Horticulture Hints

Summer 2005

LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

Fruits

Pecans

Considerable nutlet drop may occur in June and early July. Part of the drop is caused by lack of pollination. These nutlets have few, if any, blemishes. The hickory shuckworm and the pecan nut curculio also are often responsible for considerable nutlet drop in June and July. A puncture can normally be seen in the nut. Frequently, a white blotch can be seen around the puncture of shuckworm. A tobacco type of stain is usually seen around the puncture of curculio.

Nuts on pecan trees increase in size rapidly in June, July and early August. Drought at this time can cause the pecans to be smaller than normal.

Nuts on a pecan tree are in their final stage of development in August and September. It is during this stage that the kernels go through a final fill-out, changing from a "water stage" to a "dough stage." Water is critical at this stage. Soak trees weekly if it doesn't rain. Letting a hose drip under the trees for 8-10 hours will encourage deep water penetration into the soil.

Summer Pruning of Peaches

Summer pruning of peach trees can be a useful tool. Base pruning on logic, not instinct.

If vigorous trees are not pruned, the fruiting wood inside the tree becomes shaded. Shaded current season's shoot growth will be short and weak. In a single season, shade can reduce vigor and even kill fruiting wood. Shading will force fruiting wood higher up or further out.

The main objective of summer pruning is to increase light penetration and maintain the vigor of fruiting wood in the major fruiting zone of the tree. In general, this is done by:

1. Reducing the height of trees to lower the major fruiting zone and improve light penetration.
2. Thinning cuts within the tree to permit light penetration within the fruiting zone.
3. Selectively removing vigorous suckers that shade the inside of the tree.

The actual amount of pruning must be determined from tree to tree. In general, vigorous trees benefit from at least two or three thinning cuts in each quarter of the tree (1- to 2-inch limbs) and removal of the most vigorous watersprouts (thumb-sized) from the center of tree, particularly waterspouts from bench cuts within the major fruiting zone. These few, but relatively big, thinning cuts will increase light penetration without stimulating excessive regrowth.

As you evaluate the pruning need of a given block, keep in mind that ideally the job should not:

1. Stimulate vigorous regrowth because this hurts flower bud formation. Regrowth that develops in July and August following post-harvest pruning develops a low percentage of flower buds.
2. Expose scaffolds to sunscald. Complete removal of shoot growth from the tree's center during the summer exposes scaffolds, particularly flat areas created by bench cuts, to sunscald. This injury may contribute to disease entry and weaken trees. There is no advantage to stripping the inside of trees. When removing suckers from the center of trees, leave the shorter, less vigorous growth to provide shade for the scaffolds.

Blueberries

Blueberry plants will put on a second flush of growth in August through October, and a fertilizer application is needed at this time. Use 3/4 ozs. of ammonium sulfate per year of age up to a maximum of 4 ozs. per plant. Use urea at a 1 oz. rate per year of age on soils with pH of 5 or less. Be sure to distribute the fertilizer evenly at least 10-12 inches from the base of the plant.

Rabbiteye blueberries are vigorous growers and can reach 6 to 8 feet in a few years. Prune back to 48 inches after harvest. Plants will have ample time to produce more fruiting wood before frost. Old, unproductive canes can be removed to ground level, leaving a maximum of eight to 10 vigorous canes. Dormant pruning of rabbiteye blueberries removes fruiting wood and reduces yields. After-harvest pruning is best.

Figs

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

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

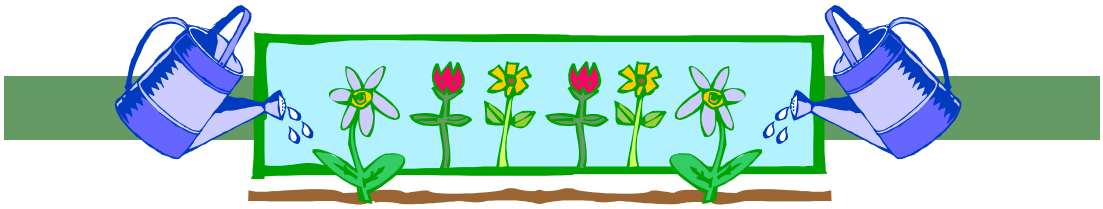
Pears

Pears differ from most fruits in that, to obtain the best quality, the fruit should be harvested before it is fully ripe. Fruit left to ripen on the tree becomes coarse and gritty. Pears will become sweeter after picking.

Pears are ready to pick when the fruit changes from hard to firm, about the firmness of a softball. There is often a slight color change from green to yellow green in some varieties. The small dots or indentations in the skin, lenticels, are white on immature fruit. The lenticels change to brown when the fruit is ready to pick. Most Louisiana pears are ready for harvest in late August or September.

Harvested fruit should be placed in a bowl or paper bag and let stand at room temperature until ripe. The fruit is ripe when it yields to gentle thumb pressure applied near the base of the stem. Ripe fruit should be refrigerated until ready to use.

John Pyzner



Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

Roses

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

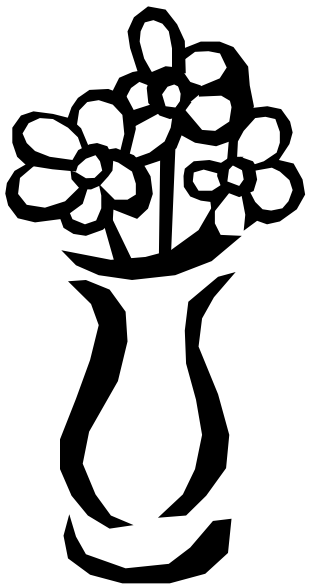
Old garden roses, such as China, Bourbon, Noisette, Tea and others, would likely benefit from a late summer pruning, but it is more optional. Trim these roses as needed to keep them shapely and the desired size. Modern shrub and landscape roses also may be pruned now. Generally, these roses are cut back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

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

Great Heat-tolerant Plants for Colorful Summer Flowerbeds

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

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



Longer Life for Cut Flowers

One of the great pleasures of flower gardening is bringing the beauty indoors in arrangements of cut flowers. The following tips will help your cut flowers last as long as possible.

1. Before cutting, select flowers that are not fully open so they will last longer.
2. Cut flowers using a sharp knife or scissors.
3. Strip away the foliage from the lower one-third to one-half of the stem and immediately place in a deep container of warm water.
4. Before going inside, wash off the flowers and foliage with a gentle spray of water to remove dust, insects, etc.
5. Store freshly cut flowers in a cool location for several hours prior to arranging them, if possible, to allow them to take up plenty of water.
6. As you arrange them, recut the stems making the new cut while holding the stem under water.
7. Keep the water fresh and clean by changing it every couple of days if the design of the arrangement permits it.
8. Do not place fresh flower arrangements where they will receive direct sun or heat.

You Really Should Use Mulch

Mulches in your garden will prevent many weeds from growing. Weeds that germinate from seed will not be able to sprout under a mulch. Perennial weeds such as nutgrass are suppressed and become more easily pulled as they tend to be more shallow rooted when mulched.

Mulches break the force of rain drops hitting the soil; this keeps the soil from becoming so compacted. Less compaction of the soil allows for better root growth since more oxygen is available to plant roots growing in a loose soil.

Mulches shade the soil and keep the soil temperature cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. This is especially important because of our high summer temperatures. If the soil becomes too hot, plant health will be affected.

Mulches conserve moisture so we have to water less frequently, and the moisture availability to vegetable plants is more even and regular.

Another benefit of an organic mulch (leaves, grass clippings) is that when your vegetable crop is removed, you can incorporate the mulch into the soil. The mulch will decay and enrich the soil, improving it for future production of vegetables.

Dividing Bromeliads

Bromeliads are tropical or semitropical plants that are popular container plants. Once a bromeliad blooms, the original plant slowly dies but produces new plants, or pups, at its base before it does. One plant generally produces several pups, so you usually end up with more bromeliads than you started out with. Dividing bromeliad pups is a great way to develop your plant propagation skills. Pups are separated from the original plant any time after they have grown to be about one-third the size of the original plant.

Using a sharp knife or hand pruners, cut the pups from the original plant at the point where they are joined. The pups should have some root development, but if they don't that's OK. Pups will form their own roots after they are potted. Pot each pup individually in a small pot (generally a 3- or 4-inch pot is large enough) using a quality potting mix. Bromeliads should be planted only up to the base of their lowest leaves. Since the newly potted pups will have a poorly developed root system or none at all, you may need to support them initially by placing two or three small stakes around the plant (chopsticks or pencils work well) until they are well established. Keep the potting medium moist but not constantly wet, and, if the bromeliad is one of those that forms a cup with its leaves, make sure you keep it filled with water.

Adequate light is critical to getting the plant that grows from the pup to bloom. With good care, the pups will generally bloom one to three years after separation from the original plant.

It's nice to know that when you buy a bromeliad or receive one as a gift, if all goes well you will end up with more plants than you started out with. This is one of the great joys of growing bromeliads and why they are so much fun to collect.

Bark Lice Harmless

You may be alarmed to see a thin film of silvery webbing over large areas of the bark of your trees in late summer. The webbing may extend from the ground up the trunk and into the branches. The insects that produce the webbing, bark lice or psocids, are harmless. They are scavengers and will not hurt the tree. No control is necessary.

Reducing Summer Pest Problems

It is important to remember that the use of pesticides is only one method for controlling pests. There are other techniques gardeners should use that can help prevent the severe infestations that make the use of pesticides necessary. Minimizing the use of pesticides, whether they are chemical or organic, is always a good idea.

Make it a point to inspect your landscape frequently for developing problems. Weed control is a prime example where early intervention is far easier and more effective than letting a situation get really bad before taking action.

One of the best defenses against pest problems is to keep your plants in tiptop condition through good culture. Good culture includes giving your plants proper spacing, soil, drainage, water, light and nutrients.

An excellent way to avoid insect and disease problems is through plant selection. Simply do not plant those plants known to be prone to insect or disease problems. Instead, choose plants well adapted to our climate and those not generally prone to major problems. If you have a plant or plants that constantly seem to have something attacking them despite your best efforts, consider removing them and replacing them with plants that are more carefree.

Planting the same type of plants in the same bed year after year in flower or vegetable gardens can cause a buildup of disease organisms in the soil that use that plant as a host. Try to plant different things in your garden in different places every year whenever possible.

Proper sanitation is another important factor in controlling insect and disease problems. Fruit and fallen leaves infected with disease should be raked up, bagged and thrown away. Never leave rotten vegetables and leaves on the ground in your vegetable garden.

The application of mulch to soil under plants can reduce incidence of some diseases. This is especially helpful when growing fruit and vegetable crops like tomatoes, squash and strawberries. Mulches are the best way to save work and reduce the use of herbicides to control weeds in beds.

Keep dead branches regularly pruned out of fruit trees, shade trees and shrubs. Dead and rotting branches can serve as points of entry and sources of infection for such problems as melanose in citrus and carpenter ants and wood rot in shade trees and shrubs. When problems do occur, proper diagnosis is critical to deal with the situation. Agents at your local LSU AgCenter Extension office can help you identify problems and recommend solutions.

Prepare Trees for Hurricane Season

Well before the possibility of a hurricane, evaluate shade trees to make sure they are in good shape.

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

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

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

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

Checklist for Summer

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

Allen Owings, Anthony Witcher and Dan Gill

Turfgrasses

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

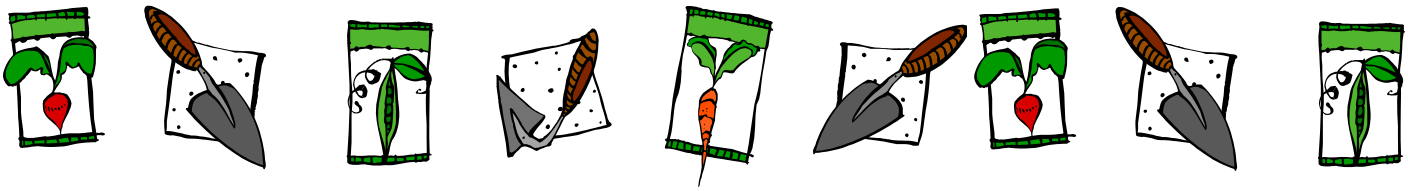
Watch for chinch bugs in St. Augustine and Bermuda grass. There's still time to dethatch through July if it's needed. Water and fertilize after dethatching.

Centipede should receive its second and last fertilizing in late July or August. It needs the most moisture of all the turfgrasses. On centipede, apply only 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. as a complete turf fertilizer or 17-0-17. Other types of grass can use about twice this rate. A slow-release turf blend fertilizer is best and worth the extra cost.

If your last fertilizing is in early September rather than August, add some potash with or shortly after only a light (1/4 pound) nitrogen application. You will need about 1 pound of potash equivalent per 1,000 sq. ft. You can apply this as 1 1/2 pounds muriate of potash. Apply all granular materials on a dry lawn, and water in. A winterizer fertilizer should be low in nitrogen and high in potassium, or just use 0-0-60 (muriate of potash). Don't just go by the name 'winterizer,' because it may be a northern type of fertilizer or fescue blend.

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

Thomas J. Koske



Vegetable Gardening

Vegetables to Plant in June:

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

Vegetables to Plant in July:

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

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

Vegetables to Plant in August:

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

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

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

Crop Highlights

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

These crops, especially cauliflower, require fast, continuous growth for proper head development. Keep them well watered and fertilized. Sidedress plants with 3/4 pound (1 1/2 cups) of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row three to four weeks after transplanting and again in 14 days.

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

Broccoli	Cauliflower
Premium Crop	Snow Crown
Green Cornet	Majestic
Packman	Candid Charm
Arcadia	Sierra Nevada
Everest	Cumberland
Wentworth	

Snap Beans: Late August through early September is the best time to plant. Normally 50 to 55 days are required from planting until harvest. Don't let beans suffer from drought.

Choose Provider, Bluelake 274, Roma II, Derby, Top Crop, Royal Burgundy, Green Crop, Strike or Gator Green. For a yellow wax bean, choose Golden Wax. Usually bush beans will produce more successfully than pole beans in the fall because of their earlier maturity.

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

Irish Potatoes: Plant small whole potatoes saved from the spring crop from about mid August to early September. Good soil moisture is essential.

The seed potatoes may not sprout readily after planting because of a physiological rest period of about 90 days that they have to go through after harvesting in the spring. After this rest period is satisfied, the tubers should sprout. Fall yields are lower than spring yields. Use seed potatoes for seed pieces.

Cabbage: Plant seed beginning in mid July, and seed through September. You may also transplant beginning in early August through mid October. Fertilize the same as broccoli and cauliflower.

Space cabbage, cauliflower and Chinese cabbage about 12 to 14 inches apart and broccoli 6 to 12 inches apart. Double drills (two drills of plants spaced 10-12 inches apart on single row) will help maximize yield. Try Rio Verde for late plantings. Recommended early maturity varieties include Green Boy, Stonehead (AAS), Dynamo (AAS) and Pacifica. Maturing a little later are Rio Verde, Blue

Vantage, Solid Blue 780 and 790, Super Red 80, Red Rookie, Solid Red, Savoy Express, Savoy Ace (AAS), Savoy King (AAS) and Atlantis.

Squash and Cucumbers: These two crops can be planted in June, July and August. Summer plantings will normally be ready to begin harvesting after about six weeks. Yields are usually lower than spring plantings. A fall crop of yellow summer squash, zucchini and cucumbers can be grown by planting seed in August.

Squash vine borers may be a more severe problem in fall than in spring, so be prepared to control them with an insecticide. Viruses are a problem in the fall, so spray regularly to control insects that transmit them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Head Lettuce - Ithaca, South Bay, Raleigh, Great Lakes 659, Mission, Imperial 847, Minerro, Lake Superior.
- Leaf Lettuce - Forms a bunch instead of a head, has a crisp texture and curly leaves. Sierra, Red Sails, Salad Bowl, Simpson, Nevada, Sunset.
- Romaine Lettuce - Loaf-shaped head with coarse, wide-stemmed leaves. Parris Island, Augustas, Valmaine, Green Forest and Green Towers.
- Butterhead or Bibb Lettuce - Small heads with dark green, soft, very flexible leaves with small veins. Buttercrunch, Mantilia, Orfeo, Oak Leaf, Butterhead, Everglades, Florida Buttercrisp, Florida 202.
- Batavia types - Leaf lettuce that forms a loose head of medium green, crisp, flexible leaves with a unique flavor. Nevadi, Sierra.

Thomas Koske, James Boudreaux

Please contact your parish agent for additional information.

Agents: Add your contact information here.

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

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