
Growing Lantana in Louisiana



Native of tropical Americas and West Africa, the lantana is a common bedding plant in the South. This publication provides information on culture, watering, fertilization and several other topics of *Lantana camara* (common lantana), *Lantana* hybrids and *Lantana montevidensis* (trailing lantana).

General Location

Lantana is a heat-loving plant that should be grown in direct sunlight, receiving no fewer than 4 hours a day. For optimum growth, night temperatures should range between 55 and 60 degrees F and day temperatures of 68 degrees F or higher. Lantana likes both humid and dry heat, remaining hardy in USDA Zones 8-11.

Growing up to 6 feet high and 8 feet across, depending on the cultivar, lantana can be used as an upright shrub or a prostrate groundcover. Lantana works best in mixed beds and borders, shrub groupings or as a container plant. It can be mixed with most ornamental plants, but prospers well alone. Tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions such as dry, rocky sites to sandy, seaside conditions, lantana can be planted in almost any site in full sunlight.

Soil Conditions and Preparation

Well-drained, tolerant, slightly, acid soil is a must for lantana; soil pH of about 6.5 or lower is best. Any soil suitable for bedding plants is ideal. Lantana is fairly drought resistant and is highly adaptable to most soil conditions. If the soil has a clay texture, adding some sand coarse bark may help. Prepare the beds a few weeks before planting if lantana are to be planted in new beds. Work the soil, preferably with a power tiller, adding amendments as necessary. If lantana are used in hanging baskets or as potted plants, any commercial potting soil for bedding plants will do.

Planting and Blooming

The best time to plant lantana in Louisiana is mid-to-late April, or when days are long and hot. Many varieties will return from the roots and main stems in early spring. Lantana will bloom from late spring to frost.

The lantana flowers are borne in dense clusters 1 to 2 inches across near the top of the stem. The clusters of flowers vary in colors, from yellow, orange, red, white, pink, to purple and gradually change colors over the blooming period. Often, the different colored flowers are present on the same cluster. The leaves are yellow-green, serrated and aromatic when crushed. The square stem is brittle-wooded and can be trained to grow in a tree shape with great heads of foliage and flowers above a single stem 2 to 3 feet tall. Throughout the blooming season, frequent tip pruning will induce repeated flowering. Maintenance is relatively easy.

Following flowering, clusters of fleshy, berrylike drupes will appear in fall. They

are green, turning black with maturity, and are poisonous if eaten. Each berry-like fruit contains one seed and possibly self-seeds for the next blooming season.

Watering and Fertilizing

Watering is often necessary to achieve good bloom. Frequent watering in a well-drained soil is recommended. Too much water will reduce bloom and make the plant more susceptible to diseases and root rot. In south Louisiana's hot summers, it's important to make sure the beds or containers stay moist but not overly wet. Modify the watering schedule according to growth and temperature.

Lantana does not need heavy fertilizing. Fertilize sparingly with a complete, all-purpose garden fertilizer in early spring. Depending on the variety, lantana may need more or less fertilizer through mid-summer to encourage faster growth. Fertilize every two weeks for the faster growing, heavy feeding varieties. Too much fertilizer can suppress flowering and make the plants more susceptible to disease.

Mulching

Mulching is an essential part of good culture. Mulches serve many purposes, such as maintaining soil moisture and keeping weeds under control. Mulching during the summer is not necessary, but it is recommended to control weeds and reduce the amount of watering needed. Mulching after the first frost (when the lantana has been killed down to the roots) will help keep the roots hardy to return in the early spring.

Recommended Cultivars

Most cultivars commercially available are hybrids of two species of lantana. Most produce colorful flowers and have individual characteristics specific to that variety. Some cultivars adaptable to Louisiana conditions are:

Cultivar	Flower Color
Resistance to early fruiting	
New Gold	dark yellow/gold
Gold Mound	dark yellow/gold
Silver Mound	off yellow/white
Lemon Drop	yellowish white
Variiegated foliage	
Samantha	light/medium yellow
Lemon Swirl	light/medium yellow
Compact and low growing	
Patriot Rainbow	rnagenta
Trailing	
WeepingWhite	white
Imperial Purple	purple
White Lightnin	white
<i>L. montevidensis</i>	light purple
Upright Growing	
Patriot Firewagon	red
Spreading Sunset	red/orange
Golden King	light yellow
Irene	magenta
LSG Red-Orange	red/orange
American Red Bush	red
Radiation	red/orange
Dallas Red	red
Confetti	magenta

Pests

Fortunately, lantana is not prone to many diseases and insect pests. The most common problems are:

Whiteflies will first appear on the undersides of leaves. They feed by sucking the sap from the plant and excrete a sticky exudate called honeydew. Sooty mold often grows on the honeydew, blackening leaf or fruit surfaces. Whiteflies are difficult to control. Consult your county agent for current control recommendations.

Lace bug damage is first noticed as yellow spots on the upper leaf surfaces of the plants. Both immature and adult lace bugs are found feeding on the undersides of leaves. When feeding damage becomes severe, the leaves take on a gray blotched appearance or can turn completely brown. Lace bug control requires monitoring early in the season. Choose a planting site that deters the lace bugs. They prefer bright, sunny conditions, making lantana a preferred target. Control methods include using insecticidal soaps and recommended insecticides.

Other pests with minor importance include the red spider mite, caterpillars and leaf miners.

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