

# THE HOME GARDENER

VOL. 7, No. 2

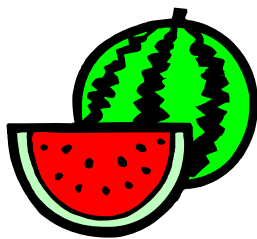
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**SUMMER, 2009**  
**June, July & August**

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## The Home Gardener

LSU AgCenter  
East Baton Rouge Extension Office  
4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge LA 70809



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# LOUISIANA MASTER GARDENER™ PROGRAM

The Louisiana Master Gardener™ Extension Volunteer Program is a service and educational activity offered by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. The program is designed to recruit and train volunteers to help meet the educational needs of home gardeners while providing an enjoyable and worthwhile service experience for volunteers. The program is open to all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, gender, religion or national origin. Master Gardener programs are all-volunteer organizations sanctioned by land-grant institutions in each state and function as an extension of the college or university. In Louisiana, the program is sponsored by the LSU Agricultural Center and is directed by parish Extension faculty.

For more information regarding the Louisiana Master Gardener™ Extension Volunteer Program, call 225-763-3990 or visit [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)

**The Home Gardener** is a publication of the East Baton Rouge Parish Master Gardeners Program. Area home gardeners receive a variety of information on vegetable gardening, landscape ornamentals, fruit and nuts, turfgrasses, hummingbird and butterfly gardening, excerpts from the LMG curriculum materials, and a potpourri of entertaining and research-based information.

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#### ***Louisiana Master Gardener Objectives***

- To expand the capacity of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service to distribute horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community.
- To develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture. Depending on community needs, these may be environmental improvement activities, community and school garden programs or public horticultural events.
- To enhance 4H programs by complementing co-curricular and extracurricular horticulture programs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network under the direction of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.



## THE WONDER OF WATERMELONS

By: Donna Montgomery, MS, Nutrition Specialist, Retired, LSU AgCenter

Those lazy days of summer wouldn't be complete without Louisiana-grown watermelons. You may grow your own or purchase them from the local farmer's market, produce stand, supermarket or from roadside vendors.

Watermelons are grown in 28 parishes in Louisiana, according to the LSU AgCenter, but the most are grown in four parishes – Washington, Bienville, Union and Avoyelles. According to Henry Harrison, LSU AgCenter county agent in Washington Parish, Baton Rouge is the top market for Washington watermelons.

According to Harrison, a lack of rain results in sweeter watermelons. “When you don't have rain, you have a better sugar conversion and you will have a sweeter melon. The flavor and texture will be much better than when you have a wet season,” he said. He's hoping for intermittent showers June through August, but no heavy rains.

### Selection

I asked Harrison how to pick a good watermelon. Here are his comments. “The belly (underside) where it lay on the ground should be a deep, deep yellow. A watermelon is ready to pick when the tendril nearest the fruit has turned brown. Don't buy a melon with a dry, dry stem because that means it is an aged melon that was pulled from the field a long time before. The stem conserves water on a melon, which is 92 percent water.”

He doesn't recommend thumping. He said it has never worked for him.

### Storage and Handling

The National Watermelon Promotion Board says watermelons will keep at room temperature for 7 to 10 days, but a temperature of 55 degrees is ideal. I suggest you keep yours in the refrigerator. Store watermelons too long and they will lose flavor and texture.

According to the LSU AgCenter, a ripe melon will keep in the refrigerator for about a week, or two to four days if it is cut and wrapped in plastic wrap or sealed in a container. Seeds should be left in the cut pieces because they help keep the flesh moist.

Before cutting and eating a watermelon, wash it in clean running water. Also, use clean knives and cutting surfaces.

### Nutrition

In addition to great taste, a 2-cup serving of watermelon contains:

- 80 calories
- No fat or cholesterol (*only animal products contain cholesterol*)
- Lycopene, a carotenoid with antioxidant activity and free radical scavenging property
- 92 percent water

- 25 percent daily value of vitamin C
- 20% daily value of vitamin A

In the heat of summer, nothing tastes better than an ice cold slice of watermelon. Some like to add salt because it brings out the sweetness of the melon. If you have any melon left, you may want to try some of these recipes.

### Watermelon Popsicles

*Let your children or grandchildren help with this recipe. Recipe is adapted from the Washington Parish Watermelon Festival booklet of 1996.*

3 cups watermelon juice  
 1/2 cup water  
 1/3 cup sugar  
 2 teaspoons lemon juice

To prepare watermelon juice, cut watermelon into cubes and rub through a strainer to remove seeds. In a small saucepan, combine sugar and water. Simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in watermelon juice and lemon juice. Pour into popsicle containers and freeze until solid. **Makes 12.**

### Watermelon Kiwi Smoothie

*This recipe is from the National Watermelon Promotion Board*

2 cups seedless watermelon chunks  
 2 kiwis, peeled and chopped  
 2 cups vanilla yogurt  
 1 cup ice  
 Springs of fresh mint for garnish

Place all ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. Pour into two glasses and garnish with a sprig of fresh mint. **Makes about 4 cups, serving 2.**

### Watermelon Salsa

2 cups peeled, seeded and cubed watermelon  
 1 cup peeled, cubed nectarine  
 2 jalapeno peppers, seeded and minced  
 3/4 cup diced purple onion  
 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro  
 2 tablespoons lime juice  
 1 teaspoon grated orange rind  
 1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients. Cover and chill 1 hour. Serve with grilled chicken, fish or pork. **Makes 3 1/2 cups.**

## Sweet and Sour Watermelon and Cucumber Salad

*Recipe is adapted from the National Watermelon Promotion Board. The sweet and sour flavor works well with the light and sweet taste of watermelon.*

1/2 cup cider vinegar  
1 cup water  
1/4 cup sugar or to taste  
1 tablespoon poppy seeds  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
3 green onions, chopped  
3 cups seedless watermelon balls or small chunks  
2 cucumbers, peeled and sliced

Combine vinegar, water, sugar and poppy seeds in small bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the chopped green onions.

Combine watermelon and cucumber in serving bowl and pour marinade over the top. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate a couple of hours before serving. Toss gently before serving.

## Watermelon Rind Sweet Pickles

*This is one of Dr. Ruth Patrick's recipes for watermelon pickles. Dr. Patrick is a retired nutrition specialist with the LSU AgCenter.*

3 quarts watermelon rind (*about 6 pounds unpared, or 1/2 large melon*)  
3/4 cup salt  
3 quarts water  
2 quarts (*2 trays*) ice cubes  
8 cups sugar  
3 cups white vinegar  
3 cups water  
1 tablespoon whole cloves  
6 (*1-inch*) pieces stick cinnamon  
1 lemon, thinly sliced, with seeds removed

Pare rind and all pink edges from the watermelon. Cut into squares or strips about 1-inch thick. Cover with brine made by mixing the salt with 3 quarts cold water. Add ice cubes. Let stand 5 or 6 hours, or overnight. Drain and rinse in cold water. Cover with cold water and cook until fork tender, about 10 minutes (*do not overcook*). Drain. Combine sugar, vinegar, water and spices (*tied in a clean, thin white cloth*). Boil 5 minutes, add lemon slices and pour over the watermelon rind. Let stand overnight. Heat watermelon in syrup to boiling and cook until watermelon is translucent (*about 30 minutes*). Pack hot pickles into clean, hot pint jars. To each jar add 1 piece of stick cinnamon from spice bag. Cover with boiling syrup to 1/2 inch of top of jar. Seal and process in boiling water bath for 5 minutes. Remove jars to cool.

For more tips and information, visit the National Watermelon Promotion Boards website at [www.watermelon.org](http://www.watermelon.org). ENJOY!

**A PICTURE PERFECT DAY**

I went looking for beauty yesterday and found it. In less than an hour, I took pictures of at least 30 sights that stood still long enough for me to capture their gorgeousness. The butterflies were too flighty, though, and wouldn't stay in one spot long enough for me to get them into focus. And I gave up trying to photograph the two skittish mamma birds feeding their chicks in the birdhouses near my front door.



← cheep, cheep (feed me, Ma)

So I contented myself with snapshots of flowers and plants within walking distance of the house. My neighbor has a magnificent tulip tree (or Yellow Poplar) that was in magnificent full bloom. One branch was low enough to get a picture of its tulip-shaped yellow flowers and leaves.



Up the driveway from the tulip tree, a hardy bunch of farkleberries cling to the hard soil of a dry bank. Also known as winter huckleberry, this neat little tree is making tiny white flowers right now, the birds having stripped off all the tasteless black berries at the end of winter when there was nothing much else for them to eat.



Two other trees looked photogenic on that crisp spring day: longleaf pine's with tall fresh candles



and Hop-tree with little bees and wasps climbing around its creamy-white flowers.



Other camera-worthy scenes caught my attention including these:



Star Anise



Sweetshrub (or Carolina Allspice)



Orange Azalea, still with a few flowers



Million Bells with brambleberries (dewberries, blackberries)



mayhaw fruit



strawberries (tasted good, too)



chokeberry (pretty flowers but its red fruit is too sour to eat, unless you are a bobwhite quail or cedar waxwing)

## JUDICIOUS PRUNING IN SUMMER

By: Vivian A. Neehy, Louisiana Master Gardener

Gardeners tend to enjoy certain jobs. It is never surprising to a gardener to hear someone say “I can’t wait to get to that weeding” or something akin to it. And some enjoy pruning. For whatever reason, pruners just want to prune and keep their pruning equipment at the ready.

Summer pruning is done for only a few specific purposes. The purpose that comes to mind the fastest is the removal dead material from a plant, perhaps a broken limb, or roses that are spent, bloomed out, and need tidying up. In my front garden the purple mums with the yellow center have bloomed splendidly but now are fading and straggly. I will not only deadhead them but cut them back, so they will be well pruned this afternoon. I think of this as mechanical or maintenance pruning, and it too needs to be done judiciously. It is for the health of the plant and garden and for control of size.

When it comes to pruning, the purpose of the cutting should always be considered. WHY is the vegetation being cut? What is to be accomplished, what end result is needed or wanted? In the case of the mums the garden spot needs to be tidied up and the dying matter removed for sanitation. Another purpose is to have regrowth so that the mums will bloom again in the fall. For the regrowth, it is important to pay attention to where the cuts will be made--certainly not at the end of the viney stem. That would remove old flowers and dead material, but it would also encourage the growth of more new stems and would not keep the plants under control.

Recently my house was reroofed, and the shingles and ladders caused some minor damage to the *Loropetalum chinense* or Chinese Fringe Flower. The Loropetalum is a tall shrub which, when left to grow to its capacity, may reach 10 feet. I had pruned it just after it finished flowering in the spring. But now there are a few minor broken limbs. I can either encourage it to fill out by cutting it near a growth node, or cut the limbs all the way back to eliminate growth at that spot. It is incumbent on me, the pruner, to make a decision and prune it with a purpose in mind. Again, attention must be made to determine where new growth is desirable.

Another purpose might be to significantly reduce the size of a plant. We have many azaleas and camellias in this area. Summer is NOT the time to prune these plants unless it is necessary, because flowers grow on new growth. But when it is time to prune them, a determination, again, of the purpose of the pruning must be decided. If pruning is needed for broken limbs, or to increase ventilation within the plant, cuts should be clean and near the branch from which it grows. Now is NOT the time to prune to increase plant growth as that has been going on for some time now. The same is true for plants intended for hedges, unless these plants are to be kept in formal shapes. Pruning for formal shapes is not a topic included here.

Pruning to remove disease is another important subject. Galls, viruses, rot forming at the end of a broken limb, and other problems will need to be removed from the parent plant. For specimen trees, it would be best to hire licensed, insured arborist to make the determination of the cause of disease, and perhaps also for removal of the diseased part. For other plants, consider the location of the problem and, if removing, cut back past the obvious infiltrated area. Rot in a branch is easy to identify, and one should cut closer to the main trunk of stem than the last identified locations of the rot. Always be sure to use sanitized cutting tools to avoid spreading the disease.

Azalea galls can be manually plucked from the bush. It might be prudent to prune to thin the shrub to allow for better circulation within the bush, especially if the azalea is not in an airy

location. Even with the summer pruning, the aesthetic quality of the shrub will be improved. When pruning within the shrub, be careful to select only the branches that are crowded, crossing or perhaps growing exceptionally outside the natural lines of the shrub. Cut back to the branch from which the stem is cut. Again, be sure you keep the cutting tool sanitized.

To have specimen identified prior to pruning or for treatment information, call LSU AgCenter Burden Center, East Baton Rouge Parish Horticulture Office, at 225-763-3990, or visit 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809.



## FULL MOON NAMES

**Full Strawberry** ----- because the relatively short season for harvesting strawberries comes each year during the month of June . . . so the full Moon that occurs during that month was christened for the strawberry!

**The Full Buck Moon - July** This is the month when the new antlers of buck deer push out of their foreheads in coatings of velvety fur. Another name for this month's Moon was the Full Hay Moon.

**Full Sturgeon Moon - August** The fishing tribes are given credit for the name of this Moon, since sturgeon were the most readily caught during this month. Known also as the Full Red Moon because, as the Moon rises, it appears reddish through any sultry haze. It was also called the Green Corn Moon or Grain Moon.

## THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER



The Dog Days begin July 3, which actually has nothing to do with lazy dogs searching for cool spots to sleep. Through most of July, the Dog Star, *Sirius*, rises and falls with the sun. Ancient Egyptians thought that Sirius added to the sun's heat, making the Dog Days extra hot. Actually the heat is due to long days and the close proximity of the sun to the Earth. And as we know, July in Louisiana does get hot!

Gardeners should take note that July brings the highest evaporation rates of the year. Evaporation rates of ¼ inch per day are typical in July. But the soil dries out even faster in our gardens, where moisture is constantly being taken up by plants.

### PRETTY PARSLEYWORMS

The colorful caterpillars you might find eating your parsley, dill or fennel are larvae of swallowtail butterflies. Choose a sacrificial host plant and gently move the caterpillars there so they can complete their life cycle.



## GARDENING ON PAPER

By: *Betty Miley, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Here is a relatively easy way to grow some plants without having to remove sod or break up the soil. It's especially useful for gardeners who have neither the time nor the equipment to prepare a garden or planting bed using traditional methods.

Step 1: Put down a kill mulch directly over grass (or other vegetation shorter than about 3 inches). Two to six layers of newspaper are sufficient to block sunlight from foliage, thereby destroying these "weeds" by taking away their ability to use photosynthesis for food production.

You may need to put a weight over the paper to keep it from blowing away. You may also want to punch a small hole in the center and wet it down at this time.



Step 2: Put some soil (or composted mulch) over the center, about 3 to six inches deep. The material in this picture is well-aged horse manure, old hay, and kitchen scraps. The mixture was solarized for 6 weeks under a cover of black plastic that sterilized weed seeds and possible diseases.

Step 3: Position a piece of cardboard over the newspaper. The cardboard should have at least 12 inches around a hole cut in the center, which should give enough room to plant seeds or young seedlings.





Step 4: Place seeds or plants into the hole, water thoroughly, and cover the cardboard with a finish mulch, preferably pine straw, a renewable material. I planted muskmelons in this section and will add more cardboard as vines grow beyond original borders. Bricks, untreated lumber, fallen tree branches, or stepping stones make a clean edge for aesthetics and easier maintenance.

I used a similar technique last year that yielded a healthy crop of melons, bell peppers, beans, and other vegetables. My favorite way is to use cardboard rings around orchard plants, especially blueberries. The following pictures show a new planting and one from last year. The rings hold up surprisingly well, and when the cardboard rots into the soil, I just plop another ring atop the old and pile on more pine straw. Blackberry briars grow in the center hole next to the blueberry trunks, but I don't pull them out until the fruit ripens for berry cobbler.



2009



2008

The hardest part of gardening with paper is finding and cutting larger pieces of cardboard. Some businesses sell their cardboard to recycling companies, but hardware and appliance stores often have large boxes that they are willing to share with the public. It's also a good idea to make friends with neighbors who have bought a new refrigerator or TV. It also doesn't hurt to know people who have oak and pine trees for free leaf mulch.

## ENTICING HUMMINGBIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

By: Vicki Vance, Louisiana Master Gardener



The height of the hummingbird season is here in full force along with our intense heat and humidity. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are present in strong numbers utilizing the nectar in the many flowering plants in our gardens.

Breeding season is well underway with most females having two separate nestings. It is quite rare to actually see a hummingbird nest since the female builds it high in the branches of the trees, safe from most predators. Nests are constructed of lichens, moss and spider webs. They will hold two jellybean sized eggs laid a few days apart by the female hummingbird.

Since this past winter was so mild, many tender perennials did not freeze back to their roots, but had a strong start into the spring season. Therefore, when the ruby-throated hummingbirds arrived from Mexico and Central America in March, there were many plants already in bloom for them to replenish their energy.

If you are planning your first hummingbird garden, the following plants are “must haves” for all south Louisiana gardeners:

**Cuphea “David Verity” - Cigar plant** Very hardy perennial with orange flowers from spring through fall. Prefers full sun and can reach 3’.

**Hamelia patens – Mexican firebush** Sun-loving perennial has red-orange tubular flowers, prefers dry soil and may not return if roots stay wet all winter. Great in containers or in beds, can reach up to 6’ tall in full sun, 4’ in partial sun. Some varieties have burgundy leaves in autumn.

**Malvaviscus arboreus v. Drummondii - Turk’s Cap** Semi-woody perennial that can reach 5’ in height with upright red flowers in summer, small red fruit in autumn. Does equally well in partial shade, very drought tolerant. Perfect plant for those gardeners with a “black thumb” since it is hard to kill.

**Salvia coccinea - Texas Scarlet sage** Native plant reaching 3’ – 4’, is adaptable to sun or shade with tubular red flowers from spring through first freeze. Although an annual, it freely reseeds.

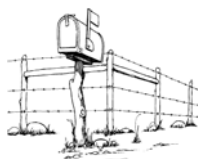
**Salvia guaranitica – Anise sage or Argentina Skies** Sun or shade loving perennial salvia that will spread very rapidly via tubers. Anise sage has deep blue/purple flowers while Argentina Skies has pale blue blooms. **Black and Blue** is another variety with deep purple/blue blooms that does not spread as easily. These three are all premier hummingbird plants!

### *Garden Thoughts*

“The kiss of the sun for pardon,  
The song of the birds for mirth,  
One is nearer God’s heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.”

*Dorothy Frances Gurney*

## The Master Gardener Mail Bag. . . . .



### *How can I attract ladybugs to my garden?*

Ladybugs have a large appetite; they can eat up to 40 aphids per hour. Other insects on their menu include mealy bugs, spider mites, scale, thrips and whiteflies. To attract ladybugs to your garden, plant marigolds, butterfly weed, yarrow, or roses. They are also partial to cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes.

### *What annual flowers can I use in a damp soil?*

Begonia, impatiens, nicotiana, and coleus will all tolerate dampness.

### *What is the plant that looks like a miniature mimosa with small round seeds on the underside of the leaves and is Sooo invasive!*

Leaf flower or chamber bitter (*Phyllanthus urinaria*) is the curse of Louisiana summer gardens. This weed has the ability to produce large quantities of seed. One plant this year can become a hundred next year.

To control leaf flower, germination must be prevented. You must weed regularly and apply a thick mulch.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



“ A Gardener’s life  
Is full of sweets and sour;  
He gets the sunshine  
When he needs the showers.”  
*Reginald Arkell, “Compensation”, Green Fingers (1935)*

“Gardeners have three weapons to use against summer droughts: mulches, watering pots, and prayers.”  
*Tyler Whittle, Some Ancient Gentlemen (1965)*

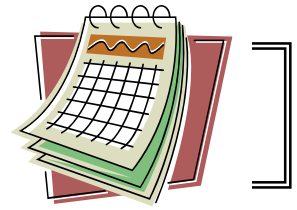
“God made rainy days so gardeners could get the housework done.” *Unknown*

**LIDS OFF** -- A gardener never has too many trash cans, as they can hold – potting soil, mulch, fertilizer, organic compost, bird seed, just to name a few!

**HOSE POT** – don’t throw away that large pot with chips on the rim. Turn it upside down. To keep a hose from kinking, wind it around the base of the pot and stick the nozzle through the drainage hole.

**WATER THIEF** – presoak new terracotta pots in a sink or bucket of water for one hour before planting. Dry clay pots will wick the moisture from the soil of newly potted plants.

## PLANNING AHEAD FOR FALL



### Grass in your Monkey Grass?

Home Gardeners use Liriope and Monkey Grass for borders and for architectural elements in gardens. When used as borders, they are almost always adjacent to lawn carpets or “grass.” Grass, with its habit of spreading by runners, has a habit of getting into the Liriope or Monkey Grass. What’s a gardener to do?

Hand weeding is no longer the only solution to this dilemma. If the gardener is willing to use chemicals there are products on the market now to eliminate that problem.

There are products that kill only Grass. Liriope is not a grass. Monkey Grass is not a grass. Both are *Liliaceae*. Liriope may be *Liriope muscari*, called Liriope, Lily Turf or Big Blue. Monkey Grass is *Ophiopogon japonicus*, called Mondo, Monkey Grass or Border Grass.

Plan ahead, now. Ask your favorite horticulturist or garden store for products that kill grass ONLY, and you can simplify your garden care!

### A couple of items to keep in mind when preparing your garden soil for fall plants.

Gypsum has two very good qualities for most of our local soils. It helps to break up compacted soils by making particle of clay clump together. This allows spaces for roots to grow more freely and allows water to soak in more readily.

Seeding directly into the garden requires a little bit of know-how. For example, if you want the seeds to sprout, do not use mulch before seeding, and never sow seed where a pre-emergence herbicide has been applied.

### The hot and cold of gardening in the Baton Rouge Metropolitan area.

When planning ahead for what to install in your garden, remember that the Baton Rouge Metropolitan area is in two recognized zones. For **cold** we are in USDA Hardiness Map’s Zone 8b. And for **heat** we are in Zone 9a. Bulbs, for instance, are cited for zones, and if a desirable one is cited for Zone 8, it may not take the summer heat we can count on here. The American Horticulture Society has devised a Heat Zone map, but all reference to its contents and use of the map is prohibited by copyright law (see [http://www.ahs.org/publications/heat\\_zone\\_map.htm](http://www.ahs.org/publications/heat_zone_map.htm)). Therefore, gardeners need to refer to the USDA Zones 8a and 9b.

“Despite the gardener’s best intentions, Nature will improvise.” *Michael P. Garafalo*



## **BOOKS AND GUIDES FOR GARDENING IN LOUISIANA**

*By: Peggy B. Scott, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Whether you are just getting started in gardening or a pro, it's always nice to have a ready source of information that is specific to our area. The LSU Agricultural Center's web site [www.lsuagcenter.edu](http://www.lsuagcenter.edu) should be your first stop for a wealth of gardening and related information. In addition, the following is a list of books from my collection that may be good references for you:

- Tough Plants for Southern Gardens: Low Care, No Care, Tried and True Winners by Felder Rushing
- Some Like It Hot: Plants That Thrive in Hot and Humid Weather by P.J. Gartin and F. Brian Smith
- The Southern Gardener's Book of Lists: The Best Plants for All Your Needs, Wants, and Whims by Lois Chaplin
- Louisiana Gardener's Guide by Dan Gill and Joe White
- Month-By-Month Gardening In Louisiana by Dan Gill
- Tough As Nails Flowers For the South by Norman Winter
- All New Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew
- American Horticultural Society Southeast Smart Garden Regional Guide
- The Louisiana Iris by The Society for Louisiana Irises
- Armitage's Garden Annuals by Allan Armitage
- Armitage's Garden Perennials by Allan Armitage
- Garden Bulbs for the South by Scott Ogden
- Garden Perennials for the Coastal South by Barbara Sullivan
- Plants for American Landscapes by Neil Odenwald

- Southern Herb Growing by Madalene Hill and Gwen Barclay
- Antique Roses for the South by William Welch and Greg Grant
- The Southern Heirloom Garden by William Welch and Greg Grant



### NAKED LADIES

*By: Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Maybe you call them spider lilies or magic lilies (my grandmother called them hurricane lilies), but most folks call them naked ladies. The red spider lily (*Lycoris radiata*) often appears following drenching late summer rains. In dry years, they may not appear until September. If you want to dig the bulbs, do so in August after the flowers fade. Many naked ladies begin clothing themselves with foliage soon after they bloom.

### VIVIAN'S BLESSED GARDEN OF PERPETUAL SURPRISE

*By: Vivian Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener*

In 1955 or thereabouts Richard Armour published a little ditty probably in Saturday Evening Post. Perhaps it was in the Readers Digest. In either case, it described our southern Gulf Coast summers in a way I understood.

“Spring has sprung  
 Fall has fell  
 Summer’s come  
 It’s hot as usual.”

I was in my mid teens then and impending summers always bring this to mind.

In my teens my gardening was limited to what Daddy would let me do in the garden, and watering while he was gone. His roses could be cut and brought in to Mother. And corn could be picked. The sweet smell of corn ripening... or was that the leaves parching?... stays with me until now.

Remembering further back than that, I remember being sweaty and walking in some leaves as tall as me, almost. I could just see above them, and there were wonderful flowers above the leaves. I didn’t have words for wonderful or marvelous, I just have the memories of delight... The leaves sorta clattered or sounded like they slapped together as I waded through them, trying to get to the flowers. And then a grown up came and took my hand and said I couldn’t be there. I often tried to remember where that was, and identify the flowers. I still don’t know. And maybe it was spring and it was Iris. Maybe it was summer and Caladium. But Caladium leaves don’t slap together. Maybe it was at Grandma’s, but none of my cousins remember what kind of flowers were there and all the grown ups of then are now gone. But I digress.

Gardening as a teen was more of learning what was weeds and what was not. I liked some of the weeds, but Daddy said they had to come out. Funny, the neighbor across the street called flowers weeds when they got in the vegetables. But no one really told me why.

My own fumbling with summer gardens years ago taught about compost beds. The best tomato plant I ever had came up as a volunteer in the compost bed. We let it go, and wow! what tomatoes. The surprise there was of the sweetness of the compost. But tomatoes were the only vegetable, and hydrangeas were the only flowers I got for a couple of years.

## CAMELLIAS IN THE SUMMER MONTHS

*By: Art Landry, Baton Rouge Camellia Society, past president*



The summer months of June, July and August in Louisiana have a number of names depending on who is doing the describing. The camellia plants view this period as hot and humid with dry spells during the time they are putting on new growth, developing their buds for blooming in the winter months and expanding their roots systems to balance the new leaf growth. We can help them get through this period with grace if we follow a few essential cultural practices.

Complete your major pruning in the spring so the new growth will have time to develop. Prune weak or unsightly limbs at any time to maintain healthy foliage and desired shape to the bush.

Add new mulch on top of your old mulch (if not already done) to maintain several inches of organic mulch material, which will break down over time (chopped leaves, pine bark mulch, pine straw, etc.). The mulch is essential during the summer months to help maintain moisture, keep the soil cooler, and retard the growth of weeds.

Watering is the key to good healthy growth in the spring and summer, coupled with a good mulching. Fertilizing during the summer of plants in the ground is generally not necessary and could promote excessive new growth in the late summer. Container grown plants should be fertilized lightly each month until about September with a slow release formula containing trace elements (like "Nursery Special®" or equivalent) since some of the nutrients are washed out of the container every time it is watered. When you water, give a good slow soaking of the root system so that the water can be absorbed by the soil. Wait until the soil dries before watering again. Avoid a short watering with a hand held hose since most of the water will roll away without being absorbed by the soil.

If you've kept your camellias mulched and watered they should produce new growth of 2 or more inches in length and by June you will notice a difference in the buds at the end of these new stems. The pointed bud is the growth bud for next year's new growth. The rounded buds on the side of the growth bud are the flower buds for the coming fall and winter bloom season. When the flower buds are easily identified (usually around June and July for most varieties) then you can begin disbudding your established plants. Removing the extra bloom buds from the plant will reward you in several ways.

Camellias usually set about 3 times more flower buds than the plant will support opening into flowers. (Of course a small plant with few buds is the exception.) If the extra buds are left on the plant, many will not open at all and many will to open late in the season producing small or partially opened blooms. Removing these extra buds will let the plant put its energy into the remaining buds you left on the plant. You will get larger flowers and most of them will open for you.

Here is how to disbud an established camellia plant. Start by removing all multiple buds (they will snap off easily when bent away from the growth bud) – leave only one flower bud on each stem. Once you've done this, go back and remove every other bud you left on the plant. The result will be about

1/3 of the original buds left on the plant to bloom in the winter. You'll be surprised at the difference and happy with the resulting bigger and better blooms.

With your mulching done and watering when needed and your disbudding proceeding, relax and enjoy the greenery through the summer. Anticipate the buds opening into beautiful blooms when the cooler weather comes.

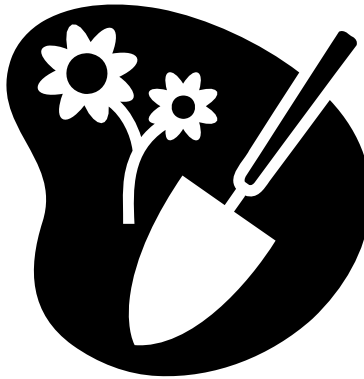
I get questions about books on growing camellias that would be suitable for the average grower. One of the best books still in print is Camellias, A Practical Gardening Guide by Rolfe and Cave. It is about 140 pages in length, has good text on growing camellias and a large number of excellent photos. It covers culture of camellias in the ground as well as containers, using camellias in the landscape, disease and pest control, propagation of plants, and many other subject of general interest to the grower. It sells for \$20 from your favorite book supplier. The Baton Rouge Camellia Society has obtained a supply of these books from the publisher for the convenience of our members and they are available for \$20 each. (If mailing is required, add \$3.) Contact the Baton Rouge Camellia Society at 10422 Ferncliff Avenue, Baton Rouge LA 70815.



- The doldrums of summer is a good time to notice your color palate. It is the time to start designs for new plants in the fall, and the laying out of new beds. It is a good time to refurbish the soil for new fall beds. Start with testing the soil where you will be preparing the new beds.
- The critters around us are much more aware of us than we are of them. Take a few moments when you are gardening and look for the birds that are watching you, and watch how the bees are working around you. You may even notice their warning buzzes. . . they get louder when you start to encroach on them. Are the toads hopping out of your way?
- “Off with your deadheads” means to remove spent flowers from annuals. If this is not done, many flowers will go to seed and stop blooming weeks of months too soon. Periodically clip the old flowers off marigolds, petunias, zinnias and verbena.
- As your gardens “play out” this summer, it provides a good time to take samples of the soil to test for the next crop to be put in if it hasn’t been tested in the past 3 years.
- Remove dead limbs in shrubs and trees as you discover them. This provides for better air circulation and aids in retarding diseases.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Cubic Yard} &= \text{Length (in feet)} \\ &\times \text{Width (in feet)} \times \\ &\text{Depth (in inches)} / 12 / 27 \end{aligned}$$

A 20 foot long by 4 foot wide garden border equals 80 square feet. If you would like to make the bed 8 inches deep, you will need 2 cubic yards of soil. If you would like it to be 12 inches deep, you will need 3 cubic yards.

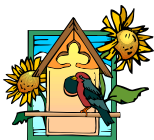


## MY FAVORITE GARDENING TIPS

*By: Peggy B. Scott, Louisiana Master Gardener*

- My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view. H. Fred Ale
- When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. Unknown author
- Gardening requires lots of water- most of it in the form of perspiration. Lou Erickson
- You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt. Unknown author
- The best fertilizer is the gardener's shadow. Unknown author
- If dandelions were hard to grow, they would be most welcome on any lawn. Andrew Mason
- Gardening is a matter of your enthusiasm holding up until your back gets used to it. Unknown author

# SUMMER IN THE GARDEN!



## THE HOME GARDENER

An East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners Program Publication

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### Baton Rouge Botanic Garden at Independence Park

7950 Independence Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
225-928-2270

The Baton Rouge Botanic Garden volunteers work at 7950 Independence Boulevard on Monday afternoon from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. and every third Saturday from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m., weather permitting. The work is maintenance of the flower beds and propagation of plants to sell at the two plants sales held in the garden to raise money. Contact Claire Fontenot at [clafon@eartel.net](mailto:clafon@eartel.net) or 225-753-1100, for more information.

The Botanic Garden Volunteers recycle garden pots. The pots may be dropped off in the fenced area to the left of the parking lot near the storage shed. The pots are used to grow plants for the garden and for the plant sales. Proceeds of the plant sales go to the Garden.

### Ione Burden Conference Center

4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
225-763-3999  
[www.agcenter.lsu.edu](http://www.agcenter.lsu.edu)

### Native Plant Society

For a complete Louisiana calendar of upcoming events and membership information visit their website at: [www.lnps.org](http://www.lnps.org)

### The Herb Society of America's Baton Rouge Unit

Meetings are held at the Baton Rouge Garden Center located at 7950 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge LA. All meetings start at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday from January through June and September and October. For more information contact Rita Salman at 225-291-5684.

### The Herbarium of Louisiana State University

The Herbarium, located on the Baton Rouge campus of Louisiana State University, studies biodiversity—green plants, lichens and fungi—from the state of Louisiana and around the world.

The herbarium is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, exception University holidays. Be sure to call ahead to make sure someone is available to assist you. 225-578-8564 ([www.herbarium.lsu.edu](http://www.herbarium.lsu.edu))

### Hilltop Arboretum

11855 Highland Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70810  
225-767-6916  
email: [hilltop@lsu.edu](mailto:hilltop@lsu.edu)  
[www.hilltop.lsu.edu](http://www.hilltop.lsu.edu)

“I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers.” - *Claude Monet*