Go Green ….
Leafy Louisiana Winter Greens, pp. 6-9

Fill Your Garden with Folklore of Fairies, Elves, Witches and More - The Magnificent Foxglove Plant, pp. 4,5
The Louisiana Master Gardener 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 the Center’s Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service and Extension’s local county agents.

For more information regarding the Louisiana Master Gardener Program, call 225-389-3056.

**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.

**Production Management**
Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener
Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener

**Editing**
Carolyn Courtney, Louisiana Master Gardener
June Peay, Louisiana Master Gardener
Judy Trahan, Louisiana Master Gardener

**Our Contributors**
Arlene Kestner, Ph.D., Louisiana Master Gardener
Donna Montgomery, Louisiana Master Gardener
Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener
Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener
Peggy Scott, Louisiana Master Gardener

**WINTER, 2009**

- Trees for the Birds, p. 1
- From the Gardener’s Bookshelf, p. 1
- Guide to the Holiday Harvest, p. 2
- How Well Do You Know Your Plants?, pp. 2, 3
- Gardening Gift Ideas, p. 3
- Fill Your Garden with Folklore, p. 4, 5
- Baton Rouge in Winter, p. 5
- Go Green – Louisiana Leafy Greens, pp. 6-9
- Thoughts From the Garden, p. 9
- Chives: An Herb Profile for the Home Gardener, p. 10
- Winter in the Garden, p. 11

**Direct Questions or Comments to:**

Attention: The Home Gardener

East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners Program

East Baton Rouge Extension Office

4560 Essen Lane

Baton Rouge LA 70809

225-389-3056

LMG@agcenter.lsu.edu

**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 complimenting co-curricular and extracurricular horticulture programs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network under the direction of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.
CHRISTMAS TREE FOR THE BIRDS
by: Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener

Christmas is always a special time of year. Remembering my son’s scout project, brought to mind how much fun it is to bring seasonal cheer to the yard.

A decorated Christmas tree is a great feeding spot that will bring life to your winter landscape. Using different types of seeds will help attract a greater variety of birds. Use an existing outdoor tree or buy one and put in on your patio or deck. Pines work well and can be planted in the yard after the holiday.

Garlands—string kernels of unsalted popcorn together using heavy thread and a needle and drape them over the branches. Adding peanut butter makes them a tastier treat. Multicolored cereal adds more color.

Baskets—Cut orange or tangerine peels in half and dry them until stiff. Punch three or four evenly spaced holds in the side and attach a 6-8 inch ribbon to the holes. Hang the basket from branches and fill with dried fruit such as raisins or apples.

Pinecones—Heat peanut butter in the microwave or on the stovetop and pour into the crevices of a large pinecone. Tie thread to the tip of the cone and hang it from a branch. Rolling pinecones in nuts when the peanut butter is still warm provides an extra treat.

Creating these ornaments is fun for adults and helps encourage children to learn about nature. Take time and enjoy the bird’s feasting!

FROM THE GARDENER’S BOOKSHELF

Gardening in Louisiana (Cool Springs Press, 2006, revised edition), by Dan Gill, is an excellent resource for things that need to be done in your garden on a month-by-month basis. This book is available at most local bookstores. It is an expanded checklist full of timely information that relates specifically to Louisiana’s unique growing conditions. Clearly presented and well organized, the information will help give you information on:

- Basic garden design, plant selection, watering, fertilization and pest control
- When and how to prune
- How to create colorful, successful gardens
- Plant categories including annuals, bulbs, herbs, vegetables, lawns, perennials, roses, shrubs, trees, vines, ground covers, ornamental grasses, and water and bog gardens
- Twelve monthly calendars make it easy to find the proper gardening advice.

“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.” ~ Author Unknown
GUIDE TO THE HOLIDAY HARVEST

Most gardeners think of pruning as a loathsome chore, at least for 11 months of the year. But December is a different story. Trimming trees and shrubs and berries provides indoor decorations.

**Boxwood** – Reach inside the shrub and cut sections 6 to 8 inches long. Prune from various spots around the plant to maintain the natural appearance. Immerse the cuttings in cold water for 24 hours prior to use.

**Holly** – This is by far the best evergreen for decorating. American, Burford, English, Nellie R. Stevens and Savannah hollies offer a glossy, green foliage and bright red berries. Clip branches of any length to shape up the plant. Immerse cut branches in water for 24 hours to condition. Discard them when berries start dropping.

**Nandina** – Huge berry clusters are great for decorating. Cut leggy stalks back to foliage lower down in the plant. No need for conditioning; the bright red berries will last a long time.

**Southern Magnolia** – The glossy deep green leaves last for weeks indoors. Immerse in water for 24 hours to condition.

How well do you know your plants?

A little quiz for you.

by: Peggy B. Scott, Louisiana Master Gardener

1. What’s a hardy groundcover that performs particularly well in the sun?
2. What’s a striking vine with purple and white flowers that produces purple beans too?
3. What’s now considered a rare bulb that naturalizes and produces delicate red flowers in the fall when it seems like nothing else is blooming?
4. What is a light sensitive plant that only blooms when the days are short, usually around Thanksgiving and Christmas?
5. What’s a desirable landscaping tree that’s recommended for hurricane prone areas?
6. What’s a shade tolerant turf grass that is “looking for a reason to die”, but used frequently?
7. What’s a beautiful tree that is genetically flawed and usually splits in two?
(8) What’s a commonly used low maintenance turf grass that tolerates some shade?
(9) What’s a stunning plant with bell-like flowers along tall spikes that blooms in the spring?
(10) What’s a compact, dark green shrub that blooms continuously from late spring through November producing 4 to 6 inch clusters of flowers, usually orange or yellow in color?
(11) What’s a yellow perennial flower made famous when planted in masses at local McDonalds?
(12) What’s a warm season vegetable that produces both male and female flowers on the same plant that must be pollinated in order to generate the fruit?
(13) What’s a self-sterile fruit that requires that you grow two plants of different varieties in order to get cross-pollination and produce a fruit?
(14) What’s a disease resistant new series of an old favorite annual that withstands the hot humidity of the summer?
(15) What’s a highly fragrant, but very invasive herb best grown only in containers?
(16) What’s a fragrant pink antique rose that’s an all time favorite for beginners and experts alike?

Answers:


GARDENING GIFT IDEAS

Give your friends, family members, or co-workers gifts for gardening. They’ll be welcome any time of year for any occasion. Louisiana Master Gardeners have compiled the following list from suggestions received from subscribers and other Master Gardeners. Keep this list handy all year long!

1. The LSU AgCenter’s 2010 Lawn & Garden Calendar. Available from the AgCenter web site: lsuagcenter.com.
2. Gardening Gloves. Gardening gloves help protect the hands when digging, weeding, spraying and pruning.
3. Hand Lotion & Nail Brush. Help the gardener take good care of their most important tool.
5. Garden Clogs. A dependable pair will help keep the dirt and mud outside.
8. Gift Certificates. To a favorite nursery, mail order company, gift store, etc.
Fill Your Garden with Folklore of Fairies, Elves, Witches and More
The Magnificent Foxglove Plant
by: Peggy B. Scott, Louisiana Master Gardener

Each Master Gardener tends to focus on their favorites and mine always involve flowers. So when I stumbled upon the impressive foxglove (Digitalis Purpurea), I had to plant it. Foxgloves are tall flowering plants that really put on a garden show. The scientific genus name, digitalis, refers to the fact that foxglove flowers are just about the right size for you to slip your fingers into them. The Latin, digitalis literally translates, “measuring a finger’s breath”.

Digitalis Purpurea, an overall favorite, grows 18 inches wide and produces slender spikes that are three to four feet tall. The spikes are covered with tubular flowers that are about 1 ½ inches long, giving the appearance of hanging bells each the size of a thimble. The flowers are purple, pink or white, although other foxgloves include yellow, rose, red, and lavender colors.

Foxgloves are traditionally seen growing in “cottage gardens”, but given their dramatic appearance, they were rapidly adopted by many local landscapers for home and commercial gardens. Given their height, foxgloves have many uses. They can be used along the back of gardens, as borders, and even as striking container plants.

Although foxgloves are technically biennial plants (leaves the first year, with blooms the second and final year of the plant), they are grown as annuals in our area. Planted in the fall, they quickly expand during our mild winters and then bloom the following spring until early summer. They thrive here, growing in almost any soil and situation. They do prefer acid, moderately rich soil and part shade to full sun. Some species self-seed.

Although foxglove plants are supposed to be susceptible to crown rot, if planted in properly drained soil, this should not be a concern. Powdery mildew and leaf spot can occur, but I have never had this problem. One note of caution about this spectacular plant—foxgloves are poisonous plants and are not suited for areas where small children may play.

Given their height and tubular flowers, foxglove plants will attract hummingbirds to your garden. The foxglove is also a favorite flower of the honey-bee. The bees enjoy pushing their way up the flower bell, to get the honey which lies at the top of the flower. It’s always best to check for bees, before you attempt to smell one of these lovely flowers.

I started my experiment with foxgloves by planting three 4” pots of foxgloves in a very large container in the fall. By spring, the foxglove spikes were three feet high and covered with flowers. The flowers were so stunning that my neighbor and his wife placed a bet as to whether or not the flowers were real. Much to my amazement, they visited just to see who won.

While visiting, I shared some of the rich foxglove folklore. The foxglove plant derives its name from the flowers which resemble the finger of a glove. Foxglove was originally Folksglove - the glove of the “good folk” or fairies.
The tiny speckles within the foxglove flowers were said to mark where the elves had placed their fingers. Folklore has also given this gorgeous plant the following names: Witches’ Gloves, Dead Men’s Bells, Fairy’s Glove, Gloves of Our Lady, Bloody Fingers, Virgin’s Glove, Fairy Caps, and Fairy Thimbles. The foxglove has been used by herbalists for medicinal purposes.

So, fill your garden with folklore and legends. Plant foxgloves, and you will truly think fairies have visited your garden in the spring when the flowers put on their show.

![Foxglove](image)

**Foxglove Colors for Everyone**

- *Albiflora*—white flowers
- *Dwarf Sensation*—compact plant—dense flowers
- *Excelsior Hybrids*—flowers all around spikes—yellow, white, purple, pink—good cut flower
- *Foxy Hybrids*—carmine red, pink, yellow, white flowers—spotted maroon on inside
- *Giant Shirley*—very large white, pink, rose flowers
- *Gloxinioides*—frilly margin flowers—salmon pink, yellow, purple, pink—spotted inside
- *Sutton’s Apricot*—apricot pink flowers

**BATON ROUGE IN WINTER**

Baton Rouge is green.
Winter cannot subdue her.

A winter garden
Camellias abound.
Fragrant sweet olives
Now bloom.
Ere’green Magnolias.

Arum, Trillium.
Sycamores sheds to silver trunk.
Long shadows, bare trunks.

*Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener*
Go Green ....

Leafy Louisiana Winter Greens

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

More than 40 parishes grow greens to sell. Most Louisiana greens are sold in farmers’ markets, roadside stands and in some grocery stores. October to May is the best time to find locally grown greens. The most popular greens grown in Louisiana include mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens, spinach, kale and Swiss chard.

Dark, leafy greens should be part of everyone’s diet. Greens are low in calories, only 29 calories for a cup of cooked greens. They are an excellent source of beta-carotene (Vitamin A) and fiber as well as other important nutrients that help to protect us against certain types of cancer. Don’t be tempted to spoil the nutritional benefits of greens by preparing them with a lot of added fat.

When shopping, select crisp greens that show no signs of wilting. Look for good color, avoiding yellow or discolored greens. If you can’t eat them immediately, you can store greens for 5 to 7 days in the refrigerator. Wrap them lightly in dampened paper towels placed inside a plastic bag that has been perforated to allow air to enter.

When cooked, 1 pound of mustard, spinach or turnip greens will give you two to three servings. Collards and kale with give you four to five servings. These are 1/2-cup servings.

Greens can be served many ways. They are delicious in salads, soups, combined with sauces, used to stuff meats and other vegetables, in quiches, appetizer cheesecakes, and I could go on and on. To save nutrients when cooking greens, cook or steam them in a small amount of water just until tender. Usually the water that remains on greens after washing is enough to cook them.

Some winter greens, such as mustard greens and turnip greens, have a very intense flavor. Kale, collard greens and chard have a much milder taste. Many recipes for mixed greens combine the strong with the mild.

Swiss chard leaves can be cooked alone, combined with other vegetables or substituted in recipes for spinach or turnip greens. The stalks of Swiss chard, which are sometimes called ribs, can also be cooked. When the chard is young, the stalks are similar to celery or asparagus stalks, but older stalks are tough, with a woody texture.

Experiment with seasonings to create new tastes for winter greens. Among the best complements are onion, garlic, nutmeg, allspice, dill, basil and shallots. Or, sprinkle vinegar or soy sauce in the cooking water to add flavor. In Louisiana, most of us enjoy pepper vinegar on our greens.

Don’t waste another minute. Take advantage of the nutritional powerhouse found in leafy winter greens. Here are a few ideas to get you started.
Spinach and Pear Salad

This recipe will not give amounts, only salad ingredients. Using spinach or green leaf lettuce greatly improves the nutritional value of a salad.

Spinach  
Pears  
Toasted pecans  
Blue cheese  
Balsamic vinaigrette

Wash spinach if needed. (Spinach purchased in bags does not need to be washed.) Cut pears into bite-sized pieces. Dip cut pears into a mixture of Fruit Fresh and water or lemon juice to prevent darkening. Combine spinach, pears, toasted pecans and blue cheese. Sprinkle with balsamic vinaigrette, toss and enjoy.

Other Combinations: Other fruits to use include strawberries, apples, satsumas, navals, dried cranberries or a combination of the above. Try feta cheese in place of blue cheese and poppy seed dressing instead of balsamic vinaigrette. Experiment with other flavors on your own.

Spinach Bread

This is a great party food for the holidays or anytime. It can be made ahead and frozen. Bake right before serving.

1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 (4-ounce) can mushroom stems and pieces, chopped  
1/2 cup butter or margarine  
1 cup (4-ounces) shredded Cheddar cheese  
1 cup (4-ounces) shredded Mozzarella cheese  
1 loaf french bread

Cook spinach according to directions on package. Drain and set aside. Saute onions and mushrooms in butter. Add spinach. Remove from heat and stir in cheeses. Slice bread into two lengthwise. Spread with mixture. Wrap loosely in foil. Bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees F. May be frozen after wrapping in foil. Thaw in refrigerator and bake as directed. Slice in small slices before serving.
Mustard, Turnip or Collard Greens

You can also use a combination of greens in this recipe. Serve with hot cornbread to dip in the “pot likker.”

2 to 3 bunches of greens
3 or 4 turnips (optional)
1 large onion, chopped
5 slices bacon or ham
Salt
Pepper
Creole seasoning

Stem and pick the greens. Wash several times. Peel and cube turnips. These are optional, but add a lot of flavor. Put greens in large pot. Layer greens, chopped onion, meat, turnips and seasoning. Continue layering until all are used. The water on the leaves from washing is sufficient for cooking. Do NOT add any more water. Cook slowly until meat and greens are tender.

Poor David’s Soup

This soup originally called for collard greens, but other greens may be substituted. Make a large pot and freeze for an easy meal on a cold winter’s night.

1 cup dry northern beans
4 quarts water
1 small ham bone
2 bay leaves
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper

4 potatoes, diced
2 bunches fresh greens (collard, mustard or turnip)
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped

Soak beans overnight or pour boiling water over them and soak for 1 hour. Drain and rinse. In a large pot, place water, ham bone, bay leaves, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, lower heat and simmer about 30 minutes. Add beans and cook until tender. Add potatoes and washed greens. Saute onion and green pepper in the vegetable oil. When onion is soft, add to greens. Bring to a boil, lower heat and cook uncovered for 10 minutes. (This keeps the greens from being bitter.) Cover the pot and simmer until potatoes and greens are done. Serves 8.
Spinach Madeline

No article on greens would be complete without including the recipe for Spinach Madeline from River Road Cookbook. This has become a classic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity/Recipe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 (10-ounce) packages frozen, chopped spinach</td>
<td>1/2 teaspoon black pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 tablespoons butter</td>
<td>1/2 teaspoon salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons flour</td>
<td>1/2 teaspoon garlic powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 tablespoons chopped onion</td>
<td>1 (8-ounce) roll garlic Cheddar cheese food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup evaporated milk</td>
<td>1 teaspoon Worchester sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup vegetable liquor</td>
<td>Red pepper to taste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cook spinach according to directions on package. (I like to cook it in the microwave.) Drain and reserve liquor. Melt butter in saucepan over low heat. Add flour, stirring until blended and smooth, but not brown. Add onion and cook until soft but not brown. Add liquid slowly, stirring constantly to avoid lumps. Cook until smooth and thick; continue stirring. Add seasoning and cheese which has been cut into small pieces. Stir until melted. Combine with cooked spinach. This may be served immediately or put into a casserole and topped with buttered bread crumbs. The flavor is improved if the latter is done and kept in refrigerator overnight. This may also be frozen. **Serves 5 or 6.**

I hope you will enjoy leafy winter greens so much you will consider planting them in your garden. Not only do they taste great, they are beautiful growing in your flower garden as well.

---

**THOUGHTS FROM THE GARDEN**

“May you have the gladness of Christmas which is hope; The spirit of Christmas which is peace; The heart of Christmas which is love.” - Ada V. Hendricks

“An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.” - Bill Vaughan

“The gardening season officially begins on January 1st and ends on December 31.” - Marie Huston

---

THE HOME GARDENER Winter, 2009
CHIVES: AN HERB PROFILE FOR THE HOME GARDENER
by: Arlene Kestner Ph.D., Louisiana Master Gardener

Chives are bulbous perennial herbs of the genus *Allium* in the Liliaceae, or Lily family. These winter hardy plants are grown for their onion or garlic-flavored leaves and their edible flower heads. The leaves of all chive-like plants grow upright. Onion chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) have tubular leaves, while those of garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*) are flattened. Onion chives bear abundant rose-colored flower heads in early May. The white flower heads of garlic chives usually appear in late August.

**Cultivation.**
Onion chives, also known as common chives, and garlic chives are easy to grow from seed, though it will take at least a year before the plant is large enough to harvest. It is best to start with a purchased plant as the chives increase in size each year by bulb division. To keep vigorous growth, divide clumps of chives every 2-3 years.

Plant chives in a sunny garden spot with well-drained soil. As with other onion-type vegetables, chives will benefit from a side dressing of organic fertilizer. Once the chives have bloomed, remove the spent flowers. This is especially necessary with garlic chives, as their very fertile seeds will self-sow aggressively. When harvesting chives be sure to cut the outside leaves first rather than shearing the entire plant. If you wish to harvest large quantities of chives, allow an inch of leaves to remain at the base of the plant. The clump of chives will regenerate in 2-4 weeks with new tender leaf growth.

**Uses.**
Chive leaves are snipped and used primarily fresh, stirred into uncooked foods such as soft cheeses and salads. Chives should be added to cooked foods during the last few minutes of cooking. Overheating the herb will destroy the flavor. Onion chives blend well with seafood, eggs, potatoes, lettuce salads, creamy salad dressings, cheese spreads, soups and sauces. Garlic chives are a welcome addition to hardy soups, omelets and homemade salsas. The mild garlic-onion flavor will enrich your favorite shrimp or crawfish etouffee recipe. Add 2-3 tablespoons of finely snipped garlic chives to etouffee toward the end of the cooking cycle.

**CULINARY HERB BUTTER**

1 stick unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons onion chives, snipped  
1/2 tablespoon lemon juice  
Zest from half a lemon

Allow butter to soften at room temperature. In a small bowl, combine herbs into softened butter. Add lemon juice and zest. Refrigerate for several hours so flavors can blend. Serve on breads and rolls and cooked vegetables including winter garden harvests of carrots, cauliflower or broccoli. A dollop of the culinary herb butter will provide a great flavor enhancement to steaks and grilled fish or seafood.

Recipe © Arlene Kestner

“Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream.” - Barbara Winkler
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@eatel.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

Native Plant Society
For a complete Louisiana calendar of upcoming events and membership information visit their website at: 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)

Hilltop Arboretum
11855 Highland Road
Baton Rouge, LA 70810
225-767-6916
email: hilltop@lsu.edu
www.hilltop.lsu.edu

“The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size.” - Gertrude S. Wister