure that the site you choose is well drained, with frequent rains basil can really struggle in low spots.

Monitor your basil weekly for downy

(Continued)

Basil Downy Mildew: Tips and Tricks *(Continued)*

mildew, again removing infected plants promptly (harvest the usable leaves to cook with before throwing the plant away!). Look on the tops and undersides of the leaves for yellowing and darker splotches, this is a sure sign that the downy mildew has taken hold, and once a plant is infected, there is not a good cure. Fungicides are rarely labeled for herbs, each state has different restrictions on what can be used. In Louisiana, we don't have good options available since the cost of registering and approving them would be prohibitive. There are currently no products available to homeowners for treating basil downy mildew. Prevention and frequent monitoring and removal of infected plants is really the best strategy.

Dark Opal Basil

Healthy, strong plants have a better shot at producing a good crop of basil. Fertilize using a balanced fertilizer at the beginning of the growing season, 8-8-8 is a good choice, as is composted poultry litter or several inches of good, rich compost. For recommended rates, do a soil test. Prepare your soil and plant basil transplants, teasing the roots apart lightly to encourage good growth. Remove the lowest leaves of the transplant and pinch the top set of leaves off to encourage robust growth and bushing out. Keep soil evenly moist but not saturated, basil downy mildew likes wet conditions. Container growing basil may be a good choice. Set the pot in full sun and be sure that it has adequate drainage holes. Use some pine straw to mulch the top and protect the leaves of the basil from splashing from the soil. Like ground-grown basil, water containers from below, a deep saucer or tray under the pot is a good choice. Fill it up with water as needed.

American 'Hoary' Basil

Throughout the growing season, side dress your basil with a tablespoon of 8-8-8 or a few handfuls of compost to help keep production strong, especially if you are regularly harvesting the leaves. Pick leaves when it is cool out, this helps to keep them turgid and prevent them from going limp. Avoid cutting the woody part of the stems, they will not regrow. Pick only what you need, basil won't keep well in the fridge and tastes better right off the plant. To store basil (if you must!) cut the top four or five inches of a sprig off, placing it in a jar of clean, cool water. Keep the leaves out of the water or they will begin to rot. Basil can be kept fresh this way for several days. Place the jar on a countertop out of the sun and avoid refrigerating it. Basil is a warm season herb and hates the cold.

To keep leaves growing strong, remove any flowers as they form. Allow your basil to flower if you want to feed the bees and other pollinators, who seem to really enjoy basil. A good compromise would be to leave four or five flower spikes per plant and remove the rest, so that the plant doesn't begin to produce seed and complete its life cycle as quickly. Basil lasts through the summer with good care, to extend the season, plant a second crop in June. Basil will die with the return of the cool weather of fall, so enjoy it this summer and make use of it in your kitchen! ~Anna Timmerman

For more information, check out these LSU AgCenter publications:

https://www.lsu.edu/agriculture/plant/extension/hcpl-publications/PPCP-VEG-003-Basil-Downy-Mildew.pdf

http://www.lsuagcenter.com/~/media/system/2/2/1/a/221aebf0d680b365d4231c6f19f190ee/pub%203358%20sweet%20basil%20downy%20mildew_laplantpath_reppdf.pdf

Virginia Buttonweed
No. 1 Weed Problem in Southern Lawns

Virginia buttonweed is widely considered the most invasive weed infesting turfgrass in the South. The plant is extremely prolific and has multiple ways to reproduce, including heavy seed production that occurs both above and below the ground from self-pollinating flowers, rooting stem fragments and tap roots that allow plants to survive through winter. Mowers set at even the lowest blade height do not interfere with growth or seed production of this plant.

Because of the potential for stem fragments to root, mowing may actually aid in the spread of buttonweed. Turning the mower deck discharge toward landscape beds could even start populations of buttonweed in flower beds.

Flowering buttonweed. Photo by Ron Strahan

Virginia buttonweed control

Virginia buttonweed is tolerant of most selective herbicides used for weed control in turf, especially when plants harden off in late summer. Managing the weed should start early in spring as perennial plants emerge from winter dormancy.

April and May are good months to begin spraying buttonweed in spot applications. Perennial plants that went dormant after the first frost will begin emerging in early April. Seedling plants germinate around the perennial "mother" plants as temperatures warm in spring. During this early growing season, perennial plants are tender with new growth. It is at this time that the perennial plants are most susceptible to herbicide uptake. Additionally, herbicide applications during spring will easily kill germinating seedling plants and reduce the overall buttonweed population significantly.

Virginia buttonweed. Photo by Ron Strahan

The worst thing to do is to wait until late July or August to make the first herbicide application. By late summer, heavy Virginia buttonweed populations can form a dense mat that can kill large areas of the lawn. Single herbicide applications, especially late-season, have not been effective on mature Virginia buttonweed. Multiple applications throughout the summer are needed after the initial spring applications to get buttonweed under control.

Seedling buttonweed. Photo by Ron Strahan

A program approach works best to control buttonweed. According to research trials conducted by the LSU AgCenter, herbicides that contain the active ingredients 2,4-D, dicamba, meco-prop and carfentrazone (Speed Zone Southern, Weed Free Zone, Weed B Gon) have been effective in suppressing

(Continued)

Virginia Buttonweed *(Continued)*

emerging perennial plants and killing the first flush of buttonweed seedlings when applied in early spring. Once temperatures exceed 85 degrees, herbicides containing 2,4-D cause too much injury to St. Agustine grass and centipede grass. In the hot summertime, metsulfuron (MSM, Mansion) or Celsius herbicides should be applied. Always repeat metsulfuron or Celsius applications four to six weeks after the initial application. Both Celsius and metsulfuron have performed well in research trials, and these herbicides seem to be tolerated pretty well by St. Augustine grass even in hot weather. ~Dr. Ron Strahan

Ron Strahan is a weed scientist and associate professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences

Virginia Buttonweed Control Program for Louisiana Lawns

Herbicide	Timing	Comments	Sources
Speed Zone Southern, Weed Free Zone, Weed B Gon (2,4-D + dicamba +, mecoprop + carfentrazone)	Apply in early spring as perennial plants break dormancy and seedling buttonweed emerges	Labeled for all Southern turfgrass. Expect injury on St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass when temperatures exceed 85 degrees.	Turf chemical distributors, retail nurseries, big-box retail centers, online sources
MSM Turf, Mansion (metsulfuron)	Apply in summer when temperatures exceed 85 degrees.	Labeled for all Southern turfgrass. Kills bahiagrass.	Turf chemical distributors, retail nurseries, online sources
Celsius (iodosulfuron + thiencarbazone + dicamba)	Apply in summer when temperatures exceed 85 degrees.	Safest herbicide to use in hot weather. Do not apply to bahiagrass or carpetgrass.	Turf chemical distributors and online sources

PLANT SALES

NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK
BOTANICAL GARDEN

Spring Garden Show
April 7, 9am – 5pm
April 8, 10am - 4pm

May 12
Pelican Greenhouse
9am – Noon

June 9
Pelican Greenhouse
9am - Noon

July 14
Pelican Greenhouse
9am - Noon

August 11
Pelican Greenhouse
9am - Noon

September 8
Pelican Greenhouse
9am – Noon

Fall Garden Festival
October 6, 10am – 5pm
October 7, 10am - 4pm

The Pelican Greenhouse is located just off Henry Thomas (Golf) Drive, South of the I-610 overpass. Bring a wagon and arrive early.

For additional information, call 504/483-9464, visit our website at www.neworleanscitypark.com, or e-mail to plants@nocp.org

Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans
Louisiana Iris Multi Site Project

The native garden at Longue Vue.

Goals:

- To educate the public about Louisiana Irises- history and culture.
- To preserve and propagate the five species and cultivars that were derived from them.
- To improve communities through use of these native plants.
- To help individuals make choices for their landscapes.
- To provide hands on experience to the public volunteers who help maintain and beautify public spaces throughout Greater New Orleans.
- To provide a native plants and habitat for pollinators.

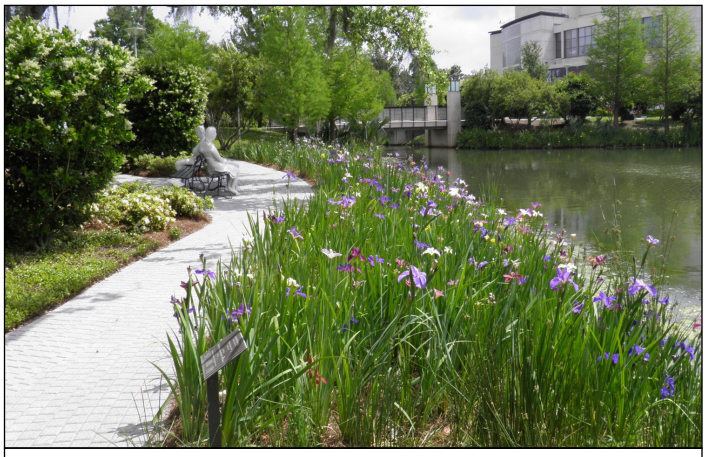
LA Iris project volunteers working in the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden.

The LA Iris project has active sites as follows:

The Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, the New Orleans Botanical Garden, The Island in City Park, Longue Vue House & Gardens, and the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station are the major sites. Minor sites include levee breach monument, Joe Brown Park Bio-swale, Palmer Park, Metairie Academy, Press Street Garden in Bywater, and Guerrilla Garden in Lower 9th ward.

Hours: Work days in the Sculpture Garden are held on the third Tuesdays of each month from 9:00am till noon.

Work on the Island and Longue Vue Gardens are planned as needed. Visit the Greater New Orleans Iris Society (GNOIS) page on Facebook for more information about dates and times. Receive LA Iris training from experts and participate in propagation by division and potting. Help make plantings from which GNOIS makes donations to public plantings.



Hard work pays off with these irises in bloom in the Sculpture Garden.

Upcoming Events

American Iris Society and Society for Louisiana Irises will hold their annual convention in New Orleans April 8-14, 2018 for the city's tricentennial. As part of the conference participants will be able to tour Longue Vue House and Gardens, the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station, the Burden Museum and Gardens and Baton Rouge Botanical Gardens.

Coming Events

Event	Date	Fee?	Link
Agricultural Food Safety Workshop @ The ReFresh Project	April 5	Free	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/agricultural-food-safety-workshop-fsma-gaps-tickets-43726303551
Growthworks Farmer's Market @ Delgado Community College	April 5	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/2016277388641691/
Louisiana Iris Day @ Longue Vue	April 5	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/158611528269178/
Spring Garden Show @ New Orleans Botanical Garden	April 7-8	$10 Adults $5 Kids	http://neworleanscitypark.com/events/spring-garden-show
Plant & Planter Sale @ Byrdies	April 7-8	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/136261100533608/
Vegetable Growing Basics @ Longue Vue House & Gardens	April 8	$15 Members $20 Non-Members	https://www.facebook.com/events/215828319159129/
Parkway Partners 2nd Saturday Organic Vegetable Gardening & Rooftop Garden Tour @ Ernest Morial Convention Center	April 14	$5	https://www.facebook.com/events/585523478479746/
GNOIS Louisiana Iris Potted Plant Sale @ City Park	April 14	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/1803225209738900/
Beekeeping Basics @ Southbound Gardens	April 14	$15	https://www.facebook.com/events/359241691225878/
Louisiana Iris Show @ New Orleans Museum of Art	April 14	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/157884211694662/
NOLA Herb Gathering @ Grow Dat Youth Farm	April 14	$35	https://www.facebook.com/events/1873942782936043/
Gourmet in the Garden @ LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens	April 19	$60 Early Bird $70 Regular	https://www.facebook.com/events/1984794215121611/
Spring Garden Work Day and Potluck @ Federal City Community Garden	April 21	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/1159894717486052/
Organic Bug Management @ Southbound Gardens	April 21	$15	https://www.facebook.com/events/181734922440158/
Earth Day Plant Swap @ 2Acre Farms	April 22	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/760524887485579/
Earth Day @ City Park	April 24	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/2005006629765913/
Spring Garden Seminar @ Longue Vue	April 25-26	Varies	https://www.facebook.com/events/297457270788884/
Staghorn Fern Workshop @ Luna Botanicals	April 25	$55	https://www.facebook.com/events/1887166441357539/

April Checklist/Garden Tips

Constant watering rapidly leaches nutrient elements from the soils of container grown plants. To replace them it is best to use either soluble fertilizers or slow release fertilizers. Soluble fertilizers are easy to apply especially when you use a hose end applicator, but they must be applied every two weeks to maintain a constant supply of nutrients. Slow release fertilizers provide nutrients over several months from one application and so cut down on labor.

If crape myrtle aphids have been a problem on your trees in the past, treat this month with Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub Insect Control with Merit. This is applied as a drench to the base of the trees and is absorbed by the roots. The insecticide travels through the tree's circulatory system up into the foliage making it toxic to the aphids. One treatment protects the tree all summer, preventing aphids and the unsightly black sooty mold they cause.

Spray crape myrtles with mancozeb , chlorothalonil or other labeled fungicides to control serious infections of powdery mildew. Powdery mildew appears as a white, powdery material on the leaves. Unlike many fungus diseases that are worse when weather is rainy, this disease is favored by humid, warm weather without rain. It is also occurs on a variety of other landscape plants such as dogwood, euonymus, gerbera daisy, rose and hydrangea, to name a few.

Oak trees infested with buck moth caterpillars should be sprayed before the caterpillars begin to migrate down the trunk. Contact local tree care companies to get your trees sprayed.

Aphids are a real problem on roses and many other plants in spring. Control with insecticidal soap, oil spray, Malathion or Acephate.

As much as is practical, continue to deadhead or remove faded, dead flowers from cool season bedding plants such as pansy, snapdragon and dianthus to promote extended flowering.

Spray peach trees regularly with a commercial home orchard or fruit tree spray to prevent plum curculio insects from causing wormy fruit.

When buying pesticides, ask for a recommendation for the least toxic material that will do the job and buy the smallest container available. Large sized containers take years to use up and by then the pesticide has often lost its effectiveness.

Keep your Louisiana irises well watered now while they flower and through mid summer. Remove any developing seed pods after flowering is finished.

Small birds called sapsuckers peck holes in neat rows. The holes just penetrate the bark and cause sap to bleed from them. Later, the sapsuckers return to feed on the sugary sap and any insects that may have been attracted to it. The damage is usually minor, and control is generally not necessary or practical.

Early to mid April is the best time to fertilize your lawn. Fertilization is not a matter of life and death, and many lawns get along well enough to satisfy the owner without it. Lawns that have been damaged or are in low vigor certainly should be considered for fertilization. Choose a commercial lawn fertilizer that has some of the nitrogen in a slow-release form. Use a drop or centrifuge type spreader to evenly distribute the fertilizer at the recommended rate following the label directions carefully, and water the lawn thoroughly after the fertilizer is applied. If weeds are a problem you may use a fertilizer with a herbicide added, the so called 'weed and feeds', but it is especially critical that you read and follow label directions carefully. These products contain a toxic pesticide that may damage the lawn, trees growing in the lawn and other ornamental plants if applied improperly.

Do not delay planting many of the warm season vegetables beyond the middle part of this month. Tomatoes, snap beans, lima beans and bell peppers all set fruit poorly when temperatures are hot. Squashes and corn are both far more likely to have major insect and disease problems when planted later.

Cool season herbs and those that thrive during mild weather, such as parsley, dill, tarragon, thyme, sage, cilantro, borage, lavender, chamomile, chervil and arugula, are at their peak this month. They will begin to decline toward late May and finish in early June, so harvest them generously over the next six to eight weeks. Extra harvest can be dried or frozen for use during the summer.

April Checklist/Garden Tips

If you need to prune spring flowering shrubs such as spirea, viburnum, quince, azalea, camellia, jasmine and mock orange, you may do so as soon as they finish flowering. Remember to prune with a specific purpose in mind, and, unless you are trying to create a clipped formal hedge, try to preserve the natural shape of the shrub.

Be sure to mulch newly planted beds of shrubs or bedding plants with a two inch layer of leaves, pine straw, pine bark or other materials to control weeds, conserve moisture and keep the soil from packing down.

Watch for spider mite damage on many vegetables and ornamentals during dry weather. Very tiny, spider mites are not readily visible to the naked eye. Use a magnifying glass to inspect the plant and look for the tiny red or green eight legged mites. Infested plants get a dull, dusty, unhealthy look to the foliage which eventually turns brown. The spider mites are primarily under the leaves. Spray with a horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, Malathion or Kelthane.

It is very important to pull up and dispose of cool season annual weeds such as henbit, bedstraw and chickweed now. These weeds are currently setting thousands of seeds that will plague you next winter if not removed now

Save some of your own seed from your cool season annuals to plant again in your garden this fall. This time of year collect seeds from sweet peas, violas, nicotiana, poppies, calendulas and cosmos. Make sure the seed pods are mature before harvesting.

This is the prime planting season for warm season grasses such as St. Augustine, centipede, bermuda and zoysia. With the exception of common bermuda, solid sodding is the preferred method of establishing a lawn whenever possible

Tomatoes are staked to keep the plants from sprawling on the ground where the fruit would be more likely to rot. Wait for the first cluster of flowers to appear, and place the stake on the opposite side of the plant's stem. All of the flower clusters will grow from the same side of the stem, and this will keep developing fruit from getting caught between the stake and the stem.

Azaleas with leaves that have tiny light spots all over them have been attacked by azalea lacebugs. Treat with Malathion or Acephate as needed through the summer and fall. Any damage that has already occurred will not go away, but treatment will prevent any more damage.

Pay careful attention to thoroughly watering newly planted trees, shrubs, bedding plants, ground covers and lawns during dry spring weather. Continue watering about twice a week until there is significant rainfall.

After planting bedding plants, water them in with a half- strength solution of your favorite water soluble fertilizer. This gets them off to a good start.

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