



Horticulture Hints

Spring 2005



Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

Ferns Thrive in the Shade

Many hardy ferns will thrive in the shady areas of your landscape. The different species range in size from less than a foot to as tall as 3 feet. The leaves of ferns, called fronds, provide the primary ornamental feature of the plants.

One of the great things about ferns is that they are so easy to grow. Not prone to any major insect or disease problems, they are one of those plants you can just about plant and ignore. Ferns will grow best in areas that receive one to four hours of direct sun or dappled light during the day. Morning sun is greatly preferred. Definitely avoid hot, dry areas that receive several hours of direct sun in the afternoon, or areas that receive sun all day. If you want a fern-like plant for sunnier areas, you could plant yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) or asparagus fern (*Asparagus densiflorus* Sprengeri, not a true fern).

Some excellent ferns for use in the landscape include maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus-vernix*), holly fern (*Cyrtomium falcatum*), leatherleaf fern (*Rumohra adiantiformis*), sword fern (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*), Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), autumn fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*, known for its coppery red new fronds), lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), wood fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*), lace fern (*Microlepia strigosa*) and sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*).

Plant Warm-season Bedding Plants for Summer Color

Warm-season bedding plants grow and flower best in April through October, and we can begin planting them as early as late March in south Louisiana. But, gardeners who planted cool-season bedding plants will generally wait for them to begin to fade in late April or May, then remove and replace them with warm-season bedding plants.

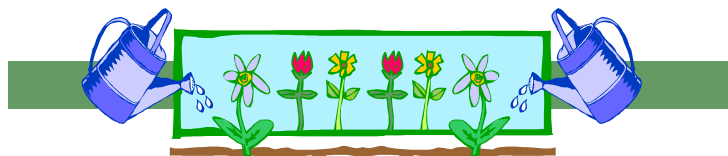
Tender perennials, such as impatiens, periwinkles, blue daze, pentas and begonias, are used as bedding plants along with true annuals, but, these plants have far more stamina and "staying power" in the summer flower garden. They

make outstanding bedding plants, often blooming from late spring until cool weather arrives in fall. True annuals rarely make it all the way through our exceptionally long summer growing season.

Choose annuals well suited to the growing conditions provided by the location where they will be planted. While most annuals need full sun (at least eight hours of direct sun) to part sun (about six hours of direct sun), some thrive in part shade (about four hours of direct sun) or shade (about two hours of direct sun). Even annuals that like part shade to shady locations, however, will generally not perform as well in full shade where they receive no direct sun. Caladiums, planted from tubers or growing plants, are one of the best choices for color in full shade.

Prepare your beds carefully before putting in summer bedding plants. First, eliminate any weeds or other unwanted plants. Next, turn the soil to a depth of at least 8 inches. Spread a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost, rotted leaves, aged manure, finely ground pine bark or peat moss over the bed, and then evenly sprinkle a light application of a granular or organic all-purpose fertilizer. Thoroughly blend the organic matter and fertilizer into the bed, rake smooth and you're ready to plant.

Make sure you plant the transplants no deeper than they were growing in the original container and at the proper spacing. Annual plantings are not low maintenance, and you should keep in mind the care they will need when deciding where, how large and how many beds you will plant. Mulch will reduce problems with weeds, but regular weeding will still be necessary. Regular watering, pest control and grooming (removing dead flowers and unattractive leaves) will keep them looking their best. In containers, hanging baskets and window boxes, annuals need regular watering and fertilization. Invite a rainbow into your garden this summer – plant flowers.



Warm-season Bedding Plants for Sun to Part Sun: Abelmoschus, Ageratum, Amaranthus, Balsam, Blue Daze*, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus (sun-tolerant types), Coreopsis, Cosmos, Dahlberg Daisy, Dusty Miller*, Gaillardia, Gomphrena, Lantana*, Lisianthus, Marigold, Melampodium, Narrow-leaf Zinnia, Ornamental Pepper*, Periwinkle*, Pentas*, Portulaca, Purslane*, Rudbeckia, Salvia*, Scaevola*, Sunflower, Tithonia, Torenia, Perennial Verbena, Zinnia.

Warm-season Bedding Plants for Part-shade to Shade: Balsam, Begonia*, Browallia, Caladium (perennial tuber), Cleome, Coleus*, Impatiens*, Pentas*, Salvia*, Torenia.

*Tender Perennials

Caladiums

Caladiums make outstanding additions to shady summer gardens. Easy enough for the casual gardener to expect routine success, the caladium's elegant beauty also makes it a staple in the most accomplished gardener's landscape. Native to tropical South America, caladiums thrive in the heat and humidity of our long summers. They are remarkably free from major insect or disease problems.

Caladiums grow best in shade to part shade (two to four hours of direct sun, preferably morning). In these conditions, they produce the lushest growth with large, colorful leaves. Some cultivars are more tolerant of sunny conditions and are successful in beds receiving part to full sun. According to trials at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, the cultivars that did best were Carolyn Whorton, Pink Beauty, White Wings, June Bride, Florida Cardinal and White Queen. Red Frills did not make the cut in this study, but it has been used successfully in sunny landscape plantings. Avoid hot, dry, sunny locations for best results.

You can buy caladium tubers and plant them directly into well-prepared beds. Purchasing tubers is the most economical way to add caladiums to your landscape. Caladiums are also available presprouted in 4- to 6-inch pots, and they will provide immediate color. Presprouted caladium tubers should be planted with the top of the root ball level with the soil of the bed. Once presprouted caladiums are planted, mulch the bed with 2 inches of your favorite mulch and water in. Plant unsprouted tubers about 1 to 1 1/2 inches below the soil surface. You should see growing points or even pinkish-white sprouts on the knobby side of the tuber. That side is planted up. The smoother side is the bottom of the tuber. Wait until unsprouted tubers have emerged and grown several inches tall before mulching them. Keep beds of caladiums well watered during the summer, especially those receiving lots of sun.



Landscaping with Periwinkles

Every year problems occur with landscape plantings of periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*) across Louisiana. Phytophthora root and stem rot is the typical disease responsible for most problems. Root rot and rotting of the lower stem just at and above the soil line are characteristics of the disease. For success with periwinkles, consider these tips:

1. Select full sun location. Periwinkles need eight hours of full sun daily for optimum performance.
2. Prepare the landscape bed properly to allow for drainage and aeration. Raise the bed at least 6 inches since internal drainage is essential.
3. Avoid early planting; plant in May. This allows the soil temperature to rise, and conditions are more favorable for root establishment and expansion.
4. Pay attention to planting depth. Planting individual cells/plugs/plants too deeply increases exposure of the root system and lower stem to unfavorable growing conditions.
5. Mulch properly to decrease splashing of rainfall and irrigation water from soil to the lower stem and foliage. Bedding plants should be mulched to a depth of 1 to 2 inches. Avoid excessive mulching.
6. Manage irrigation properly. Periwinkles require minimal irrigation and are frequently over-irrigated. Avoid overhead irrigation. It increases the incidence of alternaria leaf spot.
7. Don't plant periwinkles in the same bed consecutive years. Rotate with lantana, blue daze, pentas, melampodium, scaevola or sun coleus.
8. Consider using the Pacifica series of periwinkles. These have been among the top performers in LSU AgCenter trials.
9. Fungicides labeled for control of Phytophthora in landscape beds used for bedding plants include those containing aluminum tris (Aliette), etridiazole (Terrazole and Koban), metalaxyl (Subdue) and propamocarb hydroxide (Banol).



Pruning

Finish pruning summer-flowering trees and shrubs, such as crape myrtle, vitex, althea, oleander and abelia, this month. Ideally this should be done before they begin to sprout and grow. If any have sprouted, prune as soon as possible.

Avoid pruning of spring-flowering ornamental trees and shrubs, such as Japanese magnolia, silverbell, parsley hawthorn, Taiwan flowering cherry, quince, azalea, Indian hawthorn, deutzia, philadelphus, spirea, banana shrub, wisteria and camellia, until after they finish blooming. Any pruning done before they bloom will reduce their floral display.

There are a few shrubs, including gardenia, hydrangea, some old garden roses and many climbing roses, that are in a category of their own. They bloom in early summer, but they produced their flower buds last year or will produce flowering shoots from last year's growth. Extensive pruning done from now until they bloom will greatly reduce or eliminate flowering. Prune these plants in mid summer soon after they finish blooming.

Before you begin pruning, ask, and fully answer, two questions. First, why, specifically, do you feel the plant needs to be pruned? Or, what specific goal do you want to accomplish; what problem do you need to correct? If you can't come up with a valid reason to prune a plant, leave it alone. Second, how do you need to prune the plant to accomplish the goal? Study the plant carefully and decide what specifically needs to be done before you begin. Unless you are trying to create a clipped formal look with shrubs trained to be cubes, domes or other geometric forms, try to preserve the natural shape of the shrubs. Generally, avoid using hedge shears unless a clipped appearance is desired. Hand pruners used to make single individual cuts will give you a lot more control over what you prune and will help preserve the natural shape of the plant.

Rose Pest Problems

Get roses off to a great start by starting a regular spray program by early April for black spot control. You cannot wait to see the symptoms of this potentially destructive disease to control it. Only a regular, preventive program of spraying will do the job. Black spot is the most common disease of roses in Louisiana and causes nearly circular black spots with frayed or fringed margins. Infected leaves turn yellow and fall off, leaving the bush denuded of foliage and weakened. Most hybrid teas and grandiflora roses are particularly susceptible, but roses in any group, including old garden roses, can have problems with this disease. Weekly applications should be made from April through November for best control. If this seems too much trouble, get rid of cultivars that have constant problems with black spot, and choose those that

have more natural resistance to the disease. Products for controlling black spot (and other rose diseases) include captan, mancozeb (Manzate), triforine (Funginex), chlorothalonil (Daconil), thiophanate methyl (Fertilome Halt) and thiophanate methyl plus mancozeb.

A few insects cause problems in spring, most notably aphids and thrips. Aphids cluster on the buds and new growth, sucking out the sap of the plant. This can cause buds to abort and new growth to be distorted or deformed. Aphids are easily controlled with any common insecticide labeled for use on roses. Spray as needed since they often return when the original population is killed off (do not spray if natural predators, such as ladybugs, are present and controlling the population). Thrips are tiny insects that bore into the flower buds and feed on the petals. Infested flowers will not open properly, or they will open but have brown or tan edges to the petals. It's heartbreaking to see your spring and early summer flowers ruined. Systemic insecticides, such as acephate (Orthene, Isotox) or dimethoate (Cygon), applied weekly, will prevent this problem.

Use Pesticides Properly

As the weather warms, a number of insect pests become more active. Many still feel they should immediately get an insecticide and begin



spraying when they see insects or some apparent insect damage in gardens. But, just seeing an insect or insect damage is not reason enough to spray. The insect you see may not be harmful or may not cause enough damage to warrant the use of an insecticide. It may even be a beneficial insect. And if the damage is old and the pest has already come and gone, spraying won't do any good.

Before you decide to use an insecticide, it is still important to identify the insect causing the damage. Otherwise, you may spray the wrong pesticide or use an insecticide when it was not needed. Remember that no single insecticide will control all insect pests. Indiscriminate spraying may kill beneficial predatory insects that are eating pests on your plants, and this can actually cause pest problems to develop or become worse. You will have wasted time and effort and destroyed not a pest, but quite possibly a friend.

It is essential to read the entire label before purchasing and using a pesticide. This is the best way to be certain it will control the pest situation you are dealing with. If the label does not have specific information covering how you intend to use the pesticide, put it back and find a product that does. The label will also tell you how much to use and how to mix and apply it safely. Pay careful attention

to the safety precautions that must be taken, such as wearing protective clothing. Some pesticides have restrictions for use on certain plants and at certain temperatures that, if not followed, might cause the plants damage rather than helping them. You should read all of this before buying the pesticide.

You should also use an effective pesticide that is the safest and least toxic. Check the label of the pesticide container for one of three words. Caution denotes the least toxic category of pesticides. Warning appears on the label of the next most toxic category, and Danger is on the label of the most toxic.

The control method must be directed toward the pest. If the insect lives and feeds on the underside of the foliage, your spray should be directed there. If it lives on the trunk and branches, a light spray on the foliage will not be effective. Spray infested plants only and those nearby of the same kind. Do not spray everything in your landscape just because a few plants are infested.

Identifying insect pests and other problems in the garden is a major problem for home gardeners. Contact your local Extension office of the LSU AgCenter where the county agent can help you diagnose the problem and come up with an appropriate control strategy. If needed, you can submit a sample to the LSU AgCenter faculty in Baton Rouge for identification.

Take Advantage of Educational Opportunities

Many gardening organizations, public gardens and the LSU AgCenter have garden-related educational programs, classes, demonstrations, shows, plants sales, garden tours and a variety of other events during the next three months. Make an effort to take advantage of these opportunities while they are available. It is amazing how much useful information you can pick up. These events are local, and the information is accurate for your particular area. You will be able to find unique plants that may not be readily available from other sources at plant sales. And, also important is the chance to meet other gardeners, talk gardening and get new inspiration for working in your garden. Take some time out from the busy spring to participate in these events. You'll be glad you did.



Check list for March, April and May

1. Plant warm-season bedding plants beginning in mid March and continuing through early May. For best results, plant petunias by mid March and wait to plant periwinkles (vinca) until late April.
2. After spring bulbs have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns yellow before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms.
3. Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature changes. Excellent mulches are pine straw, chopped leaves and pine bark.
4. Divide and transplant older, large clumps of chrysanthemums in early March. Failure to divide plants can result in weak, spindly growth with few flowers.
5. Coleus are great annual bedding plants for Louisiana's landscapes. Try some of the newer sun-loving varieties.
6. Fertilize shrubs in the spring using a general purpose fertilizer. Carefully follow the label directions.
7. Watch for insect problems this spring. Lace bugs on azaleas and aphids or whiteflies on gardenias are common. Also examine camellias, sasanquas and hollies for scale insects on the lower foliage. Control with acephate or horticultural oils sprays.
8. To encourage more rapid re-blooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after their first flower cycle is completed this spring.
9. Roses may develop insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles are especially a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby.
10. Garden centers will have many crape myrtles in May and June. Plant these shrubs and trees (depending on the variety you select) for great flowering all summer. Most varieties also have exfoliating, colored bark.

Allen Owings, Dan Gill and Anthony Witcher



Lawns now show spring regrowth. Be careful not to push the season by forcing early growth with lots of fertilizer. If put on too early, it will feed the winter weeds. If put on too heavily, it will create a lush, weak growth sensitive to brown patch. Let the grass awaken gradually and show definite activity. Mow once or twice before first fertilizing.

If you wish to dethatch or power rake this year, wait until late spring when the turf is actively growing. Large dead areas are probably die-outs from winter kill or fall brown patch disease. Treat the yellow, actively diseased areas with fungicides like PCNB, iprodione, Bayleton, mancozeb, captan, thiophate, etc.

Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can reduce weeds in your turf. Some useful materials are 2,4-D blends, Speed Zone, Image, Vantage, Simazine and Atrazine. Your county agent can advise you. Apply herbicides either before or several weeks after first green-up, but not during. Some herbicides should not be used on certain grass types (read labels well).

Broadleaf weeds often can be controlled by using selective postemergence blends that contain two or more herbicides. Formulations of 2,4-D or blends with 2,4-D are available for most southern grasses, but be extra careful on St. Augustinegrass.

Examples of 2,4 D blends are Green Light Wipe Out, Kmart Broadleaf Weed Killer for southern grasses, Spectrum 33 Plus, Advanced Southern Weed Killer, Trimec, Fertilome Weed Out and Weed B Gon (Southern Lawn II). Speed Zone is a four-way blend.

Most labels will stress use on younger weeds growing in the cooler mid spring. A temporary discoloration of the lawn may occur. A second application two or three weeks later is usually needed (sometimes a third). Wet the foliage only;

don't saturate the soil. Control weeds NOW in spring! Mow herbicide-treated lawns several times before collecting clippings for compost or mulch.

Read and follow label directions! Some products contain phenoxy (2,4-D) herbicides. Avoid drift and keep spray away from gardens. Clean these sprayers thoroughly with an ammonia solution if sprayer is used on good plants. Best to buy a spray for only weed killers.

For bermuda or zoysia lawns, weed killers with MSMA or DSMA often provide good selective control for most grassy and some broadleaf weeds. Use these arsenicals in June through August.

Preemergence herbicides can be applied to thin lawns to protect them from weeds until they thicken and cover. They are not for newly seeded areas or areas with growing weeds.

Fertilize in April

During April or May, all grasses should be in full swing. Start feeding your lawn. Turf fertilizers with high first number, low second number and medium last number are preferred unless a soil test shows otherwise.

Start with a complete fertilizer like 8-8-8 if you know your soil phosphorus is not high. If you have bermudagrass, use 12 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. On zoysia or St. Augustine, use 8 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. On centipede or carpetgrasses, use 6 pounds per 1,000 sq. ft. After this application, use just a nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of 1/2 to 1 pound of pure nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. every five to six weeks until late summer.

On zoysia, centipede and carpetgrass lawns, make only one or two more fertilizations this year. Use only 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. each time.

Tom Koske

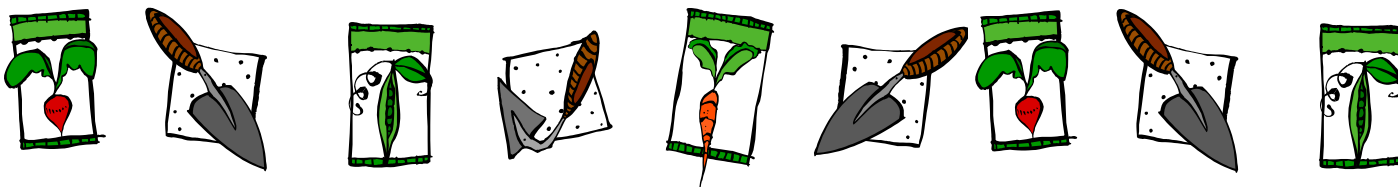
Choose Correct Mower Settings

Cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Choose the higher cut for grass in shade. Cut grass down to these heights:

Common Bermuda	1 1/2 inches
Hybrid Bermuda	1
Zoysia	1 - 1 1/2
Centipede/carpet	1 (2 shade)
Tall fescue (North La.)	3 1/2 (summer) 2 (spring)
St. Augustine	2 1/2 - 3 (3 shade)



*Sharpen that mower blade before the season and at mid season, too. Check for fresh oil and stale gasoline **before** you start the mower this spring.*



Vegetable Gardening

Vegetables to Plant in March

Plant snap beans, Swiss chard, collards, mustards, turnips, cabbage, broccoli and sweet corn. Transplant tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. Plant cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons well after danger of frost is over. Black plastic will help early growth.

Vegetables to Plant in April

Plant snap beans, butter beans, collards, cucumbers, eggplants, cantaloupes, okra, Southern peas (field peas), peanuts, pumpkins, winter squash, summer squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes (late April), tomatoes (transplants), peppers (transplants) and watermelons.

Vegetables to Plant in May

Sweet potatoes (transplants), heat-tolerant tomatoes, okra, Southern peas, pumpkins, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, butter beans, squash, cantaloupes, collards and eggplants (transplants). Fruit set in these vegetables is sensitive to high temperatures, so plant them the first part of May for best results: snap beans, butter beans, sweet corn, tomatoes (except heat-tolerant varieties) and peppers (transplants).

Crop Highlights

Most spring vegetables can be planted in May since the soil has warmed and danger of frost has passed.

Sweet Corn: Plant early to help reduce problems from the corn earworm. The earliest planting should be made seven days before the average last frost date for your area. Plant every two to three weeks to provide a continuous supply of sweet corn. Remember to plant the same variety in a block of at least three rows side-by-side at each planting. This will help to ensure good pollination and well-filled ears.

When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seed every 8 to 12 inches in the row, and cover to about 1/2 to 1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3 to 4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Sidedress a 100-foot row with 3/4 to 1 1/2 pounds of ammonium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches high and again when the plants are 24 to 36 inches high. One pint of fertilizer is about 1 pound.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin about every two to three days after silks first appear and until silks

begin to dry. This will help to reduce corn earworm damage.

Harvest sweet corn early in the morning while it is still cool. Chill or cook immediately after harvesting. Sweet corn that is ready to harvest should have a well-filled ear. Kernels should be bright and plump, and their juice should be milky. New high sugar varieties have more room for error in harvesting because they are sweeter and stay sweet longer.

Recommended early-maturing varieties include Aztec or Seneca Horizon. Mid-season varieties are Funks G90, Merit or Bonanza. Late-season varieties are Silver Queen (white), Gold Queen, lochief, NK199 or Golden Cross Bantam. Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row.

Try some of the super sweet (Sh2) and enhanced (EH) varieties of sweet corn. They are sweeter than regular sweet corn and hold their sweetness longer. The super sweets need to be isolated from field corn or regular sweet corn; they lose some of their sweetness when pollinated by these other types of corn. The super sweets don't germinate well in cool soils, so wait until soil has warmed considerably before planting.

If you eat fresh corn on the cob, try either SE or Sweet Gene7 or improved super sweets. Varieties: Prime Plus, Promise, How Sweet It Is (AAS), Honey-N-Pearl (AAS), Summer Sweet #8101 W, #781W, #7630Y, #7710Y, 8102 BC, Miracle, Argent, Merlin, Summer Flavor, #79BC bi-color, Incredible, Calico Belle, #81W, Bodacious, Delectable or Ambrosia.

Snap Beans: Plant bush varieties about every two weeks, beginning about the time of the average last frost date for your area. This will provide a continuous harvest for an extended period. Good bush snaps for Louisiana are Gator Green 15, Strike, Provider and Bush Blue Lake 274. All-America Selections include Derby, Green Crop (flat) and Burpee Stringless. Try Roma II for a good-eating, flat Italian pod bean. For a purple pod bush snap, try Royal Burgundy in early spring. Those who prefer the yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax, Goldmine or Golden Improved.

One-half pound of seed will be more than enough to plant a 100-foot row. Plant seed about 1 to 2 inches apart in the row.

High temperatures at bloom cause many of the flowers to fall off. Generally they don't produce well when planted in late May. For best quality, harvest pods before the developing seeds cause the pod to bulge. Beans can be held for up to seven days at 40 to 45 degrees and 90% to 95% humidity.

Pole snap bean varieties produce larger yields since they produce longer than the bush varieties. Space seed about 6 to 12 inches apart. About 2 to 3 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. For pole snaps, the AAS winner is Kentucky Blue. The Kentucky Wonder 191, Blue Lake and McCaslan have done well in Louisiana. For pole beans with striped pods, select Rattlesnake. For those who want a bean that sets well in the heat, try the vigorous Yardlong Asparagus Bean, and harvest pods when 18 inches or less.

Tomatoes: Begin transplanting in mid-March in south Louisiana or end of March in North Louisiana after the danger of frost is over. Be prepared to cover early transplanted tomatoes in case of a frost. Start spraying tomatoes after fruit set every seven to 10 days with a fungicide (daconil or maneb) and an insecticide (sevin, malathion or thiodan).

Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives plenty of direct sunlight, preferably all day, but at least seven to eight hours. When tomatoes receive too little sunlight, few blossoms are formed, and many that do form fall off before setting any fruit. Space tomato plants 18 to 24 inches apart. When transplanting, pour about one cupful of a starter solution in the hole. Make your own by mixing 1/2 cup of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) in 2 1/2 gallons of warm water and stir. Commercial soluble fertilizers also are available. This will encourage a strong root system and faster growth.

Tomato vines may be determinate or indeterminate. Indeterminate types are long and vining and will continue to grow. Prune to maintain one vigorous stem. Determinants have very productive vines that grow to heights of 4 feet. Stems end in a flower cluster. Determinants should be pruned only once or twice up to the first cluster.

There are dozens of varieties, but not all grow well in Louisiana. Indeterminate varieties that grow well here are Better Boy and Big Beef (large), Champion, Fantastic, First Lady, Hawaiian Hybrid, Carmello, Pole King, Spring Giant, Husky Gold (dwarf) AAS, Jet Star (low acid), Monte Carlo, Pink Girl (pink), Sweet Million (cherry), Sweet Chelsea (cherry), Macero II, Juliet, Jolly and Terrific.

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Bingo, Bonita, Carnival, Celebrity (AAS), Cherry Grande (cherry), Daybreak, Floramerica (AAS), Heatwave, Merced and Mountain Delight. New varieties are Sanibel, Juliet, Sunbeam, Sun Master, Sunleaper, Summer Flavor 6000 and Mountain Spring.

Note: The spotted wilt virus has nearly eliminated tomato production in some areas. If you had this trouble, plant Amelia, BHN 444, BHN 640 or TopGun variety. These are resistant determinant types with some heat resistance.

Bell Peppers and Eggplants: Delay transplanting of okra, bell peppers and eggplants until the weather has warmed considerably. These vegetables are sensitive to cold soils and weather. Once stunted by cool weather, they recover slowly.

A garden site with full sun is required to be successful with bell peppers. Any shade will greatly reduce fruit set. Space peppers about 12 to 18 inches and eggplants about 18 to 24 inches.

Recommended varieties of bell peppers are: Nonhybrid - Resistant giant No. 4, Capistrano, KRG#3, Jupiter, Purple Beauty and Yolo Wonder B.

Bell hybrids for Louisiana are Revolution, Merlin, Sentry, Valencia, Enterprise, Boynton Bell and the large King Arthur. Bell Boy, Valencia, Enterprise, Super Heavy Weight, Blushing Beauty and the piquant Mexibell hybrids are AAS winners. For a yellow bell, try the Goldcoast or Summer Sweet 8600 or 8610 hybrids. For a mature red bell, try Camelot (X3R) or Summer Sweet 862R. Gypsy, Dutch Treat, Cubanelle, Ivory and Aconcagua are not bell-shaped but are sweet. Producing yellow and red bell peppers is difficult in our humid conditions. Note: Spotted Wilt virus has hindered bell pepper production in many areas. The variety Stilleto is resistant to TSWV. Try this variety if you had trouble producing bell peppers.

Recommended hybrid eggplant varieties are Blackbell, Epic, Dusky, Santana or oriental Ichiban.

The green eggplant varieties produce well in Louisiana and are less bitter than the purple varieties in hot, dry weather. Seed and plants are not always available, however. The Louisiana Market Bulletin is a fairly good source for green eggplant seed and other hard-to-find vegetable seeds and plants.

Cucurbits: All members of the cucurbit family can be planted in May, but yields of squash and cucumbers may be lower than normal with the late plantings. Plant these outside well after the danger of frost is over. For transplants, start in pots two to three weeks before transplanting. Recommended varieties of cucurbits are:

- **Cucumbers:** Slicing type - Dasher II, General Lee, Turbo, Lightning, Speedway, Poinsett 76, Slice Master Select, Fanfare and Sweet Success; pickling type - Calypso.
- **Summer Squash:** Yellow Crook - Dixie, Prelude II, Goldie, Sundance, Destiny II.
- **Yellow Straightneck** - Goldbar, Liberator III, Lemondrop and Supersett.
- **Zucchini:** Declaration II, Independence II, Spineless Beauty, Senator, Seneca, Gold Rush (AAS) Embassy, 8-Ball (AAS), Revenue and Dividend.
- **Scallop or Patty Pan:** Peter Pan and Sunburst.
- **Winter Squash:** Ultra Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut (AAS), Tay Belle Acorn, Cream of Crop Acorn (AAS), Table King (AAS), Golden Delicious, Vegetable spaghetti, Tivoli Spaghetti (AAS), Golden Hubbard, Honey Delight Buttercup, Sweet Mama Buttercup.

Viruses are a big problem in squash production. Try some of the new virus-resistant varieties: Destiny (yellow crookneck), Liberator (yellow straight neck), Declaration and Independence (zucchini).

- **Cantaloupes:** Magnum 45, Eclipse, Athena, Laredo, Superstar, Earlisweet, Ambrosia, Earli-dew Passport or Honey Brew.
- **Watermelons:** Plant watermelons in May. Recommended varieties are Charleston Gray, Jubilee, Crimson Sweet, Allsweet, Royal Sweet, Royal Jubilee, Fiesta, Desert King, Patriot, Royal Majesty, Tastigold, Starbrite, 710 Hybrid, Sangria and Mardi Gras.
Apply 2 to 3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100 feet of row before planting. Sidedress with 3/4 - 1 pound of ammonium nitrate or 1 1/2 - 2 pounds of a complete fertilizer (13-13-13) per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Remove all but three to four well-shaped fruits from each plant when they reach 4 to 5 inches in diameter. Try some of the icebox types like Mickey Lee, Sugar Baby, Yellow Doll and Baby Doll for fun. Also, Bush Jubilee and Bush Charleston Grey produce dwarf plants and nice fruit and are ideal for gardens.
- **Pumpkins:** Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh is often coarser and stronger. For a small size, choose Oz, Small Sugar, Spookie or Baby Bear (AAS). Good medium-sized pumpkins are Big Autumn, Frosty, Casper (white), Peek a Boo, Funny Face, ProGold 500 and the AAS winner, Autumn Gold. Good large or Jack-o-Lantern types are Howden, Spirit (AAS), Gold Rush, Connecticut Field, Atlantic Giant, Jumpin Jack, Aspen, ProGold 510, Sorcerer and Big Moon.
For Halloween pumpkins, plant seed in early July. Cushaws are large, long-necked pumpkins that have a meaty, finer-textured flesh. Miniature pumpkins have been bred for ornamental use. Varieties include Munchkin, Jack-B-Little, Wee-B-Little and the white Baby Boo.

Cucurbit Hints

Don't be concerned if the first several squash fruit fall off the plant before they reach an edible stage. The first flowers to form in early spring squash are the female flowers (with the miniature fruit). No male flowers form at this time, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, however, the male flowers will form, and normal fruit set will begin. In summer plantings, the male flowers tend to develop first, so no production occurs until the female flowers develop.

Cucumber yields may be doubled by growing plants on a trellis. To get cucumber vines to climb a trellis or fence, you may need to tie them to the trellis in the beginning. Once they catch hold, they will continue to climb.

Use pesticides on cucurbits late in the afternoon so as not to reduce the bee population. Sidedress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with 3/4 pint ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row as vines begin to run.

Weekly applications of a general purpose fungicide (daconil or maneb) and insecticide (sevin or thiodan) starting at first bloom will protect the

foliage and improve yield.

Plastic mulch will reduce fruit rot and enhance the production of cantaloupes and the other cucurbits.

Lima Beans (Butter Beans)

Lima beans require warmer soil (70 degrees F) than snap beans to germinate, so wait until soil warms (usually in early to mid-April) before planting. Bush varieties to plant are Henderson's Bush, Thorogreen, Burpee Improved, Cangreen, Baby Fordhook or Jackson Wonder (speckled bean).

Make plantings every two weeks through mid-May to extend the harvest. One-half pound will plant a 100-foot row. Plant at the rate of three to four seed per foot of row.

Pole lima beans that are recommended are: Burpee's Best, Carolina Sieva, Christmas, Florida Speckled, and Willow Leaf. Plant seed 6 to 12 inches apart. One-quarter pound of seed will plant a 100-foot row.

Sweet Potatoes

Bed seed potatoes during April and into May. Transplants should be ready to cut in four to five weeks. Sweet potato slips (transplants) can be set out in late April if soil is warm enough (70 degrees F or above). Cut plants from plant bed about an inch above soil line, and transplant. Purchase weevil-free plants.

Cutting rather than pulling helps to reduce sweet potato weevils and many disease problems. Cuttings will develop feeder roots within a day or two if the soil is warm and moist. Holding the cut slips in the shade for two to three days before transplanting will help to increase survival. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer such as 6-24-24 or 8-24-24 at 2 to 3 pounds per 100 feet of row.

Beauregard, developed by the LSU AgCenter, is the most popular variety. It is high yielding, very attractive and tastes great.

Okra

Soil needs to be warm (65 to 75 degrees F) for okra seed to germinate. Soak seed overnight in tap water to soften seed coat before planting. Recommended varieties are Louisiana Green Velvet, Emerald, Annie Oakley (hybrid), Emerald, Cowhorn, Cajun Delight-AAS, Burgundy, Clemson Spineless and Gold Coast. Each of these varieties except Louisiana Green Velvet is semi-dwarf.

Peanuts

Many home gardeners wish to plant a row or two of peanuts. Shell the peanuts, and plant about four seeds per foot of row. Plant peanuts in April and May.

Spanish peanuts have the smallest seeds. Runner types have intermediate-sized seeds, and Virginia types have the largest. Fertilize lightly with 1 to 2 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100 feet of row. Soil should be high in calcium.

Onions, Shallots and Garlic

Harvest mature onion bulbs, garlic and shallots early summer. When mature, the tops begin to turn yellow or brown and fall over. Pull them, trim tops and roots, and lay them on top of the row or place in burlap sacks for a couple of days to let them dry if weather permits. Then store them in a cool, shaded and well-ventilated place. (Ideal storage for onions after drying is 45 to 50 degrees F and 65% to 70% relative humidity.)

Irish Potatoes

Begin digging 90 to 120 days after planting. Plant tops yellow as tubers reach maturity. Allowing the potatoes to remain in the ground a few days after tops die or after tops are cut will help set or toughen the skin and reduce skinning, bruising and rots in storage.

Spraying potatoes with a general purpose fungicide (daconil or maneb) at the end of April or early May will protect the foliage from early blight and improve yields.

To keep potatoes for several weeks, allow cuts and skinned places to heal over at high temperatures, then store in a cool, dark place with high humidity. Don't store where they will receive light, because they will turn green and develop an undesirable taste.

Fertilization

General fertilizer recommendations for vegetables are listed. This is the amount of complete fertilizer such as 8-24-24 to add per 100 feet of row on soils of low to medium fertility. Next year, perform a soil test.

For soils of higher fertility, reduce the rate about 25% to 50%. Remember that 1 pint of fertilizer is equal to about 1 pound.



1-3 Pounds	3-4 Pounds		5-6 Pounds
Beans	Beets*	Onions*	Cabbages*
Southern peas	Cantaloupes*	Garlic*	Broccoli*
Okra*	Watermelons*	Shallots*	Brussels sprouts*
English peas	Carrots*	Mustard*	Sweet peppers*
Sweet potatoes	Radishes	Spinach	Collards*
	Turnips*	Hot peppers*	Cauliflower*
	Lettuce*	Squash*	Tomatoes*
		Cucumbers*	Irish potatoes*
			Eggplants*
			Corn*

*Requires at least one sidedressing of about 3/4 pounds (about 1 1/2 cups) of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row or per 300 sq. ft. Additional sidedressings will help to obtain high yields (especially corn and tomatoes).

NOTE: An 8-24-24 or 7-21-21 is usually a better fertilizer than 8-8-8 for most vegetable crops because of the low ratio of nitrogen to phosphorus and potassium. One of these should be available in your area. If 8-24-24 and 7-21-21 are not available, don't hesitate to use 8-8-8, 13-13-13 or other complete fertilizer.

Tom Koske, Jimmy Boudreaux



Fruits

Figs

Figs are commonly grown by home gardeners in all areas of Louisiana. They are easily grown and are not very specific to soil requirements. Figs are easily propagated from dormant cuttings; therefore, many fig selections have been passed from person to person without being accompanied with the proper variety name. Many immigrants from Europe also brought cuttings of their favorite figs with them when they came to the United States, and these have been passed on to friends and relatives. These factors have contributed to a lot of confusion in fig names. One name may refer to several different varieties and several different types of figs may have the same name.

Louisiana weather limits some of the fig varieties that can be grown here. Figs are subtropical, and some varieties are damaged by freezes in Louisiana. The wet weather in Louisiana often causes spoilage of fruit that have an open eye. Figs grown in Louisiana must also be able to set fruit without pollination. Fig wasps pollinate some of the figs grown in California. Those varieties will not produce fruit in Louisiana since the fig wasp does not exist here.

Celeste is the most common fig in Louisiana. It is usually cold hardy in both north and south Louisiana, but untimely or severe freezes may occasionally kill trees to the ground. Celeste produces small to medium size violet to brown fruit with a closed eye that prevents spoilage during wet weather.

Brown Turkey fig is also recommended in north and south Louisiana. The fruit resembles Celeste but is slightly larger and has a medium open eye. The tree is very productive; good yields can be produced on young wood after severe freeze injury.

LSU Purple is a medium size reddish to dark purple fig that is recommended for south Louisiana. The fruit has a closed eye and is tolerant to the humid conditions. LSU Purple has good leaf disease resistance and frequently produces fruit up to frost. The lack of fall dormancy sometimes results in severe tree injury in north Louisiana when severe freezes arrive suddenly in the fall.

LSU Gold is a large yellow fig that is recommended in north and south Louisiana. This variety has excellent flavor. Ripe figs should not be allowed to remain on the tree since the eye opens when ripe and fruit spoilage can occur in high moisture periods.

Alma is a very productive fig that produces a yellow to tan medium size fruit. The fruit has a medium size eye which is self sealing with drops of gum. Alma is recommended for south and central Louisiana. Cold resistance is poor to moderate; it may have freeze injury in north Louisiana in some years.

Kadota and Magnolia are two figs with open eyes that are sometimes found in south Louisiana. The fruit is usually harvested before full ripe and used for preserves. The fruit frequently has spoilage problems if left on the tree until fully ripe. These figs have poor cold tolerance and are frequently killed in north Louisiana.

Figs should be planted 2 inches deeper than grown in the nursery for tree-form plants and 4 inches deeper than the nursery for bush-form plants.

Fire Blight

Fire blight can be extremely destructive on apples, pears and mayhaws. Bacteria that can be spread by insects, and hard driving rains cause fire blight. Plants are most susceptible during bloom and while fast tender growth is occurring in the spring.

A blackening of leaves at the tip of new shoots generally identifies fire blight. The infected tip usually bends into a shepherd's crook. The bacteria can move down the stem to larger limbs and cause infection. The disease also is common in blooms and can be spread by insects. The infected flowers will turn black. The bacteria will often move down the flower petiole and infect twigs.

Fire blight runs in cycles. That is, the disease may appear for several years in various degrees of severity, then show little or no damage for a few years.

Bacteria causing fire blight frequently overwinter in cankers at the base of a killed twig. Removal of these twigs by pruning can reduce the severity of fire blight the following year. Removal of infected twigs in late winter is best, although damaged twigs and cankers are sometimes difficult to see. Pruning of infected shoots is discouraged during the spring and early summer; this is likely to spread bacteria into otherwise healthy parts of the tree. Small pruning cuts can be made in late July and August after leaf growth has stopped. Because the bacteria may be present in stems beyond the area showing symptoms, make all pruning cuts at least 8 to 12 inches below damaged wood. Sterilizing the shears

between each cut by dipping into 10% commercial bleach or alcohol will reduce the chances of bacteria being spread during pruning.

Vigorously growing apple and pear trees are more susceptible to fire blight. Bearing pear trees should not produce more than 6 to 8 inches of new terminal growth in a season or 10 to 12 inches for bearing apple trees. Reducing nitrogen fertilizer levels will reduce the growth of the trees.

The best way to prevent fire blight is to plant varieties that have good resistance. The pear varieties Orient and Ayers have good resistance.

Timely use of chemicals can help control fire blight, but this may not be practical for homeowners except on small or dwarf fruit trees. Spray during blossoming with Bordeaux mixture, fixed copper (Kocide) or streptomycin according to manufacturer's directions.

Fruit Thinning

Fruit thinning is an important cultural practice in apple, peach and pear production. Thinning fruit from trees results in larger fruit as well as improved fruit color and quality. Additional benefits of fruit thinning are reduced limb breakage, increased general tree vigor and more consistent annual bearing. Fruit trees often produce more fruit than they can mature to a desirable size.

Research indicates that the sooner peaches are thinned after bloom, the earlier the ripening and the larger the fruit at harvest. It is suggested that peaches be thinned to 6 to 8 inches apart on the branch. Damaged and double-fruit can be removed during fruit thinning.

Several methods of fruit thinning are practiced. A common method, and the one most frequently used by home gardeners, is to remove individual fruit by hand. Although this method is slow, it gives uniform spacing of fruit with little or no tree injury. It is best to look at the fruit remaining on the trees and not at all the fruit that has been removed. Most people will not remove enough fruit if they keep looking at all the fruit on the ground.

Some growers prefer the pole method of thinning because it reduces time and cost. Make a pole for thinning by forcing a 3/4-inch garden hose 15 inches long over a 3- to 4-foot bamboo or wooden pole, leaving 8 to 10 inches of hose extending beyond the end of the pole. Peaches are thinned by striking the limbs about 18 inches from their tips with the flexible part of the hose.

Apples and pears should be thinned within 25 days after full bloom for maximum benefit. A desirable distance between these fruits is 6 inches. Where larger fruit is desired, leave more space between individual fruit. The center apple of a cluster is usually the largest and the best apple to leave.

John Pyzner

Fruit Tips for March

1. Complete spring application of fertilizer on fruit trees.
2. Prune trees that have not been pruned.
3. Spray fruit trees for pest and disease.
4. Graft trees. Use whip and cleft grafts in February and March. Use 4-flap and bark grafts in April and May.



Please contact your parish agent for additional information.

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Horticulture Hints

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Koske".

Tom Koske, Horticulture Professor