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# Let's Get Growing - March 17, 2011

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## MARCH & APRIL MADNESS IN THE GARDEN

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With the onset of Spring begins a tremendous amount of planting activities in the gardens and fields! Just like basketball during this time of year, everyone is looking to score a victory with a well planned growing schedule. Here is a list of vegetable that can be planted now. Plant snap beans, butter beans, southern peas, summer squash, sweet corn, peanuts, radish, bell pepper, tomatoes, cantaloupes and watermelons.

**Tomatoes:** Begin transplanting your tomatoes now. Be prepared to cover early transplanted tomatoes in case of a frost. Start spraying tomatoes after fruit set every seven to 10 days with a fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) and a insecticide (Sevin, Malathion or Thiodan).

**Snap Beans:** Plant bush varieties about every two weeks, this will provide a continuous harvest for an extended period. Good bush snaps for Louisiana are Ambra, Bronco, Contender, Dusky, Festina, Hialea, Magnum, Storm, Strike, Provider, and Bush Blue Lake 274. An All-America Selection is Derby. Try Roma II for a good-eating, flat Italian pod bean. For a purple pod bush snap, try Royal Burgundy in early spring. Those who prefer the yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax, Goldmine or Golden Improved.

One-half pound of seed will be more than enough to plant a 100-foot row. Plant seed about 1-2 inches apart in the row.

**Bell peppers and Eggplants:** Delay transplanting of okra, bell peppers and eggplants until the weather has warmed considerably. These vegetables are sensitive to cold soils and weather. Once stunted by cool weather, they recover slowly. A garden site with full sun is required to be successful with bell peppers. Any shade will greatly reduce fruit set. Space peppers about 12-18 inches and eggplants about 18-24 inches.

**Sweet Corn:** Plant early to help reduce problems from the corn earworm. Plant every two to three weeks to provide a continuous supply of sweet corn. Remember to plant the same variety in a block of at least three rows side-by-side at each planting. This will help to ensure good

pollination and well-filled ears.

When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seeds every 8-12 inches in the row, and cover to about 1/2- 1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3-4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Sidedress a 100 foot row with  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of ammonium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches high and again when the plants are 24-36 high. One pint of fertilizer is about 1 lb.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin about every two to three days after silks appear and until silks begin to dry. This treatment will help reduce corn earworm damage.

Recommended regular early maturing variety includes Seneca Horizon . Midseason varieties are Funks G90, Gold Queen or Merit. Late –season regular varieties are Silver Queen (white), Iochief, NK199 or Golden Cross Bantam. Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row.

## IN THE YARD

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If you want to add some color to your landscape with trees, you may want to consider planting some spring flowering trees such as: native swamp red maple (*Acer rubrum*), Taiwan flowering cherry, Okame flowering cherry, Oriental magnolia (*Magnolia soulangiana*), star magnolia/stellata, native silver bell, parsley hawthorn, fringe tree (Grand-daddy gray beard), and redbud. Other flowering trees to consider are: crape myrtle, black locust, flowering pear, golden rain tree and sourwood.

There are many other species of trees that can be planted, but whatever type you consider planting, now to March is an excellent planting time.

**Rose Pest Problems:** Get rose that are highly susceptible to black spots (such as many hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas) off to a great start by starting a regular spray program by early April for black spot control. You cannot wait to see the symptoms of this potentially destructive disease to control it. Only a regular, preventative program of spraying will do the job. Black spot is the most common disease in Louisiana and causes nearly circular black spots with frayed or fringed margins. Infected leaves turn yellow and fall off, leaving the bush denuded of foliage and weakened. Weekly applications should be made from April through November for best control. If this seems too much trouble, get rid of cultivars that have constant problems with black spot, and choose those that have more natural resistance to the disease. Products for controlling black spot (and other rose diseases) include captan, mancozeb (Manzate), triforine (Funginex), chlorothalonil (Daconil), thiophanate methyl (Fertilome Halt) and thiophanate methyl plus mancozeb.

A few insects cause problems in spring, most notably aphids and thrips. Aphids cluster on the buds and new growth, sucking out the sap of the plant. This infestation can cause buds to abort and new growth to be distorted or deformed. Aphids are easily controlled with any common

insecticide labeled for use on roses. Spray as needed since the insects often return when the original population is killed off (do not spray if natural predators, such as ladybugs, are present and controlling the population. Thrips are tiny insects that bore into the flower buds and feed on the petals. Infested flowers will not open properly, or they will open but have brown or tan edges to the petals. It's heartbreaking to see your spring and early summer flowers ruined. Systemic insecticides, such as acephate (Orthene, Isotox) or imidacloprid will prevent this problem.

## AROUND THE LAWN

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**Azaleas:** Have you noticed your azalea plants lately? Look on the underside of the leaves for lace bugs. This is the first generation of lace bugs on the plants and will cause the foliage to be a pale green to white mottle-scaly looking. Use the insecticide Orthene to effectively control lace bugs on your azalea plants.

**In the Lawn:** During this time of year, many homeowners are bringing to my office samples of two of the worst weeds to be found in the home grounds. These two weeds will drive you crazy trying to control them. The weeds in question are: (1) lawn burweed/spurweed and (2) Florida betony/rattlesnake weed. All the green you now see in the yard is not grass, but may be some of these weeds.

**Lawn Burweed/Spurweed:** This is a low-growing winter annual with small inconspicuous flowers. The weed resembles a parsley plant. Fruit clustered in leaf axils have sharp spines that cause injury when walking in the lawn without shoes. The key to control is not to let this weed flower. To effectively control this weed, use ONE of the following:

Weed-B-Gon 6 Tablespoons per gallon of water

Ferti-Lome Weed-Free Zone 3 Tablespoons per gallon of water

Atrazine 3 Tablespoons per gallon of water.

Use any one of these now.

**Florida Betony/Rattlesnake Weed:** This is one of the worst in the parish. It is a smooth to hairy, freely-branched perennial forming slender underground stems with white segmented tubers resembling a rattlesnake's "rattles." It flowers white to pink with purple spots. It is found in turf, flower beds, gardens, and shrub borders. Control with the following chemicals: Atrazine or Round-Up by painting or swabbing it on.

**Be extra careful when using Atrazine and read the label on ALL chemicals.**

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**APPLICATION:**

**WASHINGTON PARISH MASTER  
GARDENING PROGRAM 2011**

*If you are interested in becoming a volunteer Master Gardener in Washington Parish, fill out the form below and return to:*

**LSU AGCENTER  
1104-B BENE ST  
FRANKLINTON LA 70438**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TELEPHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Classes will start in August of 2011*

*NOTE: After sending this form back to our office, you be contacted with detail information on cost and time schedule for the class.*