

Horticulture Hints



Spring
2012

Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

2012 All-America Selections Winners

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

When it comes to bedding plants and vegetables, those that are All-America Selections 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, but the selections provide guidance on good choices.

For 2012, four winners have been named.

AAS Flower Award Winner: Ornamental Pepper 'Black Olive'

The AAS judges said Black Olive ornamental pepper (*Capsicum annuum* 'Black Olive') was a standout, especially in the southern trial gardens where heat was a major presence during the 2011 trials. The plants grow to about 18 to 20 inches tall and 12 to 15 inches wide.

This attractive pepper has an upright habit with nicely draping leaves and dark purple/black fruit, which appears in small clusters along the stems. As summer progresses, the fruit matures to red, giving a beautiful contrast against the dark purple foliage and bright purple flowers. The fruit is edible, but be careful. Like most ornamental peppers, the fruit is fiery hot. Plants will perform best in full sun and can be grown in garden beds or containers. You can even cut branches to use as cut flowers in mixed bouquets.



AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner: Salvia 'Summer Jewel Pink'

Last summer, Summer Jewel Red salvia was an AAS winner. Summer Jewel Pink salvia (*Salvia coccinea* 'Summer Jewel Pink') is similar, with delicate pink flowers. Both of these salvias have performed well in trials at the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station. This salvia will thrive in beds or containers in full to part sun. Once established, they are fairly drought-tolerant.



Summer Jewel Pink salvia is a compact plant that is notable for its prolific production of delicate pink flower spikes throughout the growing season. The plants grow to be about 15 to 20 inches tall and about 10 to 15 inches wide. The foliage is an attractive midgreen and is slightly fuzzy. You can purchase transplants from local nurseries this spring or grow transplants yourself from seed.

The flowers are rich in nectar. Summer Jewel Pink, along with Summer Jewel Red, is an excellent choice for hummingbird and butterfly gardens.

AAS Vegetable Award Winner: Pepper 'Cayennetta' F1

If you love the spicy flavor of peppers but don't want so much heat, consider growing the new Cayennetta pepper (*Capsicum annuum* 'Cayennetta'). It is an excellent tasting, mildly spicy pepper that is easy to grow. This variety produces chilli peppers about 3 to 4 inches long on a compact, well branched, upright plant. The tapered, bayonet-shaped fruit start off green, mature bright red and are produced in great quantities. Plants produce best with eight hours or more of direct sun (full sun) and grow to be about 24 inches tall and about 20 inches wide.

A unique character of this variety is that it has good cold tolerance. This is important for gardeners planting as early as possible in the spring and a good characteristic for late summer plantings for fall production. Also notable is the dense foliage cover to protect the fruit from sun scorch. It also handles extreme heat well.



AAS Vegetable Award Winner: Watermelon 'Faerie' F1

Faerie is a nontraditional watermelon because of its appearance. It has an unusual creamy yellow rind with thin stripes instead of the more traditional green or green-striped rind. Yet it still yields sweet pink-red flesh with a high sugar content and crisp texture. Home gardeners will like growing something unique in their gardens. They also will like that the vigorous vines spread only to 11 feet, which means it takes up less space in the garden. Each 7 to 8 inch fruit weighs only 4 to 6 pounds, making it a perfect family size melon.



Spring 2012 Louisiana Super Plants

The Louisiana Super Plant program is an educational and marketing campaign that highlights tough and beautiful plants that perform well in Louisiana landscapes. Louisiana Super Plants have a proven track record from several years of university evaluations and observations. Louisiana Super Plants are “university tested and industry approved.”

Each spring and fall LSU AgCenter horticulturists unveil a list of Louisiana Super Plants that have been evaluated and selected for their superior performance across the state. Wholesale nurseries are encouraged to grow Louisiana Super Plants, and retail nurseries are encouraged to carry them. That way, when you hear about these outstanding plants, you should be able to find them at your local nurseries.

Homeowners and professionals alike can benefit from using Louisiana Super Plants to ensure successful landscaping efforts.

Plants should be available at participating area nurseries by the time the promotion of each of them begins. To see a list of participating nurseries in your area, go to the Louisiana Super Plants website at www.lsuagcenter.com/superplants.

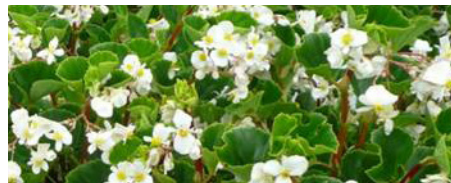


The spring 2012 Louisiana Super Plants are:

Begonia BabyWing Series

(Promotion begins second week April)

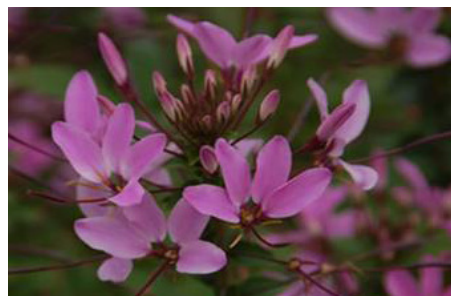
- Warm-season annual
- Part sun to part shade
- White or pink flowers
- Grows 12-15 inches tall by 10-12 inches wide
- Blooms from late spring through frost
- Heat and stress tolerant
- Vigorous plant with upright, mounded growth habit
- Excellent bedding plant to add season-long color to landscape



Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita®'

(Promotion begins third week April)

- Warm-season annual
- Full sun
- Grows 24-48 inches tall by 20-24 inches wide
- Space 18 inches apart
- Plant spring through fall
- No spines
- Sterile – no seeds means longer blooming
- Flowers from late spring through frost
- Heat and drought tolerant
- Excellent plant to add height and drama to the landscape



Hydrangea 'Penny Mac'

(Promotion begins second week May)

- Introduced by Penny McHenry, founder of the American Hydrangea Society
- Flowering deciduous shrub
- Part shade
- Grows 4-6 feet tall by 3-4 feet wide
- Space 4 feet apart
- Use as specimen plant or in borders and mass plantings
- Produces large, rounded clusters of blue or pink flowers
- Repeat bloomer!
- Major bloom in May with sporadic flowers through fall
- Great for cut and dried flowers



Landscaping with Periwinkles

Every year problems occur with landscape plantings of periwinkles (*Catharanthus roseus*) across Louisiana.

Phytophthora root and stem rot is the typical disease responsible for most problems. Root rot and rotting of the lower stem just at and above the soil line are characteristics of the disease.

For success with periwinkles, consider these tips:

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

Pruning

Finish pruning summer-flowering trees and shrubs, such as crape myrtle, vitex, althea, oleander and abelia, in late February or early March.

Ideally, this should be done before they begin to sprout and grow. If any have sprouted, prune as soon as possible.

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

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

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

Include Trees in Home Inspection

When thinking about purchasing a house, a home inspection can ensure that costly repairs are not needed once you take possession of the house.

In most instances, however, home buyers seldom look at the condition of the existing trees on the property. Hiring a licensed arborist to inspect the trees can save potential homeowners hundreds or even thousands of dollars in tree-related expenses. If there are trees that are going to require extensive work or even removal, the price of the property can be negotiated to take such expenses into account – or at least you will be more aware of tree issues you may have to deal with in the future.

This topic also is critical if you are thinking about building a new home on a lot with existing trees. During construction, valuable trees can be damaged by physical injury to the trunk and crown from construction equipment, soil compaction from heavy equipment, filling over the roots with soil and cutting roots when trenching is done to put in utility lines. Damaged trees often die within one to five years after construction, or if they survive, it may be in a weakened, less attractive state for many years.

Hire a professional arborist in the early planning stages. Many of the trees on the property may be saved if the proper steps are taken. Allow the arborist to meet with you and your building contractor, and make preserving trees a high priority. The arborist can assess the trees on the property and help determine which should be removed during construction and which are structurally sound and healthy and should be protected and preserved during construction. It's too late to do anything when the trees around your newly constructed home begin to do poorly or die.

Controlling Fire Ants



Red imported fire ants inflict painful stings and create unsightly mounds in our landscapes, and most of us would be happier if they weren't around.

A variety of products and methods are available to control fire ants effectively. Unfortunately, no treatment will eradicate them from a yard permanently. The product chosen is often determined by the situation and the preferences of the individual doing the treatment.

When using a pesticide, always read the label carefully before you purchase it to make sure you understand and are comfortable with how to use it – and to make sure it is appropriate for the situation.

Baits

Fire ant baits consist of a pesticide combined with a material fire ants will consume as food. Use fresh bait and apply it when the ground and grass are dry and no rain is expected for the next 24 hours. Apply baits when the worker ants are actively searching for food.

Dusts

Some products, such as those containing acephate, are applied as a dry dust. Ants walking through the treated soil get the dust on their bodies and transport the insecticide into the mound. Within a few days, the entire colony should be killed. To use a dust, distribute the recommended amount evenly over the undisturbed mound.

Mound Drenches

Other insecticides used to control fire ants are mixed with water and applied to the mound as a drench. These liquid mound drenches kill ants underground but must be applied in sufficient volume to penetrate the entire nest. Generally, about 1 gallon of diluted mixture is poured gently over the top of each mound.

Granules

Granular products offer another method of getting insecticide into fire ant mounds. To treat a single mound, measure the recommended amount and sprinkle it on top of and around the mound following label directions.

Organic Controls

A few active ingredients used in fire ant control products, such as boric acid, pyrethrin, pyrethrum, rotenone, citrus oil extract and diatomaceous earth, are organic pesticides. Diatomaceous earth, a natural silica-based dust, will kill some ants, but it rarely eliminates ant colonies when used alone. Avoid breathing in the dust-like particles.

Home Remedies

Be advised there are some home remedies that don't work well. Spreading grits on a fire ant mound will only feed them. Laying orange or grapefruit peel on a fire ant mound will only make them move to another spot. Shoveling one mound on top of another in an attempt to force the ants to kill each other is not effective. Do not use gasoline or other petroleum products for fire ant control. While many of these products will kill fire ants, they are extremely flammable and will kill grass and other plants.

For more information on fire ants, click on this link: [Managing Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/NR/rdonlyres/629A7009-16C9-41A8-99B5-D7A4B6E24F62/3110/pub2817ManagingFire-Ants4.pdf), or use this address: <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/NR/rdonlyres/629A7009-16C9-41A8-99B5-D7A4B6E24F62/3110/pub2817ManagingFire-Ants4.pdf>.

Dealing With Spring Weeds

It is very important to focus on weed control this time of year around shrubs and in flower beds.

Cool-season weeds are in active growth as the days get longer and warmer, and they will begin to flower and set seeds. Left unchecked, the prolific seed production this spring will lead to even more problems next spring, so efforts made over the next couple of months are especially critical.

Ideally, all of your beds should be mulched with about 2 to 3 inches of a mulching material, such as chopped leaves, pine straw, pine bark or other suitable materials. Mulches help considerably but are not totally weed-proof. If weeds manage to make it through the mulch, dig the weeds out promptly, making sure you get any bulbs or roots that might sprout again out of the ground, too.

You may also carefully apply a herbicide, such as glyphosate (Killzall, Eraser, Roundup and other brands), to just the weeds to kill them. Use shields or plastic bags to cover ornamentals in the bed to prevent the spray from contacting their foliage.

The use of a weed preventer, such as Preen or Amaze, will not be helpful in dealing with growing weeds. After you have weeded the bed, however, you can apply a weed-preventing herbicide to keep weeds from coming back. These products also could be applied to beds right after planting shrubs, ground covers or flowers to prevent weeds. (Do not apply to seeded beds, however.) Follow the label directions carefully and use these products only around plants that the label indicates are tolerant of the herbicide.

As you begin to see these cool-season weeds come into bloom, don't put this job off any longer. Weeding is not the most fun or glamorous part of gardening, but a garden simply cannot exist unless you keep up with it.

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 May.
2. After spring bulbs have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns yellow before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms.
3. Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature changes. Excellent mulches are pine straw, chopped leaves and pine bark. Mulch should be applied at least 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. Coleuses are great annual bedding plants for Louisiana landscapes. Try some of the newer sun-loving varieties.
6. Fertilize shrubs during 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 their first flower cycle is completed this spring.
9. Roses may develop insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles are especially a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby. Treat with spinosad for beetles and thrips.
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 (Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub Insect Control and other brands) to the base of the tree, and the tree will be protected from aphids all summer.

*Dan Gill
Consumer Horticulture*



Lettuce is an easy plant to grow for numerous reasons. First and probably most important, it's a vegetable most people eat. It is also easy to grow in both the fall and spring seasons.

Lettuce can easily be seeded directly into the soil. And it's an easy crop to grow because it can be planted in the ground or in containers.

Lettuce generally is planted as a fall crop and an early spring crop. The fall crop is planted between Aug. 15 and Oct. 15, but I have planted it as late as Nov. 15 with success. The spring crop is planted anytime during January.

While lettuce easily can be planted into a home vegetable garden, it is even easier to grow in a container. Just remember that the container needs to be at least 8 inches deep and have good drainage.

- **Step one.** Fill your container with soil. If you aren't using soil with fertilizer already in it, mix a handful of 13-13-13 into the soil.
- **Step two.** Read the plant depth instructions on your seed packet. Some lettuce seeds need light to germinate; others do not. If your lettuce seeds need light, gently sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil. If it does not need light, plant lettuce seeds no deeper than 1/4 inch in the soil. Mix different varieties into your container to create a beautiful edible display of lettuce.
- **Step three.** Water the container. Make sure to use a "breaker" to water gently so you don't blast the seeds deep into the container or so they don't all float to the side of the container.
- **Step four.** Thin leaf lettuce to 4 inches apart. If growing head lettuce, thin and leave no more than three plants.
- **Step five.** Fertilize your lettuce three weeks after it was seeded. Typically, we fertilize with 15-0-0, but any fertilizer with 15 percent nitrogen will work. (The first number on the bag will be a 15.) Repeat this again two weeks later.
- **Step six.** Harvest and enjoy. Depending on the type of lettuce you sow, it will be ready to harvest 30-50 days after seeding. If you planted leaf lettuce, cut the lettuce so you leave 2 inches of green material in the container. The lettuce will grow again (like hair), allowing you to harvest several times off one planting. Romaine and head lettuce will only be harvested once, however.



My favorite varieties: Wildfire mix and Allstar mix (several types in one packet), Red butterhead, Panisse, Skyphos, Flashy trout back and Cimarron Red.

Vegetables to Plant in March

Direct plant snap bean, Swiss chard, radishes, lettuce, collard, mustard, turnip, cabbage, broccoli and sweet corn seeds. Plant tomatoes, peppers and eggplant transplants. Plant cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons well after danger of frost is over; this usually is after March 15 in south Louisiana and closer to April 1 in north Louisiana.

... 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.

... 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 as a result of high temperatures.



Now is Time to Think About Spring Vegetable Garden

It's time to get ready for the spring vegetable garden. If you haven't done so already, start ordering your favorite vegetables varieties or visit your local hardware/ feed store and pick up all the essentials – tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, etc.

Start your tomato, pepper and eggplant transplants now. This usually takes eight weeks from seed to transplant, and if you want to get an early start, you'll need to plant in the garden about March 15 for south Louisiana and April 1 for North Louisiana.

Start your cucumber, squash and melon transplants no earlier than four weeks prior to planting them into the garden. Or just direct seed these.

Everything else can be directly seeded into the ground.

Take a soil sample prior to adjusting pH and fertilizer! Soil varies in different parts of the state, so have your soil checked at least every three years. Soil samples can be sent to the LSU AgCenter's soil testing lab on the LSU campus in Baton Rouge (www.stpal.lsu.edu).

Once you've done all that, apply pre-plant fertilizer, if needed. Then irrigate and wait one to three weeks to plant. See the planting guidelines and suggestions for dates to plant particular crops.

Crop Highlights

Sweet corn. Planting corn early helps reduce problems from corn earworms. 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 with 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 ¾-1½ 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 pound.

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.

The recommended regular early maturing sweet corn variety is Seneca Horizon. Midseason varieties are Funks G90, Gold Queen or Merit. Late-season regular varieties are Silver Queen (white), lochief, NK199 or Golden Cross Bantam.

Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row.

If you love to eat fresh corn on the cob, try the improved super sweet (Sh₂) and enhanced (EH) (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 these other types of corn. The super sweets don't germinate well in cool soils, so wait until soil has warmed considerably before planting.

Many new high-sugar modern varieties are commonly available. The best include (early) Platinum Lady, White Out, Xtra-Tender 372, Temptation, Sweet Ice, Bodacious, Sweet Riser, Dazzle, Lancelot and Precious Gem; (midseason) Argent, Devotion, GSS966, Passion, BSS982 or 977, Snowbelle, Summer Sweet

(7630Y, 7210, 8102), Honey Select, Crisp N Sweet 711, Incredible, Prime Plus, Big Time, Sweet Chorus and Sweet Rhythm; and (late or long season) Even Sweeter, Pegasus, Tahoe and Silver King.

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, Pod Squad, Valentino, Dusky, Festina, Hialea, 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 the yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax, Goldmine or Golden Improved.

One-half pound of snap bean seed 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 F and 90-95 percent 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 Selections winner is Kentucky Blue. 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 plants in mid-March in south Louisiana or at the end of March in north Louisiana – after the danger of frost is over.

If a frost occurs, you will need to cover the newly planted plants! To avoid severe damage from diseases and insects, spray tomatoes after fruit set every seven to 10 days with a fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) and

an insecticide (Sevin or Malathion).

Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives six to eight hours of direct sunlight each day. When tomatoes receive too little sunlight, few blossoms form and many that do form will fall off before setting fruit.

Space tomato plants 18-24 inches apart. Fertilize with 5-6 pounds of 13-13-13 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), Sweet Million, Sweet Chelsea, Jolly, Small Fry, Juliet, Elf, Elfin, Navidad, Cupid, Mountain Belle and Sun Gold (cherry).

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 All-America Selections winner, best taste), Carolina Gold, Fla. 47 or 91, Mountain Spring, Cherry Grande (cherry), Floralina, Mountain Fresh and Mountain Crest. Also try Sun Master, Sunleaper, Summer Flavor 6000, Mountain Spring and Phoenix.

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

Bell peppers and eggplants.

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

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

Recommended hybrid bell peppers are Revolution, Heritage and the large King Arthur, Valencia, Paladin and Plato. For a yellow bell, try Orobelle, Summer Gold, Valencia or Summer Sweet 8610. For a mature red bell pepper, try Camelot (X3R) or Aristotle.

Yellow and red bell peppers are difficult to produce in our humid conditions. (*Note: Tomato spotted wilt virus has hindered bell pepper production in many areas.*) The varieties Stilleto, 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, Night Shadow, 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. The Louisiana Market Bulletin is a fairly good source for green eggplant seed and other hard-to-find vegetable seeds and plants.

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 in your garden.

Recommended cucumber varieties for slicing are Talladega, Dasher II, Olympian, 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 Jackson.

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, Fortune and Lemondrop.

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

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, Ultra Butternut, Tay Belle Acorn, Cream of Crop Acorn (AAS), Table Queen, Table King (AAS) 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 crook-neck); Liberator and Conqueror (yellow straight neck); and Declaration, Payroll, Judgment III, Revenue and Independence (zucchini).

Recommended cantaloupe varieties are Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Magnum 45, Super 45, Ambrosia, Earlidew or Honey Max.

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: Revolution, Summer Sweet 5244, TriX Carousel or 313, Cooperstown, Millionaire, Crimson Trio, Laurel and Nova. Ice Box Type: Sugar Baby and Mickeylee. Yellow: Gold Strike, Tendersweet, Desert King and Butter Cup.

Apply 2-3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row before planting. Side-dress with $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 pound of ammonium nitrate or $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 pounds of a complete fertilizer (13-13-13) per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Remove all

but three to four well-shaped fruit 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 Touch of Autumn or Orange Smoothie. Recommended medium-size pumpkins are 20 Karat Gold and Hannibal. Recommended large or jack-o'-lantern types are Conastoga, Mustang or Cinderella.

See the article on 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 this time, 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. Side-dress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with $\frac{3}{4}$ 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) 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 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 But-

terpea or Baby Fordhook.

Plant lima beans every two weeks through mid-May to extend the harvest. One-half pound of seed 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, Florida 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 potatoes 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) for okra seeds to germinate. Soak seeds 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 and Clemson Spineless. 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 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 in 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 45-50 F and 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.

Mulching Your Garden

Remember to mulch your garden.

There are several mulch options including black plastic, leaves and pine straw. Using mulch has several benefits. It reduces weed germination. It also prevents soil from splashing on your vegetable leaves and fruit, which, in turn, reduces insect and disease damage. And it adds organic matter to your soil – improving the soil's health and tilth.

*Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D.
Community/School Vegetable
Gardens*

Fruits

Peaches are Problematic

Thomas Walker said *life is better than death, I believe that, if only because it is less boring and because it has fresh peaches in it.*

A freshly picked peach is indeed one of life's greatest pleasures. To accomplish this in your own backyard in Louisiana is a difficult feat, however. We generally do not recommend that homeowners attempt to grow their own peaches unless they are willing to follow a seven- to 10-day regular spray schedule from bloom until harvest.

Peaches have an extensive list of insect and disease pests that annually attack the fruit and foliage. Our high humidity and excessive rainfall create an environment that is ideal for the spread and growth of fungi and bacteria. Another notable problem can be losses to late spring frosts.

But if you still think it is worth the effort, here are some cultural considerations:

Site and soil requirements: Peaches grow best in sandy soils with good internal and external drainage. Regardless of soil type, tree life and production will benefit if planted on a raised bed to increase external drainage. Soil pH should be in the range of 6.0 to 6.8. Extra lime added to the planting site in areas where calcium levels are inherently low in the soil will increase tree longevity and production.

Irrigation requirements: Irrigation is important in tree establishment and obtaining a large tree for fruiting. Additional water applied as the fruit begins to ripen also will dramatically increase fruit size.

Plant spacing and mature canopy size: A mature tree easily will have a spread of 12 to 15 feet. Space is needed between trees to maintain the orchard and allow for air movement. Crowding trees close together reduces air movement and increases problems with fruit diseases like brown rot and insects such as stink bugs.

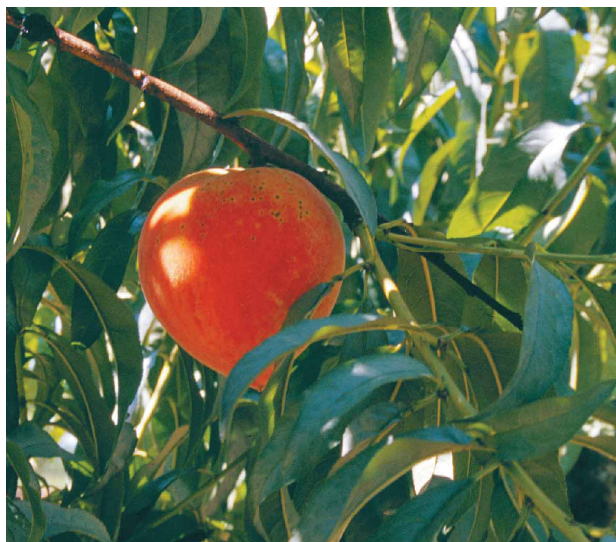
Years to bearing: Three.

Potential yield: 50-175 pounds per tree.

Planting stock: Best stock is a dormant, freshly dug, 3/4-inch caliper tree that stands about 3 feet tall. Large potted plants from retail nurseries are difficult to train to an open center style of pruning. Some nurseries carry 30- to 36-inch tall trees in pots that make an ideal stock that can be trained and pruned properly.

Varieties: The nectarine is a fuzzless mutation of a peach and not a cross between a peach and a plum. Nectarines generally are not well adapted because the smooth-skinned fruit is especially vulnerable to diseases and wind-scarring.

There are many peach and nectarine varieties from which to choose, but only a few are recommended for a particular



area because the winter chilling requirement for a variety has to match the chilling hours received in that area.

Peach Varieties		
Variety	Recommended Area	Ripening Season
Gulf King	Coastal	Very Early
Gulf Crest	Coastal	Early
Surecrop	North	Early
Spring Prince	North	Early
June Prince	Mid and North	Early
Delta	Coastal and Mid	Midseason
Regal	Mid and North	Midseason
Gala	Mid and North	Midseason
Harvester	Mid and North	Midseason
La Feliciana	Mid	Midseason
La Rouge	Mid	Midseason
La Belle	Mid	Late
Majestic	North	Late
Ouachita Gold	Mid and North	Late
Ruston Red	North	Late

Establishment: Site selection and establishment should begin several months prior to planting the tree. Drainage issues and soil amendments, such as adding lime, if needed, should be done at least three months prior to planting. Actively growing peach roots cannot tolerate saturated soils for a long period of time. Surface drainage can be accomplished by constructing furrows and ditches to remove the water from the area. The site should receive at least eight hours of full sunlight a day for the tree to be productive.

Fertilization: Pre-plant fertilization is important in establishing a strong, productive tree. In sandy soils with low native nutrient levels, 2 to 3 pounds of a fertilizer with high potassium levels should be incorporated into the planting site two to three months prior to planting. In addition, extra lime at about 3 pounds per site should be thoroughly incorporated into the planting site to a depth of 12 to 18 inches. In soils high in nutrients, such as those found in the Mississippi River Delta, no pre-plant fertilizers are necessary.

Pruning and training: Peach and nectarine trees usually are pruned to an open center system. Begin training the day you plant by cutting the main trunk back to about 24 inches from the ground. As the tree begins to grow in the spring, three to four scaffold limbs about 18 to 24 inches from the ground that are spaced equal distances apart around the tree should be selected. When looking straight down on the tree, the scaffold limbs should resemble spokes in a wheel. The three scaffold limbs should be trained by making heading cuts to change direction of growth. Ideally, the limb angle should be about 50 degrees. The first growing season is important in establishing the framework of the tree. Several light prunings may be necessary that season to establish a tree's framework.

Major insect pests: Plum curculio and stink bugs.

Major disease pests: Brown rot, rhizopus rot and scab.

David Himelrick, Ph. D.

Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The LSU AgCenter's Louisiana Master Gardener program plays an important role in meeting the horticulture needs of Louisiana residents and providing research-based information for the fastest-growing leisure-time activity in the nation – gardening.

Designed to recruit and train volunteers, the Louisiana Master Gardener program is open to anyone with a willingness to learn and a desire to help others. Instructional training for the Louisiana Master Gardener program is tailored for beginners and experienced gardeners.

In exchange for horticulture training, Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their parish Extension offices, to develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture. Depending on community needs, these may include environmental improvement activities, parish fairs, plant health clinics, civic meetings and community and school gardening programs.

Enjoy the satisfaction that more than 1,700 citizens across the state are experiencing as a certified Louisiana Master Gardener. To learn how you can become a Master Gardener, contact the LSU AgCenter Extension office in your parish or visit our website: www.LSUAgCenter.com/MasterGardener

René G. Schmit
Louisiana Master Gardener
Coordinator



Turfgrass

Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can be effective tools for reducing weeds in your yard, but the best weed control is a thick healthy lawn.

An agent in your parish LSU AgCenter Extension Service office can advise you on fertilizers and other cultural practices that will improve the overall health of your lawn.

Weed preventer or pre-emergence herbicides may be applied safely in late winter and early spring to all established southern lawns. These products usually are granular and should be applied with drop or broadcast spreaders and watered in soon after application.

Pre-emergence herbicides are effective in reducing the emergence of several annual grasses like crab grass and goosegrass, which are common grassy weeds in lawns throughout the state. These herbicides work before you see the weeds infesting your lawn, but timing is everything with the pre-emergence type of herbicides. These are not weed and feed type herbicides. They are weed preventers that should be applied before the weeds germinate so there is a limited opportunity for application.

Residents in the New Orleans area and other extreme southern areas of the state should apply pre-emergence herbicides around Valentine's Day or a few days after. The window for applying pre-emergence herbicides further north in Louisiana is late February to early March.

Some pre-emergence herbicide trade names to look for are Green Light Crabgrass Preventer, Scott's Halts and Hi-Yield Crabgrass Preventer with Dimension. These herbicides may be reapplied at four-to six-week intervals throughout the growing season.

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 and 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. These herbicides are widely available and can be used on most southern grasses.

Be extra careful, however, when using them on St. Augustine grass when the weather gets warmer. Some examples of trimec-type broadleaf herbicides are Bayer Advanced Southern Broadleaf Herbicide, Ortho Weed B Gon Max for Southern Lawns and Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone.

Atrazine is very effective on winter broadleaves and also controls annual bluegrass. This herbicide may be applied on St. Augustine, centipede and zoysia and dormant Bermuda grass

Most herbicide labels will stress the use of these products on younger weeds at temperatures below 85 degrees. Even when used as directed, a temporary discoloration of the lawn may occur following the use of these herbicides. Follow the manufacturer's recommendation for the amount of water and spray material to cover a given area as well as the

recommendations regarding mowing practices before and after the herbicide application.

Some product manufacturers recommend a follow-up spray two or three weeks after the first application. 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.

Weed and feed herbicides can be used at the time 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. Applying weed and feed too early (late February to early March) may encourage outbreaks of brown patch disease.

Be sure to read and follow product label recommendations!

Ron Strahan
Weed Scientist/Turfgrass Specialist

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Mulching Pecan Trees in the Landscape

For a homeowner, one of the most important practices to successfully grow a pecan tree is to provide adequate water during the growing season.

Generally, water will have more of an influence on pecan production than any other environmental factor, particularly where nut quality is concerned. Insufficient water or drought stress will affect nut size, nut filling and kernel quality, as well as leaf and shoot growth.

Weed competition often results in poor growth or even death of young pecan trees. Bermuda grass and Johnson grass are especially severe competitors, but numerous other grasses and weeds can result in very poor tree growth.

Pecan trees will make the best growth in the first few years after planting if a circle, 6 feet in diameter around the tree, is kept weed-free with glyphosate herbicide, hand cultivation or mulch. Chemical weed killers (herbicides) should be used with extreme caution and in complete accordance with label directions. Organic or inorganic mulches are the more sensible choice for residential landscapes, but they also can be used in commercial pecan orchards.

Let's begin with some basics about mulches. The practice of mulching pecan trees isn't a unique concept developed by modern society. We're actually borrowing it from Mother Nature.

Think of native pecan trees growing in their natural environment along the numerous tributaries in Louisiana. Nature produces continuous mulch consisting of fallen leaves, dead grass, twigs, pieces of bark, catkins, shucks and other organic material. This blanket of organic material replenishes nutrients and provides an optimal environment for root growth and mineral uptake.

Mulching can be an important management practice to maintain healthy trees in your landscape. This is especially true for newly planted trees. Research has shown that the growth rate and tree health is improved when competition for water and nutrients by weeds is minimized.

Benefits of Mulching

- **Conserving moisture.** Bare soil surfaces heat up in summer, causing water evaporation and sometimes root desiccation and death. This was especially a problem last year during the severe drought conditions of late summer and early fall. A layer of mulch reduces moisture loss by preventing sunlight from reaching and heating the soil. Mulch also insulates the soil moisture from evaporation by wind. Since evaporation is reduced, the need for watering can be minimized. Mulches minimize soil crusting, thus improving the absorption and movement of water into the soil.
- **Adds organic matter to soil.** Decomposing mulch adds humus to the soil, increasing organic matter in the surface of heavy clay soils and improving the water holding capacity of light, sandy soils. Fertility of the soil is improved as the decaying mulch slowly releases nitrogen, phosphorus and other nutrients into the soil. Organic mulches also provide food and a favorable environment to beneficial soil organisms, such as earthworms and "good" fungi. Organic mulches will improve soil aeration, structure (aggregation of soil particles) and drainage over time.
- **Provides insulation.** A layer of mulch acts as insulation for tree roots, providing uniform growing temperatures and protecting them from extreme summer and winter temperatures.
- **Discourages weeds.** Most of a tree's roots are in the upper 6-18 inches of soil. Applying mulch under pecan trees eliminates competition from other plants for water and nutrients. Turf roots are especially aggressive and pose the largest threat of competition to young pecan trees. A 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch will reduce the germination and growth of weeds.
- **Reduces soil erosion.** Mulches reduce water runoff from rainfall or sprinklers, thereby reducing the possibility of soil erosion. Soil compaction is reduced, as well as water entry into the soil being improved by the porous surface of the mulch.
- **Protects trunk.** As discussed earlier, a properly placed circle of mulch around a tree prevents weed and grass growth near the trunk. This leads to easier lawn maintenance and greatly reduces the possibility of trunk damage due to improperly used string weed trimmers or careless lawnmower drivers.
- **Looks nice.** Mulching around pecan trees is recommended to improve the growing environment, but an attractive layer of mulch around trees also can add to the beauty of the landscape by providing an area of uniform color and interesting textures to the lawn surface.
- **Soil fertility.** Mulch also provides a favorable environment for earthworms and other organisms that benefit soil structure and fertility. Decaying organic mulches also release many nutrients into the soil.
- **Reduce diseases.** Mulches prevent soil splashing, which not only stops erosion but keeps soil-borne diseases from splashing up onto the trees.



Applying Mulches

The best time to mulch new plantings is right after you plant them. Around established plants mulch is best applied in early spring. This is when plants are beginning to grow and before weed seeds start to germinate. Before applying any type of mulch to an area, it is best to weed the area.

Inspect the trees and soil in the area to be mulched. Determine whether drainage is adequate.

If mulch is already present, check the depth. Do not add mulch if there is a sufficient layer in place. Rake the old mulch to break up any matted layers and to refresh the appearance. Top dressing with new mulch annually (simply to refresh the color) creates a buildup to depths that can be unhealthful for the tree. The appearance of old mulches can be improved by spraying with a water-soluble, vegetable-based dye.

If mulch is piled against the stems or tree trunks, pull it back several inches so the base of the trunk and the root crown are exposed. Do not pile mulch up against the trunk (often called "volcano mulching"). Excessive mulch on the trunk causes moisture to build up, creating ideal conditions for insect pests, diseases and decay.

Organic mulches usually are preferred to inorganic materials due to their soil-enhancing properties. If organic mulch is used, it should be well aerated and, preferably, composted. Avoid sour-smelling mulch.

For well-drained sites, apply mulch to a recommended depth of 3- to 4-inches for medium- to coarse-textured materials. Reduce the depth by 1 to 2 inches if there are drainage problems or you are using a fine-textured material. Excessive amounts of these fine-textured mulches can suffocate tree roots, resulting in yellowing of the leaves and poor growth.

Avoid placing mulch against the tree trunks. It's very important to keep the mulch 6 inches away from the trunks of young trees and 1 foot away from the trunks of older, mature trees.

Place mulch out to the tree's drip line or beyond. The larger the mulched area, the more beneficial.

Keep mulch 6 to 12 inches away from the walls of buildings. Subterranean termites nest in the soil and feed on materials that contain cellulose. Termite treatments are applied to the soil around buildings, so keeping mulch away from walls will prevent termites from using it as a bridge to cross treated soil.

Check the mulch depth annually and replenish as necessary.

Mulch Material

Many factors go into selecting a mulch for use in a landscape.

The texture will affect its porosity and water infiltration rates into the soil. Mulching materials differ considerably in the nutrients they will provide as they decompose. One of the greatest determining factors for mulch selection is the availability of the material and its cost.

Composted mulch generally has more uniform texture than mulch that is not composted. Composting generally is desired to reduce the incidence of weed seeds, insects and disease microorganisms.

But the most important selection criteria is which mulch or which combinations of mulches are going to provide your pecan tree with the best growing environment – because a happy tree is a productive tree.

*Charlie Graham
Pecan Specialist*

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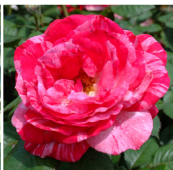
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