Horticulture Hints





Spring 2008

LSU AgCenter
Research & Extension

Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

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. 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 season to participate in these events. You'll be glad you did.

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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 advantages of 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 morning sun or dappled light during the day. 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).

Ferns do require adequate moisture, and may need irrigation during hot, dry summer weather. Incorporate generous amounts of organic matter during bed preparation and keep the ferns well mulched, and this will help reduce the amount of watering required.

Some excellent ferns for use in the landscape include maidenhair fern (*Adiantum capillus-vernis*), holly fern (*Cyrtominum 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 filixfemina*), wood fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*), lace fern (*Microlepia strigosa*) and sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*).

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 in April or May. Purchasing tubers is the most economical way to add caladiums to your landscape. Plant the tubers about 2 inches deep and 8 to 12 inches apart. 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.

Caladiums are also available at local nurseries growing in 4- to 6-inch pots, and they will provide immediate color. Caladiums growing in pots should be planted with the top of the root ball level with the soil of the bed. Once they are planted, mulch the bed with 2 inches of your favorite mulch and water in. Keep beds of caladiums well watered during the summer, especially those receiving lots of sun.

Rose Pest Problems

Get roses that are highly susceptible to black spots (such as many hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas) 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. 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 infestation 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 the insects 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 imidacloprid will prevent this problem.

Summer Bedding Plants

Warm-season bedding plants grow and flower best from April through October, and we can begin planting them as early as late March in South Louisiana and mid-April in North Louisiana.

Many of the bedding plants we plant for summer color are true annuals, but some are tender perennials grown as annuals. Tender perennials, such as impatiens, periwinkles, blue daze, pentas and begonias, have far more stamina and "staying power" in the summer flower garden. They make outstanding bedding plants in Louisiana landscapes, often blooming from late spring until cool weather arrives in fall (sometimes they survive the winter to grow and bloom another year). 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. Although most annuals need full sun (at least eight hours of direct sun) to part sun (about six hours of direct sun), some annuals 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 are one of the best choices for color in full shade.

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

Checklist for March, April and May

1. Plant warm-season bedding plants beginning in mid-March (South Louisiana) or mid-April (North Louisiana). For best results, plant petunias by mid-March and wait to plant periwinkles (vinca) until late April.
2. After spring bulbs that reliably rebloom each year 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. Mulch should be applied 2 inches thick for effective weed suppression.
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 is a great annual bedding plant 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, imidacloprid 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 may be 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.

Dan Gill
Horticulturist

Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Gardening is the No. 1 pastime in United States. Learn new gardening skills and enjoy volunteering in your community by becoming a Louisiana Master Gardener.

The Louisiana Master Gardener program is a volunteer project of the LSU AgCenter. Classes are conducted in 20 parishes across the state. Each class covers one or two topics, and the series usually takes three months to complete. The state fee is $55, and individual parish programs may charge an additional class activity fee.

All Master Gardener volunteers are asked to perform a minimum number of required volunteer hours and continuing education hours each year to maintain their certification. For more information, contact your parish LSU AgCenter extension office.

Louisiana Master Gardener extension volunteers have accomplished much in their communities. In the Monroe area, for example, volunteers maintain demonstration plots at the LSU AgCenter Calhoun Research Station with plantings of Earth Kind roses, lantana and ornamental grass varieties. A speaker's bureau has made numerous presentations, and volunteers have provided gardening information using TV broadcasts and radio shows.

The Webster Parish Piney Hills Master Gardeners successfully premiered their spring "Buds and Blooms" public gardening seminar while volunteers had fun providing third graders hands-on gardening experience in the Teaching Garden at Union Elementary School.

Ascension Parish Master Gardeners assist with the "Prime Property" TV broadcast and answer consumer horticulture telephone calls at the extension office. They conduct a successful 4-H, adult and senior citizens garden contest and awards program.

In St. Tammany Parish, Master Gardeners have an annual Northshore Spring Garden Show. St. Tammany volunteers answer consumer horticulture telephone calls as well as interact with the public through neighborhood libraries. Landscape projects benefiting the community include Habitat for Humanity and the fire station.

Lafourche, Terrebonne and St. Mary Master Gardeners cooperate with Nicholls State University by presenting garden topics through the Golden Learning Opportunities program. LaTerre volunteers maintain gardens at the Terrebonne Parish Folklife & Culture Center and offer garden tours at their themed Children's Garden, providing educational programs based on the state's basic science objectives. Their Home and Garden Trends program uses native plants and container gardening to those with declining physical capabilities.

Natchitoches Parish Master Gardeners do a great job with gardening outreach by participating with "Bloomin' on the Brick" in downtown Natchitoches and with the Natchitoches Noisette Garden Symposium. Master Gardeners teach gardening practices and best management practices to inmates at the Detention Center and have developed a butterfly and butterfly gardening booklet for school children.

Tangipahoa Parish Master Gardeners work closely with the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station putting on successful programs like the Spring Garden Day and the Camellia Stroll. You'll find volunteers providing helpful horticulture information at 4-H & Youth Development events, Hammond Feed & Seed open house and by performing on-site consultations. Master Gardeners assist with answering horticultural calls and write newspaper articles and columns.

In the River Region, St. Charles and St. John volunteers conduct Plant Health Clinics at the farmers' market. They offer classes on landscape instruction and best management practices to teachers, students and parents. Master Gardeners established an enviroscape butterfly ecology program at an elementary school and trained science teachers on proper care of plants.

LOUISIANA Master Gardener SM

An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

The tri-parish program consisting of Master Gardeners in Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge and Iberville completed the landscaping for Habitat for Humanity homes in Plaquemine by collaborating with Dow Chemical of Louisiana, Bonnie Plant Farms, Murrell Farms, Callais Nursery, Dupont Nursery, Americorp and City Year.

Lafayette Parish Master Gardeners work diligently in their multi-themed Children's Garden providing guided tours to second graders following a science education curriculum. Another type of garden, the Enabling Garden, is a model garden developed by Master Gardeners and used at homes of the elderly and handicapped. An Acadiana open-channel TV show is completely produced by Master Gardeners with gardening-related topics.

In the Shreveport area, Master Gardeners' Le Tour des Jardins spring garden tour, exposes the public to several private gardens in the Shreveport and Bossier area while promoting good gardening practices to the public. Volunteers actively involve themselves in community landscape projects, including Woody's Home for Veterans, Gateway to the Town of Castor, Pioneer Heritage Museum and the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum. Master Gardeners have partnered with the city of Shreveport and acquired and renovated the Carriage House of the Randle T. Moore Center.

Washington Parish Master Gardeners help with the food & nutrition project with hands-on growing and preparing of vegetables to improve nutrition and combat obesity in their community.

Calcasieu and Beauregard Parish Master Gardeners actively participate with the Southwest Louisiana Garden Festival every spring in Lake Charles. Volunteers have developed a speakers' bureau, and they offer several garden symposiums annually.

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Turfgrass and Lawns

Turfgrass Care

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, fertilizer will feed 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 vigorously 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.

Choose Correct Mower Settings

Cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Choose the higher cut for grass in shade. Sharpen that mower blade before the season and at midseason, too. Replace old oil with new and stale gas with fresh before you start your mower this spring.

Cut grass to these inch heights: common Bermuda, 1 ½; hybrid Bermuda, 1; zoysia, 1-1 ½; centipede/carpet, 1 ½ (2 shade); tall fescue (North La.), 2 (spring), 3 ½ (summer); St. Augustine, 2 ½-3 (3 shade).

April Fertilizing

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.

You may start with a complete fertilizer like 13-13-13 if you know your soil phosphorus is low. If you have Bermuda grass, use 7-8 lb per 1,000 sq ft. On zoysia or St. Augustine, use 6-7 lb per 1,000 sq ft. On centipede or carpetgrasses, use 4 lb per 1,000 sq ft. After this application, use just a nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of ½ to 1 pound of pure nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft every five to six weeks until midsummer; then go back to the complete fertilizer.

Note that on zoysia, and centipede lawns, apply N fertilizer only one more time in midseason. Use only ½ pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft for this. Carpetgrass needs very little fertilizer; once in spring is enough.

Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can reduce weeds in your turf, but thick sod keeps weeds out. Your county agent can advise you. Apply herbicides either before or several weeks after first green-up, but not during first greening up. Some herbicides should not be used on certain grass types (read labels thoroughly).

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 using it on St. Augustine. Examples are Bayer Advanced Southern Broadleaf, Ortho, Weed B Gon, Spectracide Weed Stop, Trimec or Fertilome Weedfree Zone.

Manor or Blade herbicides easily control bahia in Bermuda, centipede, St. Augustine or zoysia.

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 without a bag 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 sprayer only for weed killers.

For Bermuda or zoysia lawns only, 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. These PreE are not for newly seeded areas or areas with growing weeds.

Some home PreE are Greenlight Crabgrass Preventer, StaGreen Crabex, Hi Yield Dimension, Scott's Halts, Portrait, Atrazine and Crabgrass Preventer 2.

Tom Koske
Horticulturist

Vegetables to Plant in March

Plant snap beans, Swiss chard, radish, lettuce, 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.

... and in April

Plant snap beans, butter beans, radish, 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.

... and in May

Most spring vegetables can be planted in May, since the soil has warmed and danger of frost has passed. Plant sweet potatoes (transplants), heat-tolerant tomatoes, okra, Southern peas, pumpkins, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, butter beans, squash, cantaloupe, collards and eggplants (transplants). Fruit set in the following 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

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 seeds every 8-12 inches in the row, and cover to about ½-1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3-4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Sidedress a 100-foot row with ¾-1 1/2 pounds of ammonium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches high and again when the plants are 24-36 inches high. One pint of fertilizer is about 1 lb.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin about every two to three days after silks first appear and until silks begin to dry. This treatment will help 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 regular early maturing variety includes Seneca Horizon. Midseason varieties are Funks G90, Gold Queen or Merit. Late-season regular varieties are Silver Queen (white), Iochief, NK199 or Golden Cross Bantam. Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row.

Try some of the improved super sweet (Sh_2) and enhanced (EH) varieties of sweet corn. They are much 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 love to eat fresh corn on the cob, try SE or improved super sweets.

Many new high-sugar modern varieties are now commonly available. The best include (Early) Platinum Lady, Sweet Ice, Bodacious, Sweet Riser, Dazzle, Lancelot and precious Gem; (midseason) Argent, Snowbelle, Summer Sweet (8101, 7630Y, 7210, 8102), Crisp N Sweet 711, Incredible, Prime Plus, Big Time, Sweet Chorus, Sweet Rhythum; (late or long season) Even Sweeter, Pegasus, Tahoe, Honey Select, Silver King.

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 Ambra, Bronco, Contender, Dusky, Festina, Hialea, Magnum, Storm, Strike, Provider and Bush Blue Lake 274. An All-America Selection is Derby. 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 1-2 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- 45 degrees and 90% to 95% humidity.

Pole snap bean varieties produce larger yields, since they produce for a longer period than bush varieties. Space seed about 6-12 inches apart. About 2-3 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. For pole snaps, the All-America Selection winner is Kentucky Blue. The Blue Lake, KY Wonder 191, Dade, Rattle Snake and McCaslan have done well in Louisiana. For those who want a bean that sets well in the heat, try the vigorous Yardlong Asparagus Bean, and harvest pods when about 18 inches high.

Tomatoes

Begin transplanting in mid-March in South Louisiana or at the 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 18-24 inches apart. When transplanting, pour about 1 cup of a starter solution in the hole. Make your own by mixing ½ cup of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) in 2 ½ 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 spreading and continue to grow. Prune to maintain one vigorous stem.

Indeterminate varieties that grow well in Louisiana include Better Boy and Big Beef (large), Champion, Fantastic, Terrific, Sun Gold, First Lady, Husky Gold (dwarf) AAS, Jet Star (low acid), Monte Carlo, Pink Girl (pink), Sweet Million (cherry), Sweet Chelsea (cherry) and Jolly.

Determinants have very productive vines that grow to heights of 4 feet. Stems terminate in a flower cluster. Determinants should be pruned only once or twice up to the first cluster.

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Celebrity (an AAS winner), Carolina Gold, Fla. 47, Mountain Spring, Cherry Grande (cherry), Floralina, Mountain Fresh and Mountain Crest. Also try Sanibel, Juliet, Sunbeam, Sun Master, Sunleaper, Summer Flavor 6000, Mountain Spring and Mountain Belle (cherry).

Note: The spotted wilt virus has nearly eliminated tomato production in some areas. If you had this trouble, plant Bella Rosa, Amelia, Crista, Quincy, BHN 640 or Talageda variety. These are resistant determinant types.

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 12-18 inches and eggplants about 18-24 inches.

Recommended nonhybrid varieties of bell peppers for Louisiana are Capistrano, Jupiter and Purple Beauty.

Recommended hybrids are Revolution, Valencia, Heritage 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 Aladdin, Orobelle, Summer Gold or Summer Sweet 8610. For a mature red bell, try Camelot (X3R) or Aristotle.

Carmen, Giant Marconi, Gypsy, Cubanelle, Ivory, Supreme Biscayne 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 varieties Stilleto, Patriot and Excursion II are resistant to TSWV. Try these varieties if you had trouble producing bell peppers.

Recommended hybrid eggplant varieties are Blackbell, Calliope, Classic, Epic, Dusky, Santana, Rossita 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. Good older eggplants are Fla. Hi Bush and Black Beauty.

Cucurbits

All squash, cucumber and melon members of the cucurbit family can be planted in May, but yields 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 cucumber varieties for slicing are Taledega, Dasher II, Fanfare AAS, Diva AAS, General Lee, Speedway, Poinsett 76, Slice More, Thunder, Indy, Intimidator, Sweet Slice and Sweet Success.

For pickling, try Calypso, Fancipak and Wellington.

Recommended summer squash crooknecks are Prelude II, Dixie, Gentry, Goldie, Supersett, Destiny III and Medallion.

Recommended yellow straightneck are Goldbar, Liberator III, Enterprise, Cougar, Multipik, Patriot II, Superpik and Lemondrop.

Recommended zucchini varieties are Declaration II, Independence II, Tigress, Lynx, Spineless Beauty, Senator, Gold Rush (AAS), Payroll, Revenue and Dividend.

Recommended scallop or patty pan varieties are Peter Pan and Sunburst.

Recommended hardshell (winter) squash varieties are Waltham, Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut (AAS), Tay Belle Acorn, Cream of Crop Acorn (AAS), Table Queen, Table King (AAS), Imperial Delight, El Dorado, La Estrella, Vegetable spaghetti, Tivoli Spaghetti (AAS), Golden Hubbard, Bush Delicata and Sweet Mama Buttercup.

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

Recommended cantaloupe varieties are Odyssey, Eclipse, Athena, Primo, Magnum 45, Super 45, Mission, Vienna, Ambrosia or Earlidew.

Recommended watermelon varieties are Crimson Sweet (OP), Jubilee II (OP), Fiesta, La Sweet (OP), Jamboree, Jubilation, Patriot, Regency, Royal Star, Royal Jubilee, Royal Sweet, Sangria, Stars 'N Stripes, Starbrite, Summer Flavor 800, 710 or 500. Seedless: Revolution, Summer Sweet 5244, TriX Carousel or 313, Cooperstown, Millionaire, Crimson Trio, Laurel, Nova. Ice Box Type: Sugar Baby, Mickeylee. Yellow: Gold Strike, Tendersweet, Desert King.

Apply 2-3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row before planting. Sidedress with ¾-1 pound of ammonium nitrate or 1 ½-2 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 4-5 inches in diameter.

Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh is often coarser and stronger. For a small size, choose Orange Smoothis, Small Sugar, Trickster or Baby Bear.

Recommended medium-size pumpkins are Big Autumn, Frosty, Casper (white), Lumina, Neon, Howdy Doody and Autumn Gold (AAS winner).

Recommended large or Jack-o-Lantern types are Howden, Howden Biggie, Appalachian, Spirit (AAS), Gold Rush, Big Autumn, Big Max, Gold Medal, Aspen, ProGold 510, Sorcerer and Big Moon. For an extra-large pumpkin, try Atlantic Giant, Full Moon or Prize Winner.

For Halloween pumpkins, plant seed in early July. Cushaws are large, long-neck 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, Lil Ironsides 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). Male flowers do not form at this time, however, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, though, the male flowers appear, and normal fruit set begins. In summer, the process reverses with the male flowers usually developing first and the females later.

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 ¾ pint ammonium nitrate per 100-foot 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) 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, Fordhook 242, Thorogreen, Bridgeton, Nemagreen, Dixie Butterpea or Baby Fordhook.

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

Recommended pole lima beans are King of the Garden, Carolina Sieva, Willow Leaf, Fla. Butter, Christmas and Florida Speckled. Plant seeds 6-12 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 or higher). Cut plants from plant bed about 1 inch above soil line, and transplant. Purchase weevil-free plants.

Cutting rather than pulling helps reduce sweet potato weevils and many disease problems. Cuttings 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 increase survival. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer such as 6-24-24 or 8-24-24 at 2-3 pounds per 100-foot 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 (65-75 degrees) for okra seeds to germinate. Soak seed overnight in tap water to soften seed coat before planting.

Recommended varieties are Louisiana Green Velvet, Emerald, Annie Oakley (hybrid), Cowhorn, Cajun Delight-AAS, Burgundy, Clemson Spineless and Gold Coast. Each of these varieties except Louisiana Green Velvet is semidwarf.

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-size seeds and Virginia types have the largest. Fertilize lightly with 1-2 lb of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row. Soil should be high in calcium.

Onions, Shallots, 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 the plants 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 45-50 degrees and 65%-70% relative humidity.)

Irish Potatoes

Begin digging 90 to 120 days after planting. Plant tops start turning 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 storage rot.

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 vegetable fertilizer recommendations pertain to complete fertilizers, such as 8-24-24. Add per 100-foot row on soils of low to medium fertility. Next year, perform a soil test. For soils of higher fertility, reduce the rate about 25%-50%. One pint of liquid fertilizer is equal to about 1 lb of granular fertilizer.

Use the recommended amount of fertilizer for the plant listed:

1-3 pounds	3-4 pounds	5-6 pounds
beans Southern peas okra* English peas sweet potatoes	beets* cantaloupe* watermelon* carrots* radishes turnips* lettuce* onions* garlic* shallots* mustard* spinach hot peppers* squash* cucumbers*	cabbage* broccoli* Brussels sprouts* sweet peppers* collards* cauliflower* tomatoes* Irish potatoes* eggplant* corn
*Requires at least one sidedressing of about ¾ lb (about 1 ½ cups) of ammonium nitrate per 100-foot row or per 300 sq ft. Additional sidedressings will help 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 and Jimmy Boudreaux
Horticulturists

Home Blueberry Production

Blueberries fit into any general home landscape design and can serve as hedges, borders or backgrounds. The blueberry's native adaptation to both the soil and the climate of the Southeast makes it a productive fruit for Louisiana. Blueberries are typically used in the landscape as hedges for screening purposes, but they can also be used in cluster plantings or as single specimen plants. Blueberries are an ideal year-round addition to the landscape with delicate white flowers in the spring, attractive blue fruit in the summer and the possibility of colorful fall foliage. In addition, blueberry plants lend themselves to the "organic" approach of gardening because they typically have few insect or disease problems, and pesticides are rarely needed in home garden plantings.

Adaptation

The rabbiteye blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei*) is the primary species of blueberry grown in Louisiana. It can be grown successfully in most areas of Louisiana, with the exception of the extreme southern coastal areas, where the lack of sufficient cold to satisfy chilling requirements may limit production.

Site Selection and Preparation

Full sun is desirable, but up to 50% shade is usually acceptable. Yield, however, is reduced with increasing shade, so plant in a sunny location to achieve maximum yield. Select a site with sun for at least half the day. Blueberries will grow in shady spots, but fruit production will be poor.

Site Preparation

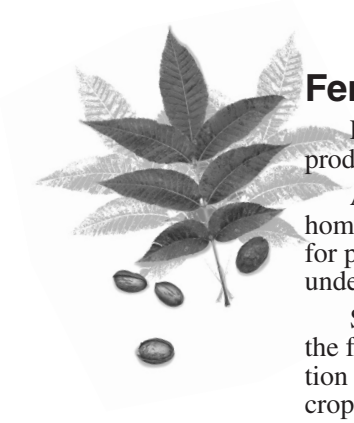
Soil pH. Blueberries require a lower pH than many other fruit and vegetable crops. Before planting blueberries, test the soil to determine the pH and amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and organic matter present. You can find out what your soil pH is by taking a sample to your parish extension office. Blueberries require a soil pH of 4.0 to 5.3 for best growth. The primary material recommended for lowering soil pH is finely ground wettable sulfur. Since sulfur reacts slowly and must be converted by soil bacteria, the change in soil pH is brought about slowly. Therefore, sulfur should be added to the soil and mixed thoroughly several months to a year prior to planting. If your soil pH is in the range of 5.4 to 6.0, sulfur can be applied six months before planting to lower the pH. Sulfur also can be applied after planting to the soil surface but not mixed with the soil. Rates of up to 7/10 lb per 100 sq ft can be used yearly, if needed. If the initial soil pH is above 6.0, growing blueberries will be difficult unless massive amounts of peat moss or milled pine bark are mixed with the soil. Use 1 lb (2.5 cups) per 100 sq ft on sandy soils to lower pH by 1 unit (for instance, from 6.0 to 5.0). Apply 2 lbs per 100 sq ft for the same amount of pH lowering on heavier soils containing silt, clay or more than 2% organic matter. Try to achieve a pH of around 4.8; too much reduction can be detrimental to bush growth.

Organic matter additions. Since Louisiana soils typically have a low organic matter content, incorporating peat moss or well-decayed pine sawdust or bark will improve plant survival and growth. Apply 3 to 4 inches of the organic material over the row in a band 18 to 24 inches wide and incorporate thoroughly using a rototiller or spade to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. For small plantings, the soil structure may be improved by the incorporation of organic materials such as peat, pine bark or leaf mold into the soil. Heavy soils require larger quantities than do lighter soils and are more difficult to maintain. Mix 2-5 gallons of wet peat moss or milled pine bark with the soil in each planting hole. Do not use any agriculture lime; blueberries require an acid soil.

Soil drainage. Adequate soil drainage is essential. Blueberry plants will not tolerate excessive moisture (wet feet) for long periods of time. In low, poorly drained areas, set plants on raised beds 6 to 12 inches high and 4 feet wide. Arrange elevated rows to allow good drainage from between rows.

Irrigation. Supplemental irrigation is essential in most seasons and on most soils, and plants should be watered throughout the growing season when rainfall is not adequate. Irrigation of young plants is especially important. Adequate water is essential for plant growth and is important for fruit bud formation that occurs in the fall. Hand watering with a hose is possible for several bushes; however, a soaker hose will usually give more uniform wetting. In larger plantings, systems using micro-sprinklers have been more successful than point-source drippers. Even two drippers per plant often do not wet enough of the soil in the root zone. At least 50% of the area under the drip line should be wetted. The use of automatic timers on drip or microsprinkler irrigation systems can result in shallow root systems and root rotting if systems apply water daily. Apply irrigation no more than once every two days to reduce the chances of root rot infection.

David Himelrick
Horticulturist



Fertilizing Pecan Trees

Proper fertilization is an important culture practice for proper growth and nut production.

Annual fertilization is the most practical and effective tool available to the homeowner for improving pecan production. Fertilizers, however, cannot compensate for poor conditions such as lack of moisture, inadequate disease or insect control, undesirable soil and sites or poor varieties.

Standard fertilization of lawns near and beneath pecan trees may supply much of the fertilization requirements of both trees and lawn. An additional fertilizer application may be needed to supply fertilizer requirements especially in years with large nut crops.

Fertilizer should be applied by broadcasting over the root zone of the pecan tree. Fertilizing trees by placing fertilizer in holes beneath trees give little additional benefit. Exercise care when applying fertilizer. Excess fertilizer in narrow bands or clumps could injure lawn grasses or tree roots. Uneven application can also cause dark and light green streaks in the lawn.

The fertility needs of pecan trees can vary. Young pecan trees transplanted in deep, loamy, fertile soil may not need fertilizer additions immediately. But trees transplanted in nonfertile, poorer soils may require several applications of fertilizer beginning in June the year of transplanting. Do not place fertilizer within 1 foot of tree trunks.

Guidelines for fertilizing pecan trees based on trunk diameter – Apply 3 lb of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) or an equivalent amount of another complete fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter measured at about 1 foot above the soil line in February or early March. Later during the growing season (May or early June), add an additional 2 lb of (8-8-8) per inch of trunk diameter on trees that have a large nut crop.

Example: A tree 10 inches in diameter should receive 30 lb of 8-8-8 or 18.5 lb of 13-13-13 when applying 3 lbs of fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter.

When zinc deficiencies occur on acid soils, apply 36% zinc sulfate to the soil at a rate of 1/2 lb per inch of trunk diameter up to a maximum of 10 lbs per mature tree every third year. On alkaline soil with a pH of 7.0 and up, zinc must be sprayed on the leaves at 14-day intervals April through June. Use 2 to 3 lbs per 100 gallons of water or 2 to 3 teaspoons per gallon of water. Three sprays should be sufficient on older trees, 3 to 5 on younger trees.

John Pyzner
Pecan Extension Specialist

(continued from page 3)

St. Helena Parish Master Gardeners completed a “First Impressions” landscape project at the St. Helena Middle School as well as designed and installed a landscape for the Police Jury Administration building. Volunteers have established a gardening resource library at the parish extension office.

The Master Gardeners in West Feliciana Parish have an annual Spring Stroll of St. Francisville Garden Tour by partnering with the Feliciana Horticultural Society and the Greater St. Francisville Chamber of Commerce. Proceeds funded the West Feliciana 4-H Jaclyn Garza Memorial Scholarship, West Feliciana Middle School Memory Garden and the St. Francisville Farmer’s Market.

Learning and sharing your gardening knowledge as a Louisiana Master Gardener in your community is a worthwhile experience for you, the volunteer and the people you help.

Bob Souvestre
Master Gardener State Coordinator

Please contact your parish agent for additional information.

LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

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Horticulture Hints





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

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The LSU Agricultural Center is a statewide campus of the LSU System and provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.