

Horticulture Hints



Spring
2015

Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

Louisiana Super Plants Announced for Spring 2015

Two new plants are joining the list of Louisiana Super Plants, with the announcement of the spring 2015 additions of fireworks purple fountain grass and henna coleus as the latest additions to the program.

The Louisiana Super Plant program is an educational and marketing campaign of the LSU AgCenter that highlights tough and beautiful plants that perform well in Louisiana landscapes. Louisiana Super Plants have gone through several years of university evaluations or have an established history of performing well across Louisiana.

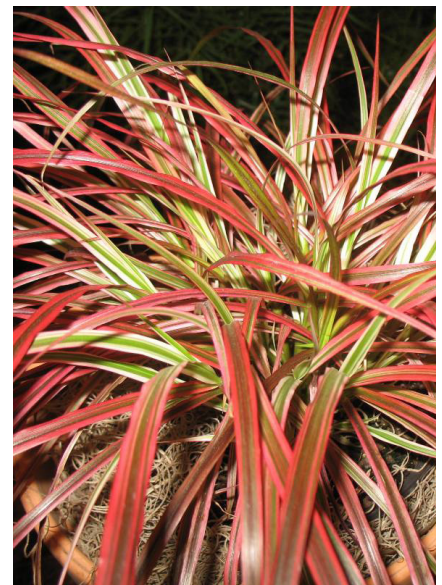
Louisiana Super Plants have a proven track record. They are "university tested and industry approved." Homeowners and professionals alike can benefit from using Louisiana Super Plants to ensure successful landscaping efforts.

The 2015 Louisiana Super Plants spring selections should be available at participating area nurseries later this spring as promotion of them kicks into full swing. To see a list of participating nurseries in your area, go to the Louisiana Super Plants website at www.lsuagcenter.com/superplants.



Fireworks Purple Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum* 'Fireworks')

- Warm-season bedding plant – tender perennial
- Colorful new variegated cultivar of purple fountain grass
- Hardy down to the low 20s – grow as an annual in north Louisiana and a semihardy perennial in south Louisiana
- Outstanding foliage streaked with red, creamy white and green
- 24 to 30 inches tall; 18 to 24 inches wide
- Full to part sun
- Attractive flower plumes
- Heat tolerant
- Drought tolerant once established
- No major insect or disease problems
- Low maintenance



Henna Coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Henna')

- Warm-season bedding plant – tender perennial
- Grows to about 24 to 30 inches tall
- Outstanding performance at the Hammond Research Station over a number of years
- Full sun to part shade
- Colorful foliage is shades of gold and chartreuse brushed with burgundy on top, burgundy underneath and deeply toothed along the edges
- Very heat tolerant
- No major pests
- Full, bushy growth habit
- Very late blooming (flowering is undesirable as it detracts from the colorful foliage)

Common Garden Misconceptions and the Real Truth

There are a variety of misconceptions when it comes to gardening. Here are just a few of the common mistaken ideas and what you really need to know about those topics:

When transplanting trees or shrubs (digging them out of the ground and planting them in a new location), you should prune back the tops up to 50 percent. This balances the top of the plant with the reduced number of roots since roots are lost when the plant is dug up.

Although common sense seems to support this, research does not. When a plant is transplanted, the most critical thing it needs to do when replanted is to grow new roots to replace those that are lost. Cutting the plant back, however, tells the plant to grow new shoots instead. So the newly transplanted tree or shrub puts effort into growing shoots when that effort should be directed at growing roots. This actually works against establishment and survival.

Top pruning also removes leaves. Leaves are the food factories of the plant, and food is needed to grow new roots. Reducing the plant's ability to produce food also reduces root growth. The most important thing to ensuring the survival of a transplanted tree or shrub (or any plant) is digging up enough of the root system and proper watering after it is replanted.

The moon has a profound influence on the way plants grow, so you have to plant vegetable seeds and transplants based on the proper phase of the moon to be successful.

This idea has been around for a long time, but research does not substantiate it. The moon has an undeniable effect on the tides and living organisms, but planting in the wrong phase of the moon will not prevent a vegetable plant from growing and producing a crop. We all eat very well thanks to our abundant food supply, and I promise you farmers who grow all of that food do not plant by the phase of the moon or a sign of the zodiac. They plant according to weather conditions and the proper season, and you should too.

Adding gypsum to heavy clay soils loosens up the soil, reduces compaction and makes it easier to work with.

According to soils specialist J Stevens with the LSU AgCenter, adding gypsum as a soil amendment to soils in southeast Louisiana generally is not beneficial and will not loosen the soil. Gypsum is only beneficial in areas where sodium levels in the compacted soil are high.

Soil sodium levels in Louisiana overall are relatively low. In such soils, it is pointless to add gypsum. It will not make the soil easier to work or less compacted. Gypsum can be useful, however, in situations where you need to add calcium to the soil but don't want to raise the pH.

Watering plants when the sun is shining on the leaves will cause the leaves to burn.

The idea behind this is that the droplets of water sitting on the leaves will act as lenses and will focus the sunlight on the leaf like a magnifying glass and burn it. But that simply does not happen. All of us have either watered our gardens, container plants or lawns during the day and in doing so have wet the foliage. Yet I guarantee that you have never seen plants burn when this is done.

If you plant sweet peppers next to hot peppers, the sweet pepper plants will produce hot peppers.

The idea here is that cross-pollination of the hot pepper with the sweet pepper will cause the sweet pepper plant to produce hot peppers. This is not true. All of the male genes in the pollen from the hot pepper go into the embryos inside the seeds. The genes from the plant that provides the pollen play no role in the formation of the fruit (the pepper). The fruit characteristics are strictly due to the genetics of the mother plant. So if the mother plant is a sweet pepper, it will produce sweet peppers even if pollinated by a hot pepper (and vice versa). This also applies to other vegetables, like squash and zucchini, and fruit trees. An exception is corn. Some types of corn must be isolated from each other because cross-pollination can affect the quality of the corn produced.

Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer Program Offers Opportunities To Learn, Help Others

Many newcomers and inexperienced gardeners in Louisiana need gardening advice. As a certified Louisiana Master Gardener volunteer, you could educate and advise home gardeners in your community.

Louisiana Master Gardeners provide important and valuable contributions. Working as volunteers through parish LSU AgCenter Extension Service offices; Louisiana Master Gardeners develop and enhance community educational programs related to horticulture. Depending on the community needs, organized volunteer activities may involve garden shows, gardening workshops, answering horticulture-related phone calls at the parish Extension Service office, garden tours, developing educational materials and newsletters, demonstration gardens, plant health clinics, presentations to garden clubs and community or school gardening programs.

The Louisiana Master Gardener Program is open to anyone with a willingness to learn and a desire to help others and is tailored for both beginners and experienced gardeners. Training classes are planned, organized and conducted by LSU AgCenter faculty members and offer instruction on a variety of interesting horticultural subjects. Master Gardener participants learn about insects, diseases, weeds, ornamentals, lawn care, fruits, vegetables, soil fertility, diagnosing plant problems and much more.

If you have an interest in improving your gardening skills and knowledge and the desire to work with people, consider becoming a certified Louisiana Master Gardener volunteer with the LSU AgCenter. To learn more about the Louisiana Master Gardener Program, contact your parish LSU AgCenter office or visit www.LSUAgCenter.com/master-gardener



All-America Selections Announces 2015 Winner

All-America Selections is a nonprofit organization that tests newly developed cultivars of seed-grown bedding plants and vegetables in garden plots all across the United States. Duplicating conditions in the average home gardens, the testing program is independent and unbiased.

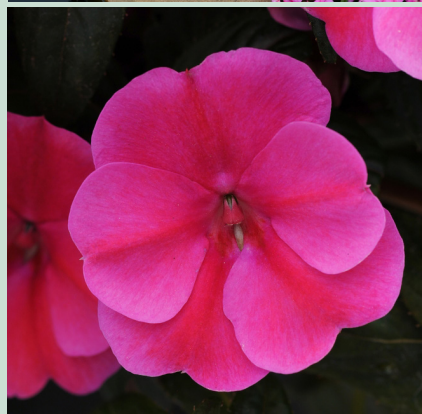
So when it comes to bedding plants and vegetables, those that are All-America Selection Winners generally are considered good choices. That's not to say every winner is going to be an outstanding choice for Louisiana, and we may use them differently than gardeners in other parts of the country.

Impatiens Bounce Pink Flame

The Bounce series of impatiens comes in a variety of colors, but the All-America Selections winner is a specific color called Bounce Pink Flame. Bounce impatiens are hybrids created by crossing two different species of impatiens.

The use of New Guinea impatiens in the breeding of the Bounce impatiens makes this series, including Bounce Pink Flame, highly resistant to impatiens downy mildew. This disease has been very destructive to traditional garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) in Louisiana. Bounce impatiens look like garden impatiens in growth and bloom habit, but the resistance to downy mildew makes them much more reliable in the garden.

Bounce Pink Flame produces a massive amount of stunning bright pink bicolor blooms to brighten your garden over the long summer season. It's a great choice for shady to partly sunny beds.



What's in a Name? Knowing May Be Helpful

Knowing the proper name of a plant you want is critical to finding that plant and purchasing it. Whether you are looking at your local nursery or searching online, knowing the right name makes all the difference.

Things can get surprisingly complicated if you don't know the proper or complete name. Say, for instance, you walk into the nursery and ask for a jasmine. The response could be, "Are you looking for a Confederate jasmine, Asiatic jasmine, yellow jessamine, primrose jasmine or Grand Duke jasmine?" The more precisely you know the name of what you are looking for, the more likely you are to find it.

In addition, knowing the proper name is the key to finding information about a plant. When I get an email request for information, there often is not much I can do if the gardener does not know the name of the plant he or she is asking about. If you get a new plant and want to look up information in a printed reference or on the Internet, you have to know the right name for the plant to do it.

Of course, then we come to the issue of common names versus scientific or Latin names. Common names are very useful, and most gardeners get by using them exclusively. But they have their limits.

Unfortunately, people generally don't like Latin names. Everyone is intimidated by those unpronounce-

able strings of letters that often make up the Latin names of plants. But it's really not that bad. Many names you are familiar with and roll easily off your tongue are Latin names – such as *Magnolia*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Lantana*, *Clerodendrum*, *Vinca* and *Verbena*, to name a few. It's just a matter of becoming familiar with them.

Why, you might ask, deal with these unfamiliar and foreign words? The answer is because they are the best names to know. Although common names are useful, they change from region to region and around the world for the same plant. Several common names often are used for the same plant, or one common name is used for several different plants. You can see how easily confusion can creep into such situations.

Each plant has only one official Latin name, however, and it is used worldwide. In the age of international Internet communication about plants, Latin names are becoming increasingly important to avoid confusion.

So I would encourage you to try to use Latin names more often in your gardening efforts. Although you may hate them, scientific names often are critical to properly identifying plants. And whenever you are asking questions, doing research or looking to buy a particular plant, there are many instances where having the Latin name will make your efforts more effective.

Avoid Bad Plant Choices

Over the years, I often have cautioned gardeners about plants that typically don't do well in Louisiana. When I do have some idea about a plant's poor performance in our area, I think it can be just as important for gardeners to know which plants are likely to fail as those that are likely to succeed.

Now, I have to be careful here. I can't tell you how many times I've given lectures and mentioned that this or that plant will not grow well here, only to be collared by gardeners afterward who tell me how well the plant grows for them. I long ago stopped saying a plant will not grow here. I now hedge my statements by saying things like, "This plant is challenging and generally does poorly here," or, "Gardeners I've talked to in this area found this plant did not thrive for them."

There are, of course, also times I get asked about a plant and can find no evidence it has ever been grown locally. I don't necessarily discourage gardeners in those situations. But I do make it clear they are on new ground. Only adventurous gardeners who are not afraid of failure and can afford the loss should select plants that do not have a proven track record in Louisiana. Still, it is these excursions into the unknown that may lead to discovering new and wonderful plants that thrive in our climate.

At this time of the year, when you are looking at garden catalogs full of lovely pictures, it's good to take a deep breath and do some research before you pull out the credit card or checkbook and send in an order. The plants you find at local nurseries almost all are well adapted to our state; but there is no such assurance when ordering from a catalog or the Internet.

Before ordering an unfamiliar plant, do some research using books written for Louisiana and the LSU AgCenter's gardening publications. If you find the plant is not listed in references and gardening books for our area, is not carried by local nurseries and isn't familiar to local gardeners, it's because either it doesn't grow well here or it hasn't been tried yet. Either way, you are rolling the dice.

Prune Crape Myrtles Properly

An appropriate time to prune most summer-flowering trees and shrubs, including crape myrtles, is late January through early March.

Crape myrtles are leafless at this time, and it is easy to see the structure of the tree. This is helpful when deciding where to prune. Pruning generally should be done to enhance a crape myrtle's natural shape, while also correcting any problems.

An unfortunate trend in crape myrtle pruning is to cut back the tops, which results in a tree reduced to large main branches ending in stubs. The lush growth that occurs at these cut sites appears vigorous but actually is structurally weak and is more susceptible to fungal diseases such as powdery mildew. Even more, when pruning is conducted improperly over the years, unsightly large, swollen knobs form at the points where pruning is done each year.



Although cutting a tree back can be considered an option when pruning crape myrtles, it is certainly not, and never has been, the preferred way of handling these graceful and beautiful trees. Perfectly beautiful crape myrtles often are disfigured and deformed for no good reason. In most cases, this annual pruning is needless work and expense that generates huge amounts of pruning trash that ends up in landfills. Also, it is not healthful for the trees in the long run.

To prune a crape myrtle properly, first decide if it needs to be pruned. As with any pruning project, you must have a specific and valid purpose in mind before you begin. In other words, if you can't come up with a good reason to prune your tree, leave it alone.

If you see something that calls for pruning, however, study the tree carefully and determine what needs to be pruned to accomplish the specific purpose identified. If the problem is one branch is touching the edge of the roof, deal with that branch. Don't cut back the whole tree.

Every crape myrtle will need some pruning in its life to grow properly and fit well with its surroundings. Here are some examples:

- Over time, branches that are too low on the trunk(s) will need to be pruned to raise the canopy to the desired height. We often need to remove weak, thin or vertical shoots from the inner part of the tree to produce a cleaner looking tree.
- Selected branches may need to be pruned back to a side branch or the trunk to create a shapelier tree and to eliminate crossed and rubbing branches. Generally, avoid cutting back or shortening branches much larger than your finger, although cutting larger branches back to a side branch or to the trunk when needed is fine.
- Of course, you need to prune to keep suckers removed from the base of the trunk. This is especially important in younger trees.
- You also may need to redirect the direction of a branch's growth. This can be done by studying the branch carefully and looking for a side branch that grows in the desired direction. Prune back to that branch and you have redirected the growth of the branch. This can be helpful where trees are too close to a structure, such as a house. (A common problem is crape myrtle trees being planted too close to a house – always locate trees at least 10 feet away from the house roof line.) In situations where trees are close to a house and branches are hitting the roof, branches can be redirected to grow away from or up and over the roof line by using this pruning technique.

Louisiana Irises ‘Floral Ambassadors’

Blooming from late March to early May, the Louisiana iris is a floral ambassador that has carried our state’s name all over the world. Their extraordinary beauty and reliability in the garden have made them increasingly popular, but they still deserve more recognition and use here in their home territory.

Although a number of iris species are native to Louisiana, only five species, *Iris brevicaulis*, *Iris fulva*, *Iris giganticaerulea*, *Iris hexagona* and *Iris nelsonii*, are known as “The Louisianans.” And only in south Louisiana do all five species occur together.



These five species are closely related and will interbreed with each other but with no other species. The crossing, or interbreeding, of these species has resulted in the modern hybrid cultivars we grow today. Their large attractive flowers cover a broad range of colors, including many shades of blue, purple, red, yellow, pink, gold, brown, lavender, burgundy and white.

The best time to plant Louisiana irises is in August and September when they are dormant, but you also can buy and plant them with good success during the spring while they are in bloom. When purchased and planted in spring, however, Louisiana irises need to be handled carefully to avoid damaging the foliage and flower buds, and you may need to stake the plants after planting to hold them upright. (Established Louisiana irises do not need staking.)

Louisiana irises should be grown with as much direct sunlight as possible. Although they will tolerate shade for part of the day, at least about six hours of direct sun are needed for good blooming. You can plant Louisiana irises in beds by themselves, combined with other perennials or even in aquatic gardens.

When preparing a spot to plant Louisiana irises in a typical bed, incorporate a generous 3-inch layer of compost, rotted manure or peat moss and some all-purpose fertilizer into the soil. These irises grow best in a soil high in fertility and organic matter.

Aquatic culture is one of the easiest and most natural ways to grow Louisiana irises, and the foliage tends to stay more attractive during the summer when grown that way. Simply place a potted iris into your decorative pond or aquatic garden so the rim of the pot is a few inches below the water’s surface. Louisiana irises also grow well and look great planted in the ground on the edges of large ponds.

The large seedpods that form after flowering should be removed as soon as you notice them to keep the plants more attractive and vigorous. Next fall, in October or November, fertilize the irises as they begin their winter growing season.

Caladiums Make Outstanding Additions to Shady Summer Gardens

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.

All caladiums grow well in shade to part shade (two to four hours of direct sun, preferably morning). In these conditions, they produce vigorous growth with large, colorful leaves. Some cultivars, however, also can be successfully grown in areas receiving full to part sun.

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. Plant tubers about 1 to 1 ½ 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.

Caladiums also are available already sprouted and in 4- to 6-inch pots, and they will provide immediate color. Pre-sprouted caladium tubers should be planted with the top of the root ball level with the soil of the bed.

Once caladiums are planted, mulch the bed with 2 inches of your favorite mulch and water them in. Keep beds of caladiums well watered during the summer, especially those receiving lots of sun.

Top-performing caladium cultivars of various types that do well in both sun and shade based on research done at the LSU AgCenter’s Hammond Research Station include:

- Fire Chief – fancy-leaf red
- Carolyn Whorton, Elise – fancy-leaf pink
- Moonlight, Garden White – fancy-leaf white
- Tapestry – fancy-leaf multicolor
- Red Ruffles – lance-leaf red
- Florida Sweetheart – lance-leaf pink
- Mount Everest, White Delight, White Dynasty, White Ruffles – lance-leaf white
- Candyland, Raspberry Moon – lance-leaf multicolor
- Bombshell – lance-leaf red
- Hearts Delight – lance-leaf red
- Cherry Tart – lance-leaf red
- Celebration – fancy-leaf multicolor
- Highlighter – lance-leaf chartreuse



Checklist for March, April and May

1. Plant warm-season bedding plants beginning in mid-March (south Louisiana) or mid-April (north Louisiana) 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 that reliably return 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, larger 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, imidacloprid or horticultural oil sprays.
8. To encourage more rapid re-blooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after the 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.
11. If your crape myrtles have had problems with crape myrtle aphids and the unattractive black sooty mold they cause, treat your trees now to prevent problems this summer. Apply a drench of imidacloprid insecticide at the base of the tree, and the tree will be protected from aphids all summer.

Dan Gil, Consumer Horticulture



Beauty and Flavor All in One Plant!

If you are a gardener with minimal time, energy and funds to use toward making your vegetable garden "look pretty" this spring, consider growing borage.

Borage foliage has several culinary uses. It commonly is mixed into salads or used as garnish. The foliage has a mild but somewhat cucumberlike flavor. Other kitchen artists cook borage foliage down as you would a green and mix it into spaghetti and other pasta dishes.

Wait just a little bit longer and you'll have a plethora of beautiful blue blooms. The blooms really pop against the mostly green foliage crops in a fall vegetable garden. And, as a bonus, the flowers are edible. They often are used to decorate cakes and other desserts. For a really fancy party, freeze a few flowers in ice cubes – but not too many. You would not want to overwhelm guests with flavor.

Even if you have no desire to eat borage, you won't be the only one enjoying its beauty. Borage is a great crop to attract bees and other pollinators to your garden, which is especially important if you plan on growing cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, gourds, zucchini or other cucurbit crops.

Simply let the plants grow and snip foliage or flowers as you need them. Want more borage in your garden next year? Just collect seeds, since this is an open-pollinated plant that should have no trouble germinating in the future.

Plant borage transplants or seeds into the garden during the spring. As with most edible crops, borage prefers full sun. Plants must be spaced 12-24 inches apart and usually grow 1 ½ to 3 feet tall. Keep in mind, too, that borage prefers drier soils, so don't "love" this one too much!

Although an annual, borage is known to re-seed itself. So you should be able to enjoy this wonderful culinary herb that is not only tasty but also visually appealing!

Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D



Vegetables to Plant in March

Plant snap bean, Swiss chard, radish, lettuce, collard, mustard, turnip and sweet corn seeds directly into the ground. Plant tomato, pepper and eggplant transplants after March 15 in south Louisiana and after April 1 in north Louisiana. Cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons really need warmer soils to perform their best. Make sure all frost is over before planting these. Technically, you can use the same dates given for other crops (March 15 and April 1), but to be on the safe side, you might wait a week or two extra for the cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons.

... and in April

Plant snap beans, butter beans, radishes, 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. Remember that most pumpkins require 90-120 days to reach full maturity, and some giant pumpkins may even require up to 160 days before they are ready to be harvested. These days must all be frost free. If you are aiming to harvest for Halloween, adjust your planting date according to the variety of pumpkin you are planting.

... 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), okra, Southern peas, pumpkins, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, butter beans, squash, cantaloupes, collards and eggplants (transplants). Snap beans, butter beans, sweet corn, tomatoes and peppers (transplants) should be planted in the early days of May to prevent poor fruit set caused by high temperatures.



Now Is Time to Think About Spring Vegetable Garden

Have you been using some of the colder days of winter to think about the garden, order supplies and dream of the great things we'll soon be growing?

Our average last frost date in south Louisiana is March 15, and it's April 1 for gardeners in north Louisiana. Of course, that doesn't guarantee we won't experience some frost or freezes after those dates. So if you plan on planting right before or a little after these dates, prepare yourself with some frost protection cloth.

One favorite is the lightweight white cloth that is available at most hardware stores and plant nurseries. You can leave this cloth on for several days without harming plants because light can still penetrate through it. Just be sure to check underneath for insects and signs of disease.

As always, if you have special varieties in mind, start your tomato, eggplant and pepper crops eight weeks prior to the date you want to set them in the ground. Start your cucurbit crops (cucumbers, cantaloupes, watermelons, squash and pumpkins) only three to four weeks prior to setting them in the ground. Cucurbits also can be easily seeded directly into the garden.

Crop Highlights

Sweet corn. Planting corn early may reduce exposure to corn earworm populations. 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 ensure good pollination and well-filled ears.

When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seeds every 8 to 12 inches in the row and cover to about ½ inch to 1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3 to 4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Side-dress a 100-foot row with 1 ½ to 3 pounds of calcium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches tall and again when the plants are 24-36 inches tall. One pint of fertilizer or 2 cups is about 1 pound. Three ounces of seeds will plant 100 feet of row.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin 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.

If you love to eat fresh corn on the cob, try the improved super sweet, or Sh₂, and enhanced, or SE, 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 because they lose some of their sweetness when pollinated by those other types of corn. The super sweets don't germinate well in cool soils, so wait until soil has warmed considerably before planting.

Varieties such as Seneca Horizon, Funks G90, Gold Queen, Merit, Silver Queen (white) and Golden Cross Bantam always perform well. But there also are many new high-sugar modern varieties commonly available. We regularly grow Ambrosia, Incredible, Miracle and Delectable at Burden and always enjoy both the production and flavor of these varieties. There also are others available that would be worth trying, such as Temptation, Obsession, Honey and Cream, Peaches and Cream, Silver Queen, Luscious and any of the XTRA-Tender numbered series.

Snap beans. Plant bush varieties every two weeks, starting right after the average last frost date for your area. This will provide a continuous harvest for an extended period.

Good bush snap beans for Louisiana are Ambra, Bronco, Contender, Valentino, Dusky, Festina, Hialeah, Magnum, Storm, Strike, Provider and Bush Blue Lake 274. An All-America Selections winner 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 yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax and Goldmine.

One-half pound of snap bean seeds will plant a 100-foot row. Plant seeds 1-2 inches apart in the row. High temperatures at bloom may cause many of the flowers to fall off. Generally, snap beans 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 Fahrenheit and 90-95 percent humidity.

Pole snap bean varieties produce larger yields since they produce for a longer period than bush varieties. Space seeds about 6-12 inches apart. About 2-3 ounces of seeds will plant a 100-foot row.

For pole snaps, the All-America Selections winner is Kentucky Blue. Rattle Snake and McCaslan also 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. Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives six to eight hours of direct sunlight each day. When tomatoes don't get enough sunlight, few blossoms form, and many of those that form fall off before setting fruit. Begin transplanting in mid-March in south Louisiana and at or after April 1 in north Louisiana – after the danger of frost is over. If a frost occurs, you will need to cover the newly planted tomato plants! To avoid severe damage from diseases and insects,



spray tomatoes every seven to 10 days after fruit set with a fungicide (Daconil or Maneb). Scout weekly for insects.

Space tomato plants 18-24 inches apart. Fertilize with 5-6 pounds of 13-13-13 per 100-foot row prior to planting and side-dress at first and second bloom with calcium nitrate or potassium nitrate.

Tomato vines may be determinate or indeterminate. Indeterminate types have a vegetative terminal bud that continues to grow. Determinate types have a fruiting terminal bud that keeps the plant from growing beyond a predetermined height. Determinate types are better suited for container gardening. Indeterminate types will need to be staked in the garden.

Indeterminate varieties that grow well in Louisiana include Better Boy and Big Beef (large); Champion and Pink Girl (pink); and Sweet Million, Sweet Chelsea, Jolly, Small Fry, Juliet, Elfin, Cupid, Mountain Belle and Sun Gold (cherry).

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

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Celebrity (an All-America Selections winner, best taste); Carolina Gold, Florida 91, Mountain Spring, Cherry Grande (cherry) and Floralina. Also try Sun Master, Sunleaper, Mountain Spring and Phoenix.

Note: The tomato spotted wilt virus has nearly eliminated tomato production in some areas. If you had trouble with it, plant Bella Rosa, Mountain Glory, Amelia, Crista, Quincy, Tribeca, Tribute and Talladega varieties.

Bell peppers, eggplants and okra. Wait to transplant 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 for growing bell peppers. Any shade will greatly reduce fruit set. Space peppers about 18 inches and eggplants 18-36 inches apart.

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

Recommended hybrid bell peppers are Revolution, Heritage, King Arthur (large), Valencia, Paladin and Plato, Camelot (X3R), Aristotle, Gypsy, Tequila (purple) and Mavras (black).

(Note: Tomato spotted wilt virus has hindered bell pepper production in many areas.) The varieties Stiletto, Patriot and Excursion II are resistant to tomato spotted wilt virus. Try these varieties if you have had trouble producing bell peppers.

Recommended hybrid eggplant varieties are Fairy Tale, Calliope, Classic, Epic, Dusky, Santana, Hansel or oriental Ichiban. The green eggplant varieties produce well in Louisiana and are less bitter than the purple varieties in hot, dry weather. The Louisiana Market Bulletin is a fairly good source for green eggplant seeds and other hard-to-find vegetable seeds



and plants. Kermit is a green variety of eggplant that might be worth a shot.

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 cucurbits outdoors well after the danger of frost is over. Do not keep transplants in pots longer than three to four weeks prior to planting into your garden.

Recommended cucumber varieties for slicing are Dasher II, General Lee, Thunder, Speedway, Poinsett 76, Slice More and Intimidator.

For pickling, try Calypso, Fancipak, Jackson and Sassy.

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

Recommended yellow straight-neck squash varieties are Goldbar, Liberator III, Enterprise, Cougar, Multipik, Patriot II, Superpik and Fortune.

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

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

Recommended hard shell (winter) squash varieties are Waltham Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut, Tay Belle, Table Queen, Honey Bear, Cream of Crop, Table King and Imperial Delight.



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

Recommended cantaloupe varieties are Ace, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Magnum 45, Super 45, Ambrosia, Earlidew (honeydew type) or Honey Max (honeydew type).

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 and Starbrite. Seedless varieties include Revolution, Summer Sweet 5244, TriX Carousel 212 or 313, Cooperstown and Millionaire. Ice box type: Sugar Baby. Yellow: Summer Gold and Tender Gold.

Apply 2-3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row before planting. Side-dress with 1 ½

to 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 fruit from each plant when they reach 4-5 inches in diameter.

Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh often is coarser and stronger. Good varieties to try include Atlantic Giant, Prize Winner, Aladdin, Big Autumn, Merlin, Autumn Gold, Magic Lantern, Orange Smoothie, Munchkin and Baby Boo. See the article on the LSU AgCenter's website: http://www.LSUAgCenter.com/en/crops_livestock/crops/vegetables/2010-Pumpkin-Variety-Evaluation.htm for more information from our 2010 pumpkin evaluations.

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 that time, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, however, 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 you don't reduce the bee population. Side-dress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with 1 ½ pounds of calcium nitrate per 100-foot row as vines begin to run. Starting at first bloom, weekly applications of a general-purpose fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) 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 Fahrenheit, at least) 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 lima beans every two weeks through mid-May to extend the harvest. One-half pound of seeds will plant a 100-foot row when three or four seeds are planted every 12 inches within the row.

Recommended pole lima beans are King of the Garden, Carolina Sieva, Willow Leaf, Christmas and Florida Speckled. Plant seeds 6-12 inches apart. One-quarter pound of seeds 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 (greater than 70 degrees Fahrenheit). 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. Bienville, another LSU AgCenter variety, requires a sandy soil.

Okra. Soil needs to be warm (65-75 degrees Fahrenheit) for okra seeds to germinate. Soak seeds overnight in tap water to soften seed coats before planting.

Recommended varieties are Emerald, Annie Oakley (hybrid), Cowhorn, Cajun Delight (All-America Selections), Red Burgundy and Clemson Spineless.



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

Onions, shallots and garlic. Harvest mature onion, garlic and shallot bulbs during the 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 at temperatures of 45-50 F in a place with 65-70 percent relative humidity.)

Irish potatoes. Begin digging 90-110 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.

*Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D.
Community/School
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Turfgrasses and Lawns

Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can be effective tools for reducing weeds in your yard, but the best way to manage weeds is to grow a thick, healthy lawn. Lawns that are managed properly are lush and healthy, with few weed problems.

Visit www.lsuagcenter.com and search for the keywords "lawn BMP" for more information on growing a beautiful lawn.

Pre-emergence herbicides – Weed preventer or pre-emergence herbicides can be helpful in preventing the emergence of several annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. Pre-emergence herbicides may be applied safely in late winter to early spring to all established southern lawns.

Most pre-emergence products for home gardeners are granular and should be applied with drop or broadcast spreaders and "watered in" soon after application. Pre-emergence herbicides kill weeds as they germinate, so timing is everything with these types of chemicals. There is limited opportunity for application, since you have to apply before weeds germinate.

Residents in the New Orleans area and southernmost areas of the state should apply pre-emergence herbicides in late January or early February (definitely before Valentine's Day) and then follow up with another application in mid-April. From Alexandria to Baton Rouge, residents should apply just after Feb. 14, with a follow-up application in late April. If you live in north Louisiana, try to get these herbicides applied in late February to early March, with a follow-up application in mid-May.

Some pre-emergence herbicide trade names to look for are Green Light Crabgrass Preventer, Scotts Halts and Hi-Yield Crabgrass Preventer with Dimension. These pre-emergence herbicides may be reapplied throughout the growing season. Consult product labels.

Post-emergence herbicides – Post-emergence herbicides are used to kill weeds that already have emerged in the lawn.

Winter broadleaf weeds usually are prevalent in the late winter to early spring throughout the state. These broadleaf weeds often can be controlled by using selective liquid post-emergence "trimec type" herbicides that contain formulations with three weed killing ingredients – 2,4-D; dicamba and mecoprop.

Broadleaf weed killers are widely available and can be used on most southern grasses. Injury can occur, however, when using them on St. Augustine grass and centipede grass as the weather gets warmer in late spring.

Some examples of these broadleaf herbicides are Bayer Advanced Southern Broadleaf Herbicide, Ortho Weed B Gon Max for Southern Lawns and Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone. Some product manufacturers recommend a follow-up spray two or three weeks after the first application.

Atrazine is very effective on winter broadleaves and also controls annual bluegrass. This herbicide is consistently the most effective herbicide on winter broadleaf weeds in the LSU AgCenter's lawn weed management trials. Atrazine does not control wild onion, false garlic or blue-eyed grass (actually an iris). The herbicide may be safely applied on St. Augustine grass, centipede grass and zoysia, as well as dormant Bermuda grass during the spring. Most garden centers have a good supply of atrazine on their shelves.

Clean your sprayers thoroughly with an ammonia solution if the same sprayer is used for applying insecticides or fungicides on good plants. It is best to buy a sprayer specifically dedicated for weed killers, however, to avoid accidental injury to desirable plants. As always, be sure to read and follow product label recommendations before using any pesticide.

What about weed and feed products? Weed and feed herbicides can be used at the times recommended for the first fertilizer application of the year. Apply weed and feed in the New Orleans area about late March. For north Louisiana, mid-April is the time. Just be aware that applying weed and feed too early (late February to early March) may encourage outbreaks of brown patch disease.

*Ron Strahan
Weed Scientist/Turfgrass Specialist*

Fruits

Primocane-fruiting Blackberries

Primocane-fruiting blackberries produce fruit on current-season canes (primocanes) and second-season canes (floricanes), if desired, while all other blackberries fruit only on the floricanes. Primocane-fruiting blackberries are adapted to a diverse range of climates, particularly because cold hardiness is not an issue when plants are grown for a primocane crop only.

Most of the currently available primocane-fruiting varieties were developed at the University of Arkansas, and many of the statistics about them are in reference to the growing season there. For example, the floricane crop of 'Prime-Jan' and 'Prime-Jim' – the first commercial varieties released in 2004 – is from June 3 to July 6 in Arkansas, thus overlapping with other fresh market blackberries. Harvest on primocanes begins in mid-July there.

The primocanes of 'Prime-Jan' and 'Prime-Jim' tend to branch naturally, producing a couple of branches near the base. Soft-tipping primocanes at 3 feet early in the season, however, increased branch and flower numbers, resulting in a threefold yield increase compared with untipped canes.

Research indicates primocane-fruiting blackberries easily can be manipulated to adjust harvest time. Removing primocanes to create a delayed flush of growth will delay harvest. Row covers or tunnels that increase temperature will advance primocane growth and harvest. Soft-tipping height and frequency can affect cane architecture and season. Management techniques along with new varieties of primocane-fruiting blackberries will have a great effect on blackberry production worldwide.

Flowering and Fruiting

'Prime-Jan' and 'Prime-Jim' bloom on the floricanes beginning in early to late April in Arkansas. The time from flowering to black fruit is similar for both cultivars, averaging 57 days. Reported yields range from 1,500 to 5,300 pounds per acre in Arkansas. Berry size on floricanes ranged from 3.7 to 6.4 grams. Double-cropping (floricane plus primocane crop) did not reduce the primocane crop.

In warmer climates, like Louisiana, primocane-fruiting blackberries can

be double-cropped. Harvest on the floricane crop is at the same time as other blackberry types, such as the fresh market blackberry variety 'Navaho' that is considered to have much better fruit quality. Also, the yield of the floricane crop in 'Prime-Jan' and 'Prime-Jim' is not as high as that typically found in other erect blackberry varieties. Although the primocane crop overlaps with other varieties, the fruiting season of the primocane-fruiting types is longer.

Date of first bloom on primocanes ranged from June 16 in Arkansas to July 14-22, depending on primocane management treatment. Fruit harvest on primocanes began on July 17 in Arkansas and continued until frost, although fruit numbers were greatly reduced during higher temperatures in August, indicating pollen germination, stigma receptivity and pistil density were reduced when temperatures exceeded 84 degrees. Yield ranged from 200 to 2,700 pounds per acre, and berry size ranged from 2.0 to 3.7 grams in Arkansas.

Primocane Management

The effects of "soft-tipping" primocane-fruiting blackberry primocanes (removal of 1 to 2 inches) on yield and berry size depended on when it was done. "Soft tipping" late, when flower clusters appeared or later, reduced primocane yield and berry weight.

The primocanes of 'Prime-Jan' and 'Prime-Jim' tend to branch naturally, producing a couple of branches near the base. Primocanes that are not summer-pruned can reach more than 6 feet tall. Generally, primocanes that are soft-tipped to 3 feet produce up to three times the yield of untipped canes. This higher production results from more branches per cane and more flowers on soft-tipped canes.

Crops should be expected the year after planting. A simple two-wire trellis is recommended to prevent the vigorous canes from bending over and to prevent wind damage.

Off-season Production

In primocane-fruiting blackberries, fruiting season can be modified by advancing or delaying primocane growth using row covers. Primocane-fruiting blackberries also can be manipulated to produce fruit at most

times of the year in tunnels. With row covers, primocanes tend to grow faster than those without row covers and thus bloom earlier.

Flower bud initiation in primocane-fruiting blackberries may be day-neutral and dependent on primocane age as it is in primocane-fruiting raspberries. The chilling requirement of the floricane of 'Prime-Jim' seems to range from 100 to 300 hours.

Research indicates primocane-fruiting blackberries easily can be manipulated to adjust harvest time. Removing primocanes to create a delayed flush of growth will delay harvest. Row covers or tunnels that increase temperature will advance primocane growth and harvest. Soft-tipping of canes is necessary to manage primocane growth and to increase yield, but tipping height can affect cane architecture and season. In addition, double-tipping, where primocane branches are soft-tipped also, shows great promise for increasing production.

'Prime-Ark Freedom' is a new variety developed by the University of Arkansas and is the world's first thornless primocane-fruiting blackberry. 'Freedom' is the fourth in the university's Prime-Ark line. 'PA Freedom' is intended for home garden use and possibly local markets because it does not store well for shipping. 'Freedom' follows the release of 'Prime-Ark 45' in 2009.

'Osage' is the newest thornless floricane-fruiting blackberry. In Arkansas, 'Osage' ripens between 'Natchez' and 'Ouachita,' with June 10 as the beginning harvest date. Its yields have been consistent and good, comparable to and higher than 'Ouachita.' Berry size is medium, 5 grams, slightly smaller than 'Ouachita.' Flavor is a key attribute of 'Osage,' which has lower acid flavor and notable flavor components coupled with high sugar levels. It has great post-harvest handling potential.

Other Arkansas floricane-fruiting blackberry varieties to consider include, in order of ripening at the test location in Clarksville, Ark.: 'Natchez,' June 5; 'Osage,' June 10; 'Ouachita,' June 12; 'Navaho,' June 20; and 'Apache,' June 25.

David Himelrick, Ph.D.

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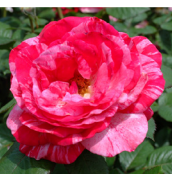
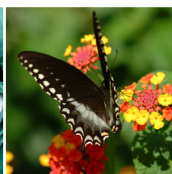
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Horticulture Hints



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**Parish agents, please adapt these suggestions to your area
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