

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter

Vol.2 Issue 1 Fall 2024

UPCOMING EVENTS

Avoyelles Parish
Livestock Show Jan 17-
19

Avoyelles/Rapides
Parish Rice
Production Clinic Feb 6

Avoyelles/Rapides
Parish Sugarcane
Meeting Feb 18

CenLA Crops and Cattle
Forum Feb 26

Challenge Camp Feb 27-
28

Food Challenge March
12

Fishing Clinic May 28-
30



The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.

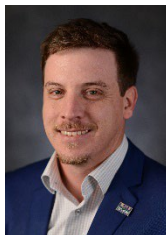


Molly Lyles teaching our Avoyelles Parish 4-H Junior Master Gardener's

Educate. Innovate. Improve Lives.

The LSU AgCenter is dedicated to providing innovative research, information and education to improve people's lives. Working in a statewide network of parish extension offices, research stations and academic departments, the LSU AgCenter helps Louisiana citizens make the best use of natural resources, protect the environment, enhance agricultural enterprises, and develop human and community resources. In Avoyelles, we possess a profoundly unique and distinct culture that is deeply rooted in agriculture and the connected industries that come along with it. The Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter remains committed to preserving this tradition by offering supportive programming that educates, innovates, and improves agriculture production, youth development, and nutrition.

Our Team:



Justin Dufour
ANR Agent
Parish Chair



Ann Soileau
4-H Agent



Amy Andrus
4-H Agent

Area Agents:

Jennifer Duhon - Nutrition
Molly Lyles - Horticulture
Brittany Zaunbrecher - Livestock
Robbie Hutchins - Forestry/Wildlife

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[LSUAgCenterAvoyelles](#)

Avoyelles Parish Jr. Master Gardener's Club



Jr. Master Gardeners Hands-On Planting Demonstration



Jr. Master Gardeners Educational Lesson

The Avoyelles Junior Master Garden Club is nurturing the next generation of gardeners with its monthly meetings, where young enthusiasts gather to learn and grow together. Under the expert guidance of Ann Soileau, Assistance 4-H Extension Agent and Molly Lyles, Assistant Extension Agent - Horticulture/ANR for Rapides Parish, the club provides a hands-on educational experience that is both fun and informative. Each month, Ann Soileau and Molly Lyles share their extensive knowledge with the attending youth, teaching them about the best planting times and locations for various plants. These young gardeners get the opportunity to plant seeds in their community garden, learning the importance of proper planting techniques and garden maintenance.

In addition to their work in the community garden, each club member leaves the meeting with a pack of seeds to plant at home. This encourages them to apply what they've learned and continue their gardening journey outside of the club meetings.

The Avoyelles Junior Master Garden Club is more than just a gardening group; it's a community where young people can develop a love for horticulture, gain valuable skills, and make lasting friendships. The club's activities not only promote environmental stewardship but also foster a sense of responsibility and pride in the participants. For more information on the Avoyelles Junior Master Garden Club and how to get involved, please visit their website or contact the local 4-H office.



Seed Spacing Demonstration



Plant Maintenance



Flower Harvest

Nutrition Outreach



Avoyelles Parish youth participating in Next Food Star competition



Avoyelles Parish Culinary Club receiving lesson demonstration

Youth work: Avoyelles Parish had numerous students attend 4-H University. We were excited to have a team compete in the Next Food Star. DeMarcus Thomas and Austin Leblanc prepared a Louisiana Gulf coast Summer Night themed dish featuring Louisiana Redfish. They worked closely with Amy Andrus and Jennifer Duhon to perfect their recipe and speaking skills. In June and July, Move Bunkie Forward hosted a summer camp for Avoyelles Youth. Our horticulture agent, Molly Lyles and nutrition agent, Jennifer Duhon partnered to provide a healthy lesson based on the Hungry Caterpillar and students were able to plant their own cucumber plant to take home and tend to. Our Teen Chef Culinary Club started in August with over 20 members. Members meet monthly to learn new skills and to prepare for future cooking competitions. We are also proud to announce three Culinary Club Ambassadors, Ethan Leblanc, Jacques Dauzat and Elizabeth Dupont. These students have been active members of the Culinary Club for three years and will now serve as mentors to our newer members. As mentioned in the last update, Brees Vasquez was chosen to work with Nutrition Agent, Jennifer Duhon to film kid friendly air fryer recipes. She was a natural star! Here is the link to the video: <https://youtu.be/WFngbedQ5u4> Or you can view the video on our LSU AgCenter website, search Build a Healthy Meal.



Nutrition Agent Jennifer Duhon demonstrating lesson to the Avoyelles Society for the Developmentally Delayed (ASDD)

Adult work: Dining with Diabetes and Smart Portion classes were a hit with the Bunkie Council on Aging. Clients learned more about healthy eating and exercise to improve their quality of life. Lunch and Learns with Move Bunkie Forward provided great tips for the community. And Life Lesson classes with the Avoyelles Society for Developmentally Delayed delivered smiles and skills as clients learn how to read a recipe, measure ingredients, and use kitchen equipment to prepare healthy meals and snacks.

Future work: Learning Labs-Healthy Holidays will be hosted in Mansura and Bunkie in December. Look for more Learning Lab opportunities in the New Year. Or contact us at the Avoyelles LSU AgCenter to learn more about our nutrition agent can partner with your group. There will be a quarterly series beginning in March with the Avoyelles Parish Library system. This will be a collaboration of healthy eating and gardening.

Clubs, Clinics, and Camps

Red, White, and Blue Cooking Workshop



Avoyelles Parish youth showcasing final product of cooking workshop

On July 2nd, Avoyelles 4-H members arrived at the LSU Ag Center excited to try new 4th of July recipes. We began the workshop by discussing kitchen safety, knife skills, and recipe reading. Then the real fun began! Youth worked together to bake a yellow cake. While the cake was baking, they washed and cut fresh strawberries and raspberries. After discussing the benefits of Greek yogurt and fruits, they repeatedly layered yogurt, raspberries, blueberries and protein-rich granola in a Mason jar to create a patriotic yogurt parfait. Timing worked out great as the cake finished baking just as they completed the parfaits. Next, they made holes in the cake and then poured a mixture of three milks, pudding, and vanilla extract over the cake to be absorbed. While the cake was cooling in the refrigerator, youth proceeded to make All-American skewers. For this recipe, fresh marinated mozzarella cheese balls were used. For many, this was their first time trying this new flavor. And it was a success! They ate every bite of the cheese and then asked for more. After eating their skewers and parfaits, it was time to remove the cake from the refrigerator. Their final steps were to cover the cake with reduced fat whipped topping and then garnish it with strawberries and blueberries in the shape of an American flag. The morning ended with everyone taking home a slice of cake, their Mason jars, and copies of each recipe. This workshop was just one example of how 4-H promotes healthy living and independence in youth.

Livestock Exhibitor Day



Adult Volunteer Carolyn Bordelon providing information on rabbit species and maintenance

The annual Avoyelles Livestock Exhibitor Day, hosted by Livestock Ambassadors and Ann Soileau, brought together 4-H youth and their families for a day of learning and fun. This event is a cornerstone of the 4-H livestock program, aimed at educating and engaging the community in the rewarding experience of showing livestock.

Participants had the opportunity to interact with various animals, gaining hands-on experience and valuable insights into livestock care and exhibition. The Livestock Ambassadors, along with Ann Soileau, provided expert guidance and shared their knowledge, helping attendees understand the intricacies of preparing and presenting animals for shows. A highlight of this year's event was the stick horse rodeo, a fun and creative activity hosted by the ambassadors. Young participants enjoyed the playful competition, which added an extra layer of excitement to the day. The rodeo not only entertained but also helped to build camaraderie among the youth and their families.

The Avoyelles Livestock Exhibitor Day is designed to promote the 4-H livestock program and encourage more families to get involved. By offering a welcoming and informative environment, the event aims to inspire a new generation of livestock enthusiasts and foster a deeper connection to agriculture.

For more information on the 4-H livestock program and upcoming events, please visit the Avoyelles 4-H website or contact the local 4-H office.

Bacon and Eggs Cooking Class



Youth completing participating in cooking workshop



Youth enjoying the recipes they learned and demonstrated



In preparation for going back to school, Avoyelles 4-H hosted a cooking class in which participants learned multiple ways to cook bacon and eggs. After discussing the risk of Salmonella from raw eggs and foodborne illnesses from undercooked bacon, youth had a lesson on handwashing and food safety. They then experimented with multiple methods of cooking eggs. First, they used the oven to bake egg omelets in a muffin tin. While this was baking, they used the microwave to each make scrambled eggs in a mug. The youth were surprised at how quick and easy it was to cook eggs in the microwave and take it on the go for a healthy breakfast. Next, they tried cooking boiled eggs in three ways: stovetop, air fryer, and Dash Rapid Egg Cooker. They discovered that the air fryer method worked best for soft boiled eggs and the Dash Rapid Egg Cooker produced the eggs that were easiest to peel. Their stovetop boiled eggs came out great but required more monitoring than the other two methods. The conversation moved to the ease of preparing boiled eggs ahead of time and packing them in school lunches for a protein boost, and then our gears switched.

Bring on the bacon!! This was the general consensus in the kitchen as the 4-H members had their fill of eggs and prepared their bacon recipes. They began by cooking bacon in two air fryers. After cutting bacon strips in half, they laid them out on the bottom of the first air fryer basket. In the second air fryer, they twisted full strips of bacon and placed them into the basket. While those were cooking, they prepared a cookie sheet with parchment paper to reduce clean up and then lined it with thick bacon strips. They baked them at 400 degrees for 25 minutes and were pleasantly surprised with the ease of cooking and clean up as well as the delicious, crispiness of the bacon. When they tasted the air fryer bacon, they found the twisted bacon was crispier than the straight strips. While they enjoyed the taste of the bacon, they learned that the cleanup was more extensive with the air fryers and was not as convenient for a before school breakfast.

Next, they cooked bacon in the microwave. Many of the youth expected the bacon to be soft and possibly undercooked in the microwave, but they were impressed with the final result. They ended the bacon experiments with the traditional method of frying bacon on the stove. As youth took turns cooking on the stovetop, they discussed how messy it was and the fact that the bacon had to be

monitored so they could not walk away from the stove to do other tasks. This was the most inconvenient way to prepare bacon before a school morning. They enjoyed the taste of every bacon method, but they had to compare each method to choose a favorite. The winner?? Oven-baked bacon!! This workshop was a great way to get our 4-H members ready for back-to-school and prepared them for protein packed breakfasts.

Pet Show and Pumpkin Painting Contest



Pet Show Contestant



Pumpkin Painting Contestant



Pumpkin Painting Contestant

On October 10, 2024, the Avoyelles 4-H program and Avoyelles Animal Clinic teamed up to host their much-anticipated yearly pet show. The event, held at the Avoyelles Animal Clinic, brought together pets and their young owners for a day filled with fun, creativity, and community spirit. The pet show featured a variety of entertaining contests, including best costumes, best tricks, and the ever-popular pet and owner look-alike competition. Participants went all out, dressing their pets in imaginative costumes and showcasing impressive tricks, much to the delight of the audience. This year, the event also saw the return of the pumpkin painting contest, adding an extra layer of creativity and excitement. Both pets and their owners participated, creating colorful and unique pumpkin designs that were judged alongside the other contests. The event was a resounding success, with families and community members coming together to celebrate their love for animals and the creativity of the youth. The judges had a tough time selecting winners, as all participants displayed remarkable talent and enthusiasm. The Avoyelles 4-H program and Avoyelles Animal Clinic continue to foster a sense of community and provide valuable opportunities for youth engagement through events like this. Their commitment to creating fun and educational experiences for young people and their pets is evident in the success of this annual pet show. For more information on upcoming events and how to get involved with Avoyelles 4-H, please visit their website or contact the local 4-H office.

Livestock State Fair Quiz Bowl Team



2024 Avoyelles Parish State Fair Quiz Bowl Team

On Saturday, November 2nd, the Avoyelles Livestock Ambassadors made a remarkable showing at the Louisiana State Fair Livestock Quiz Bowl, securing both 1st and 4th places in a competitive field of 12 teams. The event, which tested participants' knowledge of livestock management, care, and industry practices, saw Avoyelles bringing two teams, each consisting of four dedicated members. The competition was fierce, but the Avoyelles teams demonstrated exceptional skill and teamwork. Their hard work and preparation paid off as one team clinched the top spot, while the other finished strong in 4th place. This impressive performance highlights the depth of talent and commitment within the Avoyelles Livestock Ambassadors program.

A special mention goes to their 4-H agent, Ann Soileau, whose guidance and support were instrumental in their success. Congratulations to all the team members and their supporters for this outstanding achievement! Their success at the Louisiana State Fair is a testament to their dedication and passion for livestock education and excellence.

Commodity Cookery



Volunteer Judges for the Commodity Cookery Contest

demonstrated exceptional skill, creativity, and a passion for cooking, setting them apart in a highly competitive field.

Adult volunteers from across Avoyelles Parish played a vital role in the contest, serving as judges for the diverse array of dishes. Their task was no easy feat as they evaluated entries based on taste, presentation, and originality.

The Commodity Cookery Contest is a cherished tradition in Avoyelles Parish, emphasizing the importance of agricultural education, nutrition, and hands-on learning. The event not only fosters a love for cooking but also connects participants to the farming roots of their community.

As the winners prepare to represent Avoyelles Parish at the regional competition, we also look to the future. With plans for next year's contest already in motion, we encourage more youth in Avoyelles Parish to get involved. Cooking is a fundamental skill that can be mastered at any age, and 4-H provides a platform for young people to discover their passions and develop their potential. Congratulations to all participants for making this year's contest a resounding success!



Judging at the Commodity Cookery



Judging at the Commodity Cookery



Judging at the Commodity Cookery

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Avoyelles Year End Crop Report



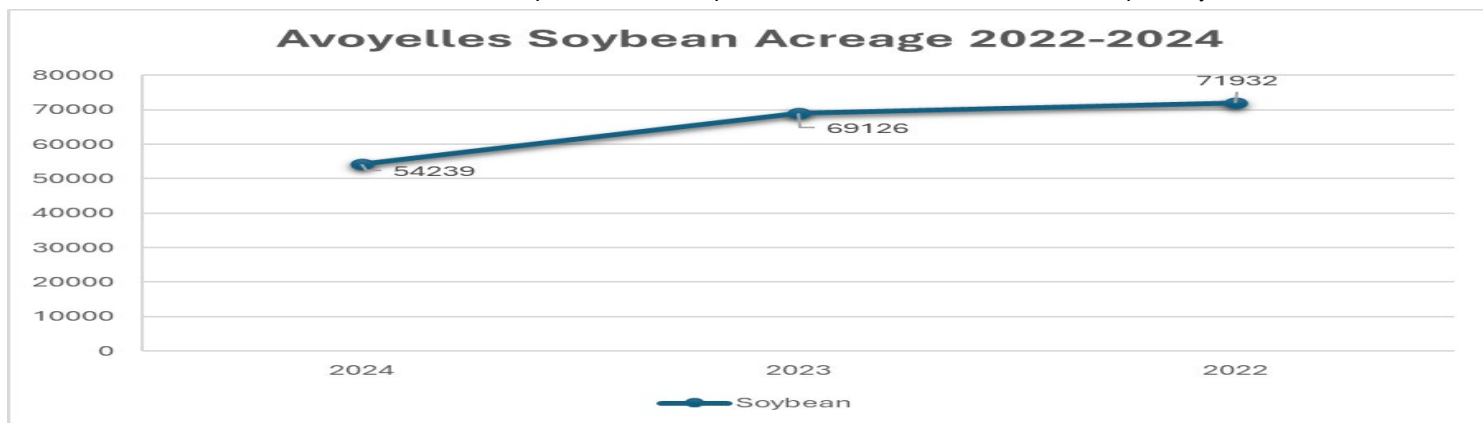
Justin Dufour with Avoyelles farmer, Dr. Fred Collins, checking wheat crop for Hessian Fly Damage

Despite rainy planting conditions for much of the Spring, Avoyelles row crops saw slightly above average production across commodities. Soybeans remain the parish's crop with the most acreage, followed by sugarcane, which has surpassed corn as the 2nd most planted crop. Soybean acreage in Avoyelles has been 54,239, 69,126, and 71,932 acres, respectively. Due to the inflated numbers and how it skews the visuals, soybean acreage is not included in the graph on the next page that illustrates crop acreage in Avoyelles for the past 3 years. Soybean production across the parish varies across operations. Multiple maturity groups are utilized throughout farms to spread out risks and create more efficient management timelines. The most common maturity group planted in Avoyelles are early 5's.

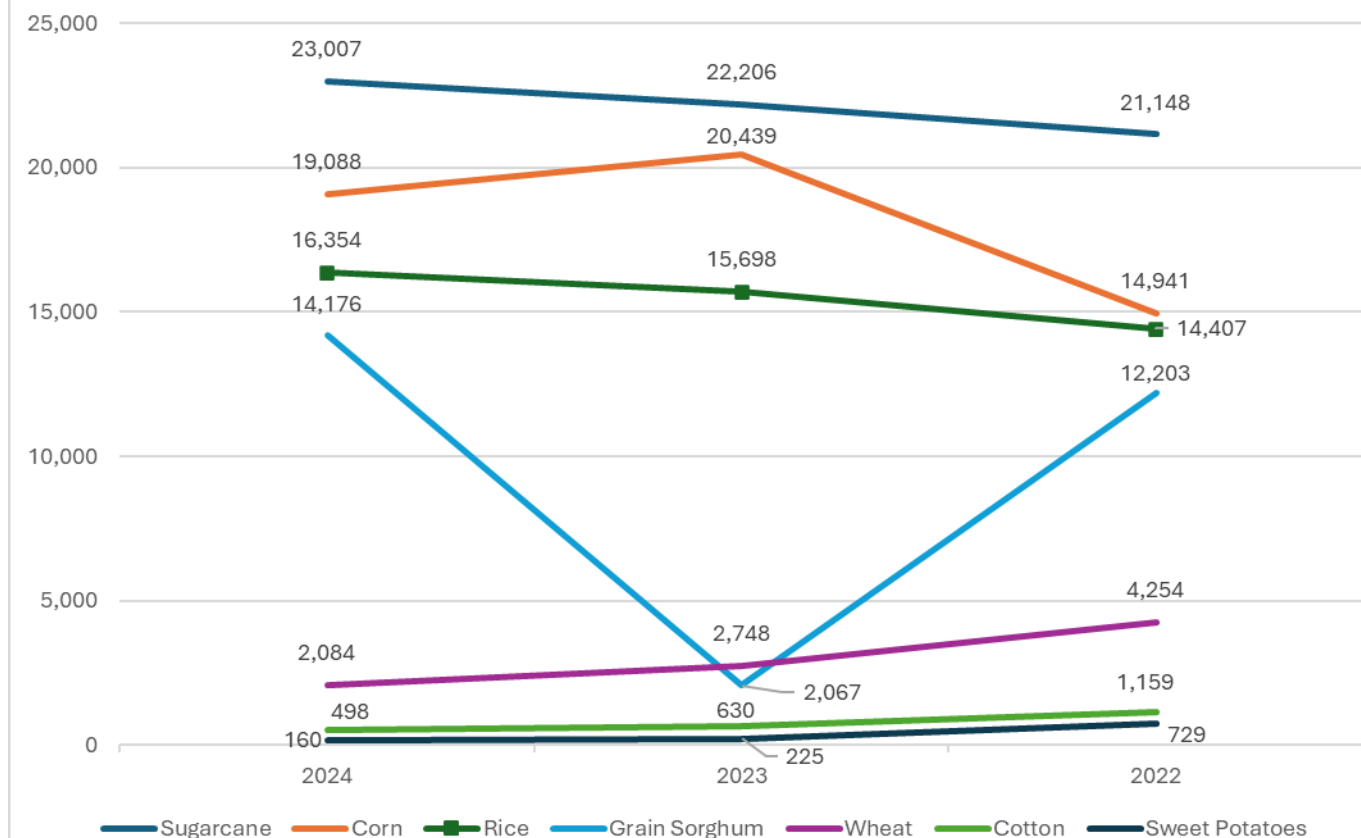
As mentioned, sugarcane has seated itself as the parish's 2nd most common crop. This is due to the high global demand of sugar and the policies in place that protect the longevity of the market. Despite underwhelming production last year due to the drought, sugarcane is as stable of a crop, production wise, as it comes, due to many genetic advances over the last decade in breeding programs. Furthermore, planting and harvest groups established through cooperative mills allows for an attractive opportunity to producers that do not possess the specific equipment needed to do the aforementioned work.

Corn, rice, and grain sorghum were all similar in the amount of acreage planted in Avoyelles in 2024. All 3 crops have increased in acreage over the past 2 years, mostly due to market potential, or lack thereof, for the other commodities. Rice possesses the most stable acreage, due to the nature of the crop and how producers must commit to the crop because of the infrastructure developed on their farm. Corn and grain sorghum acreage fluctuate yearly. This is because the crop is easily replaceable in a rotation and producers will put forth their best guess on where the market will fall for the products. Avoyelles historically plants the most grain sorghum acreage in the state, whether it's a low or high acreage year.

Cotton, sweet potatoes, and wheat remain in a downward trend regarding planted acres in Avoyelles. The cotton acreage statewide has consistently declined over the past 5 years due to underwhelming production, mostly because of weather conditions throughout and at the end of the growing season. Sweet potatoes, the parish's most beloved crop, has also seen an acreage decline due to operation retirements. As of 2024, the parish has 1 cotton producer and 3 commercial sweet potato producers. Wheat acreage varies every winter due to market fluctuations. Like cotton and sweet potatoes, the crop has seen a decline in acres over the past 5 years.

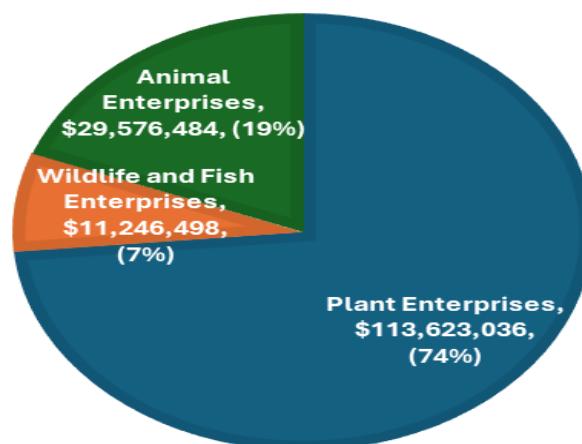


Avoyelles Crop Acreage 2022-2024



2023 AVOYELLES PARISH GROSS FARM VALUE

■ Plant Enterprises ■ Wildlife and Fish Enterprises ■ Animal Enterprises



LSU AgCenter Radio Spot

As a reminder, the Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter has a weekly radio segment that airs every Wednesday morning. The radio spot offers the opportunity to update stakeholders on all of our programming and important information pertaining to agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, and nutrition and community health. Additionally, it gives 4-H youth the platform to improve communication abilities and develop key skills regarding media relations. We want to extend our appreciation to Mr. Todd Laborde, owner of the radio station, and his staff for allowing us to reach our clientele.



Molly's Minute – Horticulture Update



Molly Lyles demonstrating proper planting to Avoyelles 4-H Junior Master Gardener's

Fortunately, we've been able to collaborate on strategies to mitigate these problems for next season, including implementing cultural practices such as crop rotation and enhancing fungicide spray programs. Seed selection plays a significant role in managing these diseases, so growers are now more aware of the importance of purchasing seed varieties that are resistant to common pathogens like anthracnose.

Beyond the hands-on support for individual growers, the importance of technical assistance from institutions like the LSU AgCenter cannot be overstated. The LSU AgCenter plays a critical role in providing research-based guidance, resources, and recommendations tailored to the unique needs of Louisiana farmers. By working directly with cooperative extension agents, growers gain access to the latest knowledge on pest management, disease prevention, and sustainable farming practices.

One of the impactful aspects of the LSU AgCenter's role is its ability to offer advice on integrated pest management (IPM). IPM practices are essential for minimizing pest damage while reducing reliance on chemical treatments. Through research and extension services, the AgCenter helps farmers develop customized IPM strategies that include cultural, biological, and chemical control methods. This integrated approach empowers growers to manage their crops more effectively and sustainably.

Ultimately, the collaboration between growers and technical assistance providers like the LSU AgCenter is crucial for the continued success of Louisiana's agricultural community. By providing expert guidance and promoting sound agricultural practices, we can help farmers reduce their risk of disease outbreaks, enhance crop resilience, and ensure that they can continue to grow and thrive in the years to come.

Lawn Burweed

Getting ahead of weeds in the lawn is a yearlong activity in central Louisiana. To reduce the impact and spread of weeds in our turf grasses, it is essential to know the type of grass you have and to properly identify any weeds present. Identifying your grass type and following the specific maintenance practices recommended will enhance the health and vigor of your lawn. The LSU AgCenter provides Best Management Practices for various turf grasses, and I encourage you to check this out or contact your local extension service for more details. Understanding the weeds in your lawn, their growth cycles, and the appropriate times to treat is crucial. Once you know what weeds are present, creating a calendar or reminders for when and what to apply throughout the year can significantly reduce weed pressure.

A common call I receive in the spring is about burweed. Burweed is also referred to as sticker weed and is most noticeable when it produces seeds covered in sharp spines or burs in the spring. If you've ever tried walking barefoot in the lawn in the spring and had to hurry back on tip toes to get shoes or just decided to continue walking while getting poked on the bottom of your feet, you most likely know which weed I'm referring to. By that stage, the plant has already created seeds so there is little that can be done to treat them at this point. There are a few tools that can help remove these seeds on the internet, but I cannot personally speak of their effectiveness as I have

As the horticulture agent for Avoyelles Parish, I've had the privilege of working alongside passionate Avoyelles residents who are deeply committed to cultivating healthy vegetable crops. Over the past few months, I've been working with several vegetable farmers facing challenges with various diseases affecting their crops. Disease management in vegetable production is an ongoing issue that many Louisiana farmers encounter and providing them with the right tools and knowledge to combat these problems is essential for improving crop health and yields.

One issue that I have been working with growers on in Avoyelles Parish this fall is with late-season cucurbits such as cucumbers, squash, and melons. These crops are a valuable addition to a fall garden before the first freeze, but this year, several growers experienced issues with diseases, such as virus buildup and anthracnose.

never used them. Management of burweed begins around October in central Louisiana. Burweed is a cool season weed that germinates in the cooler temperatures of early fall and continues to grow throughout the winter in Louisiana. Around this time of year, burweeds start to germinate. Applying a pre-emerge can help reduce germination of this weed and others. Although I anticipate that many burweed seeds from last year have already germinated, I would encourage applying a pre-emerge for lawns if you haven't done so already and re-apply according to the label instructions.

During the next few months from December to February, watch for young burweed plants, which resemble young parsley or carrot leaves. They have a low growing habit so close inspection is required. Treat these with a post emergent herbicide labeled for burweed. Herbicides with the active ingredient atrazine, or a combination of 2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba are labeled to treat burweed and are available to homeowners. It is important to follow the directions on the label as there may be specific instructions for applying products based on the lawn grass that you are applying these over. For more information contact your local extension agent.



Narrowly divided leaves



Seed bur



Branching growth habit

Lichen

A common call that I have been receiving from my parishes is concerning lichens on trees. Lichens are seen growing on trees and other structures in our landscape. I pass by a wooden bench at LSUA that is covered in lichens all the time. I also see lichens on trees around the campus. Oftentimes the tree will have a few lichens growing on the branches under the canopy of leaves but sometimes I will see them filling the entire tree or entire branches with little to no leaves growing. This is when I primarily get the call. They think that the lichens are the reason that the plant is unhealthy or dying but that is not the case. Lichens are epiphytes like bromeliads and orchids. Epiphytes use trees and other objects as a surface to grow on, but they are not parasites or pathogens. Epiphytes do not depend on the tree for nutrients, photosynthesis or water.

An increase in lichens on a tree is typically a sign that the tree is stressed. When a tree is stressed, there may be less leaves to shade out the branches underneath. The access to more sunlight leads to an increase in lichen growth. Plant stress can be due to insects, disease and other pests, water stress, improper fertilization, compaction and more. I believe that the drought last year is why I am seeing an increase in these calls. The answer to what to do about lichens is to address the underlying stressors. Avoid compaction around the roots, keep an eye out for insects and other pests that may be harming the tree, pay attention to over saturation of soils and drought conditions, and look up proper fertilization and pruning care for those specific plants that is from a trusted research-based source like the LSU AgCenter website. While this is oftentimes not necessary, epiphytes can be sprayed with a 2:1 ratio of water to baking soda to dry them out. Again, typically that is not necessary, and I would encourage addressing the underlying stress that is causing this issue.

If you have a question regarding lichens, I hope this information will help you to answer their questions. Below are links to articles with more detailed information about lichens.



Multiple forms of lichen on tree branch

2025 Crop Production Meetings Announced



2025 LSU AgCenter Crop Production Meetings

Avoyelles, Grant, and Rapides Parishes

Avoyelles Soybean and Feed Grain Meeting

January 30, 2025 8:00AM – 12:00PM

Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter

8592 HWY 1 Mansura, LA 71350



Avoyelles/Rapides Rice Production Clinic

February 6, 2025 8:30AM – 12:00PM

Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter

8592 HWY 1 Mansura, LA 71350



Avoyelles/Rapides Sugarcane Meeting

February 18, 2025 8:30AM – 12:00PM

Simplot Growers Solutions

580 Evergreen St. Bunkie, LA 71322



CenLA Crops and Cattle Forum

February 26, 2025 8:00AM – 12:00PM

State Evacuation Shelter

8125 HWY 71 Alexandria, LA 71302





For more information, contact your local LSU AgCenter Office

Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter | 8592 HWY 1, Suite 1 | Mansura, Louisiana 71350 | Phone: 318-964-2245 | Fax: 318-964-2259
Office Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our website:

LSUAgCenter.com

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