

May 2017

Why Not Peanuts?

As April has come and gone many have been busy planting those hot weather vegetables – eggplant, cushaw, hot pepper and okra – but how many have carved out a section for the ubiquitous peanut. There are just certain things that when spoken of make one think of “The South” – live oak, magnolia, crapemyrtle, sweet tea, crawfish, sweet potato, okra, and peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*). Yet it’s a safe bet that very few home gardeners have tried their hand at peanut production.

The peanut is an interesting and fun legume. The leaves close at night and open during the day (nyctinasty). The flowers are borne above ground in clusters and last for one day. After fertilization, a short stalk (pedicel) at the ovary base elongates to form a “peg”. The peg grows down into the soil where the ovary develops into the peanut pod; so the fruit is borne underground (geocarpy). Being a legume, peanuts also have nitrogen-fixing bacteria associated with their roots in nodules. Therefore, providing they nodulate properly, they don’t need added nitrogen fertilizer and actually enrich the soil in which they grow.

Peanuts grow best in light, sandy loam and a soil pH of 5.9-7.0. They do best in full sun and warm soil. They love the heat. They will also grow and produce well on as little as 13 inches of water during the growing season though you’ll get a bigger harvest if watered regularly. They are a long season crop re-

quiring from 90 to 150 days to mature depending on variety. Since they have a continuous flowering habit, even at harvest you will find a number of undeveloped fruit.



The plants are quite attractive with their dark green compound leaves and yellow flowers. They can even be grown in containers.

There are several types of peanut varieties (Valencia, Spanish, Virginia, etc.) and even some interesting ones available from places like Baker Creek Heirloom or Southern Exposure Seed Exchange. You can purchase seed peanuts (Gurney’s, Burpee’s, Seed Savers, Baker Creek, Southern Exposure) or just plant a few you get from the grocery store.

Shell the peanuts just before planting. Plant the nuts (seed) about 2 inches deep and 6-8 inches apart in rows or hills. Harvest at the end of the season by pulling or loosening the soil and then removing the entire plant. Pick off and boil the “green” peanuts or allow them to dry for a couple of weeks and then roast or store for later use. You might even want to make your own peanut butter.



A field of flowering peanut plants.

As far as insects and diseases go, peanuts have their share like all our cultivated plants – leaf spots, molds, caterpillars, aphids – but they generally aren’t a big problem for the home gardener.

So when planning what goes in your summer garden – why not peanuts?
~Dr. Joe Willis

May Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Amaranth	None Given	⅓ inch	10-12	110-150
Cantaloupe	Ambrosia, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Vienna	¼ inch	18-24	80-85
Cucuzza	None Given	½ inch	24	65
Cushaw	None Given	½ inch	24-36	110
Eggplant	Dusky, Night Shadow, Epic, Santana, Calliope	⅓ inch	18-24	80-85
Hot Peppers (transplant)	Grande, Tula, Mariachi, Mitla,	-	--	140
Lima Beans (bush or pole)	Dixie Butterpea, Jackson Wonder, Thorogreen Florida Speckled, King of Garden	½ inch	3-4 (bush)	60-67 (bush)
Luffa Gourd	None Given	½ inch	48	90
Malbar Spinace	None Given	¼ inch	12-18	Ongoing
Mirlitons	None Given	Special	-	30 from flowering
Okra	Annie Oakley, Cajun Delight, Clemson Spineless	½ inch	12	60
Peanuts	None Given	1 inch	6	130
Pumpkins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Prankster, Sorcerer	½ inch	36-60	90-120
Southern Peas	Queen Anne, California #5, Quickpick, Colussus	½ inch	4-6	70-80
Soybeans	None Given	1 inch	4-6	45-65
Sweet Potato	Beauregard, Evangeline, Hernandez, Jewel	Special	12	90-120
Watermelon	Seedless: Cooperstown, Gypsy, Matrix, Millenni- um Seeded: Mickey Lee, Sugar Baby, Amarillo	¼ inch	48	90-110
Yardlong Beans	None Given	1 inch	24-36	75

The Buzz

on Mosquitoes in the Garden

As summer approaches along with warmer, wet weather, gardeners will be noticing that pesky buzz in their ears, along with those annoying itches. Mosquito season is upon us yet again! Managing these pesky insects so that we can continue to enjoy time spent outside doesn't need to be hard or involve a fancy automatic spray system. Follow these simple tips to eliminate breeding habitat, encourage natural predators of mosquitoes, and repel them using plants.

By evaluating your yard and garden periodically much unintentional mosquito breeding habitat can be eliminated. Mosquitoes need water to breed, and it doesn't take much. Take a walk after a rainstorm and observe any lingering standing water. Mosquitoes can complete a breeding cycle in as little as ten days depending on the temperature of their environment. Check for pockets and pools of water in clogged downspouts, tarps, air conditioning drains, flower pot saucers, children's toys, and drains. Ponds and birdbaths can be treated using a floating mosquito control ring, which can be found at most garden centers. Empty and refresh water in pet bowls daily, larvae may be lurking in Fido's dish. Periodically dump out standing water in the trays under flower pots, this breaks the cycle of the larvae development. If your flowers must have a tray of water underneath them, try breaking a mosquito control ring into smaller bits. Place a small piece in each tray to control the larvae.



Mosquito larvae in a bird bath.

A lot of native wildlife species prey on mosquitoes. By encouraging these species to frequent your yard and garden, you can drastically reduce these pesky insects. Bats can eat up to 1000 mosquitoes per hour, so consider placing a bat house in a tree to encourage these super hunters. Many species of songbirds such as swallows, martins, wrens, sparrows and warblers will hunt and feed upon mosquitoes. Plant some protective cover such as bushes and shrubs for the birds, birdhouses, a feeder, as well as include a water feature in the garden to attract them. Be sure to add a mosquito control ring or barley straw to any water feature to kill larvae. These products will not harm birds. Lizards such as the Green Anole and Bahaman Anole will eat a lot of mosquitoes, so don't shoo them out of your garden. Allow them to live in your flower pots and they will reward you by chowing down on mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes in the Garden (continued)

Planting certain things in and around seating areas or other parts of the yard where you are likely to be can also help to repel mosquitoes. Most of us are familiar with the citronella plant aka “mosquito plant” *Pelargonium citrosum* marketed in the area. These plants only really repel insects when the oils are activated, which can be done by brushing or crushing a few leaves with



Lemongrass *Cymbopogon citratus*

your hands. The citronella found in candles, sprays, and repellants actually comes from our common lemongrass *Cymbopogon citratus*. Lucky for us this perennial thrives in most

garden conditions. Others that do well in the GNO area include lemon balm, catnip, basil, mints, and rosemary. Many natural mosquito sprays contain some or all of these fragrant herbs. Remember that bruising the leaves activates the oils for up to one hour, which is the action needed to get these plants to actually repel mosquitoes. Try tucking a spring or two of these herbs in the band of your sunhat or in a small vase of water near where you are working (lightly roll in your palms first to bruise the leaves and activate the oils first!). Rubbing some of these essential oils on exposed skin is also a good way to skip products that contain DEET. Citronella candles also tend to work, but only in a small space. Use several in your patio area to clear the air of unwanted guests.

If the mosquito problem just won't go away there are several treatments for yards and gardens that can help. Mosquitoes rest in cool shaded areas during the hot part of the day. Bushes and under homes are some of the favorite areas where they tend to hide from the sun. Aerosol insecticides are applied during the day to these areas, killing the adult mosquitoes where they are hiding. These

products work, but have a board reach and can harm beneficial insects such as bees and butterflies. If you are encouraging these insects to visit your garden, try skipping the fogger and implement the above strategies instead. Selectively treating only areas like patios and decks can reduce this risk. Don't spray near pollinator food sources or plants that they frequent. Mosquitoes are pesky, but pollinators are extremely important in most garden systems.

That annoying buzz in your ear will probably never be completely eliminated (we do live in a swamp of course), but reducing mosquito populations is key to enjoying your yard and garden without needing to flee into the house. Give these tips a try this spring and summer, you may be surprised how well they work!

~Anna Timmerman



Citronella plant *Pelargonium citrosum*.



Torches and Candles containing citronella oil help repel mosquitoes.

Volunteer Spotlight



Rodney Bell has been around agriculture all his life. He was raised on a 36 acre homestead in rural Grant Parish in central Louisiana. His parents always maintained a large garden and even sold some of the excess. Before they were married Rodney kept a garden at his home and introduced his future wife Kathy to edible gardening. Kathy has been a master gardener since 2007 and Rodney would frequently accompany Kathy to various events. He finally joined the program as a graduate of our 2016 class.

With a degree in mechanical engineering, Rodney is a very scientific gardener with a great attention to detail. Visiting his garden you will see a beautiful combination of nature and technology. Automatic timers on the irrigation with direct injection fertilizer, rain barrels, a temperature controlled greenhouse, electronic moisture meters, and even a weather station are just a few of the innovations that Rodney has installed.

Rodney also has a great thirst for knowledge and his favorite aspects of the master gardener program are learning new information and techniques and sharing that information with others. He is proud of the fact that he has found that he can answer many of the questions that visitors to the demonstration garden where he frequently volunteers. And if he does not know the answer, he knows where to find it. Even before becoming a master gardener Rodney would often help out as needed. Since joining the program he has been an invaluable aide. Just a few of his accomplishments include: a member the board of directors for the Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans, the volunteer coordinator for the spring garden show, and a regular volunteer at the LaSalle Park demonstration garden.

Plant of the Month

Indian Flower *Spigelia marilandica* - On a recent trip to Longue Vue we had the opportunity to answer questions and identify plants for members of the Louisiana Garden Club Federation. One beautiful plant in the native plant area caught everyone's attention and left Dr. Joe and I curious as well. Horticulturalist Amy Graham identified it for our group as *Spigelia marilandica*, a wonderful native wildflower also known as Indian Pink.

Indian Pink is a perennial, and can take up to a year to germinate from seed. I planted a flat of these a few years ago and forgot about them, luckily I didn't dump



the tray! Seeds are available from nurseries specializing in native species online. Indian Pink grows best in Zones 6-9, and blooms each spring through early summer, with some late blooms for the remainder of the growing season. It tends to grow no more than two feet in any direction and prefers neutral, well drained soils in partial shade. Planting it underneath mature trees would be ideal. Hummingbirds and other pollinators love the beautiful red flowers. If you are at Longue Vue in the near future, be sure to take a stroll through the native garden and admire this showy native wildflower!



MAY 13 • 10AM–2PM

15 minutes from downtown New Orleans.

DOCVILLE FARM
VIOLET, LA

5124 E. St Bernard Highway



**FREE
FAMILY
FUN**

Families visiting Ag Magic on the River will see first-hand how and where their food, shelter and some clothing originates. This hands-on learning opportunity will link food, fiber, forests, field crops, farm animals and Louisiana seafood to your everyday life.

Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden

Horticulture Lecture Series & Industry Open House



Friday May 12, 2017

9 am until 2 pm

LSU AgCenter

**Hammond Research Station
21549 Old Covington Hwy
Hammond, LA**



Speakers

Allen Owings - LSU AgCenter Horticulture Professor

Great New Plants from the Last Few Years / Research News to Know

Gary Bachman - Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service, Host of Southern Gardening

Landscape Ideas - Plants and More

Garden Tours and Plant Trials

2017 Plants with Potential

Additional information or questions:

Allen Owings (aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu or 985/543-4125)

Complimentary Hamburger Lunch Served in the Gardens RSVP Preferred / No Registration Fee



Master Gardener Mini's

Short informal presentations by local
Louisiana Master Gardeners

Saturday, May 13 at 9am at LaSalle Park. Meet at the gardens for a free and informal talk by Master Gardeners on tomatoes and other warm season vegetables and fruits. The garden is located in LaSalle Park in Metairie to the left side of the Jefferson Parish Performing Arts Center on Stable Drive.

Wednesday, May 31 at 10:15am at New Orleans Botanical Gardens. Meet in the Aromatic Garden for an free and informal talk by Master Gardener Lydia Pollard on medicinal, culinary and aromatic herbs. The New Orleans Botanical Gardens has free admission to Louisiana residents on Wednesdays.



2017 PLANT SALES



NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK
**BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

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

MAY 13

Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. – Noon

JUNE 3

Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

JULY 1

Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

AUGUST 5

Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

SEPTEMBER 9

Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. – Noon

OCTOBER 7-8

Fall Garden Festival
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 pm

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

Plants are now available for sale in our new Garden Gift Shop

CAMP SALMEN NATURE CELEBRATION

Free!

Join us as we dedicate our new Butterfly Garden!

*Chat with Nature Experts, marvel at a Butterfly release,
and relax to a duet from the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra*

You are welcome to bring a picnic lunch!

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2017

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM: NATURE EXHIBITS

1:00 PM: BUTTERFLY GARDEN DEDICATION AND BUTTERFLY RELEASE

1:30 PM: LOUISIANA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA DUET CONCERT



INSECTS AND BUTTERFLIES Dr. Gregg Henderson,

LSU Ag Center • Craig Marks, North American Butterfly Association

Linda "BugLady" Auld, Barber Laboratories • Zack Lemann, Audubon

Institute Insectarium • Emily Taylor, Monarch Waystations

Missy Kapsos, Monarch Watch

FROGS, SNAKES & TURTLES Russell Harris

HAWKS & OWLS Sally Farrell, Wind in My Feathers

HUMMINGBIRDS Nancy Newfield & Steve Lock

FISH Mac Colvin, New Orleans Fly Fishers Club

PLANTS Dan Gill, LSU Ag Center • Mary Elliott McCormick,

Fronderosa • Amy Nichols, Crosby Arboretum

Carolyn DeRouen, LA Master Gardeners

AND MORE Helen Peebles, Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Sierra Club, Honey Island Group

CAMP SALMEN NATURE PARK

35122 PARISH PKWY, SLIDELL, LA 70460

(ACROSS HWY 190 FROM THE GRAND THEATRE)

For more information, contact Linda at 504-739-5715 or Jeanne at 985-259-1188

May Checklist/Garden Tips

Watch azaleas for azalea lace bug damage. Small white spots on the upper surface and small dark brown spots on the back of leaves indicates they are present. Spray with a broad spectrum insecticide getting under the leaves thoroughly.

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

Soil subsidence may require fill to occasionally be spread over the lawn area. Filling can be done now through August. If you intend to fertilize, do so before applying the fill. Mow the lawn immediately before spreading the fill. Choose a light, sandy soil (such as pump sand or river sand) for filling. Avoid spillway sand as it is more likely to contain weed seeds that will introduce weeds into your lawn. Grass will not reliably grow through more than two inches of fill. Where fill must be applied deeper, remove the sod, spread the fill and replace the sod on top. Or, spread the fill and if the original grass does not grow through, plant new plugs or sod to replace it.

During dry weather don't forget to keep your compost pile evenly moist. Dry organic matter will not decompose. Do, however, avoid keeping the pile saturated as this will create bad odors.

This month is the last chance to apply broad leaf weed killers before the weather gets too hot. Button weed is particularly troublesome around the state. This low, mat-forming weed has one inch pointed leaves and small, four petaled white flowers. Most people don't notice it until July, but it is beginning to grow now. LSU AgCenter trials show Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone to work best, especially when applied to young plants in early summer.



Azalea lace wing damage to azalea leaves



Adult azalea lace wing *Stephanitis pyrioides*

May Checklist/Garden Tips

May is a transitional month for Louisiana gardeners. The intense heat of the hot season arrives with daytime highs reaching the 90s and nighttime lows staying in the 70s. We will live with this fierce heat for the next five months until cooler weather begins to make its way into the state in mid to late September or October. Although the ideal planting season for planting hardy trees and shrubs in the landscape is over, many heat tolerant vegetables, bedding plants, summer bulbs and tropicals can be planted now.

Plant basil plants now and enjoy a wonderful fresh seasoning for summer cooking. Many herbs already in your garden, such as thyme, sage, oregano, lavender, dill, cilantro and parsley, are at their most productive now and will play out as the weather gets hotter. Harvest freely and dry or freeze the extras.

Remove the developing seed pods from such plants as Louisiana irises and amaryllis when they finish blooming. This keeps the plants more attractive and prevents them from wasting effort on seeds that are not needed. It would be better for the plants to put that energy into growing leaves and roots.

Cannas that have brown, deformed leaves with holes in them have been attacked by canna leaf-rollers, a caterpillar that is devastating to cannas in our area. Control is difficult and requires regular spraying all summer. If you decide to treat, use a systemic insecticide such as acephate and make weekly applications.

Caterpillars will feed on the foliage and flowers of ornamentals and the foliage and fruit of vegetables. The tomato fruit worm eats holes in tomatoes. Sevin, spinosad and BT regularly applied will keep them in check.

Birds will peck holes in tomatoes just before you decide they are ripe enough to harvest. If birds are a problem, cover your plants with bird netting or harvest the fruit in the pink stage and ripen them inside. Bird netting also works well to protect fruit crops, such as blackberries, blueberries and figs, from bird damage, and is available from local nurseries or feed stores.

Powdery mildew on many ornamentals (crape myrtles, roses, euonymous) and vegetables (squash, cucumbers) continues to be a problem due to dry weather. Treat with chlorothalonil or other labeled fungicides.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

E-mail us at: GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu



Follow us on Facebook at [GNOGardening](https://www.facebook.com/GNOGardening)

For more information visit LSUAgCenter.com

Joe Willis
Orleans Parish
Horticulture Agent

(504)483-9471

Anna Timmerman
Jefferson Parish
Horticulture Agent

(504)736-6519