Welcome to the fall 2008 edition of our new nursery and landscape newsletter for Louisiana’s green industry professionals. The LSU AgCenter has reinitiated this communication effort to keep you updated on current research, extension programs and related events/activities. This is our 4th edition since our “re-launch,” and the newsletter is now coming to all wholesale growers, landscape contractors and horticulturists in Louisiana on a quarterly basis. Your comments, suggestions, questions, etc. are welcomed and very much appreciated.

Razzle Dazzle Crape Myrtle Evaluations

Allen Owings, Professor (Horticulture), Hammond Research Station

The Razzle Dazzle dwarf crape myrtles are a new series of crape myrtles developed by world-renowned horticulturist and breeder Dr. Michael A. Dirr. As the first series within the Gardener’s Confidence Collection, the Razzle Dazzle dwarf crape myrtles have been developed with the trustworthy attributes of easy care and mildew resistance, as well as exceptional color and compact habit. Mature height is 4 feet. Plants are being evaluated for flowering, cold hardiness and disease resistance at Burden Center in Baton Rouge. These are available at some wholesale nurseries in Louisiana. Plants were available starting in 2006 and have been available at retail garden centers in Louisiana since in 2007.

Varieties in the series include: Ruby Dazzle (pink blooms with bronze-red foliage), Cherry Dazzle (cherry red flowers), Snow Dazzle (white blooms), Dazzle Me Pink (pink blooms) and Raspberry Dazzle (raspberry red blooms).

More information on these plants:
Three-gallon containers of the Razzle Dazzle series crape myrtles, Chickasaw crape myrtle and Pocomoke crape myrtle were planted in late summer 2006 in full sun landscape trials at Burden Center, a LSU AgCenter agricultural experiment station in Baton Rouge, La. (USDA hardiness zone 8B, AHS heat zone 8). Plants were placed in raised rows of Oliver silt loam soil (normal pH 6.2) approximately 5 feet apart in a randomized complete block design with each cultivar replicated three times. Supplemental irrigation was provided as needed via a drip system. Plants were fertilized in March 2007 with Sta-Green Nursery Special 12-6-6. Pine straw mulch is maintained on the planting at a depth of 2 inches refreshed two times annually. Hand weeding, glyphosate and Amaze preemergent granular herbicide (at the recommended rate) were used for weed control. Plants have not been pruned, pinched or deadheaded from the initial planting time through 2008. In addition, fungicides and insecticides have not been applied.

Visual quality ratings based on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=dead, below average landscape performance, 3=average landscape performance, 4=above average landscape performance, 5=superior landscape performance) were taken monthly from April – November 2007 and monthly from April – November 2008. Included in this rating were plant foliage color and appeal, uniformity, flowering and overall growth habit. Cercospora leaf spot ratings were taken in October 2007 and October 2008 based on a scale from 1 to 6 where 1= no leaf spot, 2=1-10% foliage with leaf spots, 3=11-25 foliage with leaf spots, 4=26-50% foliage with leaf spot, 5=51-75% foliage with leaf spot, and 6=76-100% foliage with leaf spot. Height measurements were taken in October 2007 and October 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Visual Quality Ratings</th>
<th>Leaf Spot Rating</th>
<th>Height (cm)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dazzle Me Pink</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snow Dazzle</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raspberry Dazzle</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruby Dazzle</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Dazzle</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickasaw</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pocomoke</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Southern Living Plant Collection was first introduced last spring, and Plant Development Services Incorporated (PDSI) and Southern Living recently unveiled new shrubs, bulbs and annuals for spring 2009. New plants in the collection, like the 2008 introductions, are still designed to solve specific challenges in the landscape.

Two shrubs – Yewtopia plum yew and Emerald Snow loropetalum – were added to the collection. Both add texture and color to the category. Yewtopia is a vase-shaped evergreen conifer that does well in part shade or full sun, and Emerald Snow has leathery, shiny green foliage that is a great contrast to the vivid purple loropetalums in the collection.

A pair of lilies – Pink Rain lily and Dwarf Philippine lily – join three bulb varieties that were introduced for this fall.

PDSI and Southern Living also introduced six annuals for spring 2009: begonia Bonita Shea, ruellia Rajin Cajun, scaevola Cajun Blue, setcreacea Blue Sue, cuphea Plum Mist and heliotrope Azure Skies.

Begonia Bonita Shea is compact and mound shaped with dainty white-to-pink flowers borne over curled, reddish green leaves with red undersides. Ruellia Rajin Cajun has vivid red flowers and a low growth habit. It’s a tough little plant that’s easy to grow and holds up well through heat and humidity. Scaevola Cajun Blue is more compact and earlier blooming than other varieties.

Setcreacea Blue Sue displays distinctive blue-tinged foliage with a handsome purple margin and pink flowers. Cuphea Plum Mist, an exceptionally free-flowering, low-growing plant, offers two-tone flowers in light and dark lavender. Incredibly heat tolerant, heliotrope Azure Skies is a low-growing, spreading American native with light lavender flower clusters.
## Underutilized Trees for South Louisiana Landscapes

### Small

- Two-winged Silverbell, *Halesia diptera* – small, native, flowering, deciduous
- Roughleaf (swamp) dogwood, *Cornus drummondii* – small, native, deciduous
- Tung Oil Tree, *Aleurites fordii* – small, exotic, flowering, deciduous
- Devil’s Walkingstick, *Arillia spinosa* – small, native, flowering, deciduous
- Japanese Persimmon, *Diospyros kaki* – small, exotic, fruiting, deciduous
- Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba* – small, native, fruiting, deciduous
- Red Buckeye, *Aesculus pavia* – small, native, flowering, early deciduous
- Eastern Hophornbeam, *Ostrya virginiana* – small, native, deciduous
- Common Persimmon, *Diospyros virginiana* – small, native, fruiting, deciduous
- Deciduous Holly, *Ilex decidua* – small, native, deciduous, berries

### Medium

- Southern Sugar Maple, *Acer barbatum* – medium, native, deciduous
- Red Bay, *Persea barbonia* – medium, native, evergreen
- Big Leaf Magnolia, *Magnolia macrophylla* – medium, native, flowering, deciduous
- Sawtooth Oak, *Quercus acutissima* – medium, exotic, deciduous
- Chinese Pistache (pistachio), *Pistacia chinensis* – medium, exotic, deciduous
- Blue Beech, *Carpinus caroliniana* – medium, native, deciduous
- Sweetbay, *Magnolia virginiana* – medium, native, flowering, deciduous
- Sassafras, *Sassafras albidium* – medium, native, deciduous
- Winged Elm, *Ulmus alata* – medium, native, deciduous
- Cedar Elm, *Ulmus crassifolia* – medium, native, deciduous
- Fringe Tree, *Chionanthus virginiana* – medium, native, deciduous

### Large

- Black Gum, *Nyssa sylvatica* – large, native, early deciduous
- Willow Oak, *Quercus phellos* – large, native, deciduous
- Tuliptree (yellow poplar), *Liriodendron tulipifera* – large, native, deciduous
- Baldcypress, *Taxodium distichum* – very large, native, deciduous
- Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis* – very large, native, deciduous
- Longleaf Pine, *Pinus palustris* – large, native, evergreen
- American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia* – large, native, deciduous
- Cow Oak, *Quercus michauxii* – very large, native, deciduous
- Spruce Pine, *Pinus glabra* – large, native evergreen
- Burr Oak, *Quercus macrocarpa* – large, native (to Texas), deciduous
- Hickory, *Carya sp.* – several large, native species, deciduous
- Black walnut, *Juglans nigra* – large, native deciduous
- Overcup Oak, *Quercus lyrata* – large, native, deciduous
- White Oak, *Quercus alba* – large, native, deciduous
- American Elm, *Ulmus americana* – large, native, deciduous
- Cottonwood, *Populus deltoides* – large, native, deciduous
Azalea leaf gall is quite common in Louisiana and was particularly prevalent in the spring of 2008 because of the extended periods of cool, wet weather. Although it is most commonly seen affecting leaves, it also can occur on the stems, flowers and seed pods. It is caused by the fungus, Exobasidium vaccinii, which will also cause leaf galls on a variety of other hosts, including camellias and several other members of the Ericaceae. Similar leaf galls caused by E. camelliae can be found on camellias (especially sasanqua camellias), and those caused by E. symploci can be found on Symplocos tinctoria (common or sapphire-berry sweetleaf, horse-sugar or yellowwood). Although these deformities are unsightly and sometimes grotesque, the disease is not generally serious unless it is left unattended on particularly susceptible cultivars. In fact, the fleshy galls are often called “pinkster apples” and are edible!

Leaf gall symptoms appear soon after flowering and are quite visible as the leaves (or portions of a leaf) become thickened with a fleshy or leather-like texture and their shape is distorted. At first, these tend to be pale green, pink or white, but they eventually become white and powdery as the fungus develops and begins to produce spores, which make up the white powdery substance coating the galls. These spores are readily dispersed in air currents and by splashing water, and subsequent infection occurs only on young tender growth. Later, the leaves will shrivel up as they dry out and will turn brown and become quite hard. These galled leaves may then fall to the ground and serve as a source of inoculum the next spring. The fungus is also thought to survive within asymptomatic infected tissues and as spores within bud scales.

In the landscape, this disease is managed primarily by the use of cultural practices. These include practices that increase airflow and promote rapid drying of the foliage as well as sanitation practices that reduce the production of additional inoculum. When establishing new plantings, it is important to maintain adequate spacing so as not to create an environment conducive to disease development. Also, avoid planting in protected areas without adequate ventilation, such as enclosed courtyards, etc. For established plantings, selective thinning of the canopy to increase airflow would help considerably. Frequent inspection of the plants and removal of infected leaves when they first appear is often all that is needed to control this disease. If large numbers of leaves are affected, you might consider pruning back the plants in late spring or early summer to remove infected leaves and stimulate new growth. Also be sure to rake up and destroy affected leaves that have fallen to the ground under the plants.

In commercial nurseries, the fungicide triadimefon (Bayleton) may be sprayed beginning at bud break and repeated every 10 days as long as environmental conditions are suitable for disease development. Some fungicides used to control petal blight (i.e., mancozeb) should also help to prevent leaf gall.
New Hybrid Tea Rose Research in Shreveport

(Press Release from the American Rose Society)

Gardeners who have shied away from growing roses because of the chemicals needed to grow them well can take heart in a new research program taking place at the Gardens of the American Rose Center in Shreveport, La.

The Easy Tea Hybrid Tea Research Project seeks to identify hybrid tea roses that will not only survive, but flourish, with minimal care. Now in its early stages, the research project is a joint effort of the American Rose Society, the LSU AgCenter and the Texas Agri-Life Extension Service of the Texas A&M University.

Based on the highly successful Earth-Kind rose program initiated and managed through the Texas Agri-Life Extension Service, the Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea Project will, as its name implies, focus on hybrid tea cultivars rather than the shrubs and old garden roses primarily included in the Earth-Kind research. As with the Earth-Kind Program, the Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea Research will identify already existing roses that can meet the project criteria to be designated earth-friendly.

“The American Rose Society is seeking to encourage citizens to enjoy growing our national floral emblem, the Rose, by developing a testing program that will identify hybrid tea rose cultivars that require a minimum of care – including minimal application of chemicals that are considered by many to pose potential harm to the earth’s ecology,” said Dallas resident Claude Graves, who chairs the project.

“The function of the Easy-Tea Hybrid Tea Rose Research Program is to evaluate 30 carefully selected cultivars of hybrid tea roses to identify those with the highest level of natural disease resistance. Results of this Shreveport-based testing will be published nationally and worldwide to provide rose growers with the names of the most environmentally responsible hybrid tea roses,” Graves said.

Research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Allen Owings of the LSU AgCenter system. Dr. Steve George, with Texas A&M University-Dallas, will be a cooperating partner. Bed preparation has begun at the American Rose Center, with planting expected in February 2009.

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Mississippi Medallion Plants

Mississippi State University horticulturist Norman Winter has recently announced the winners of the Mississippi Medallion plant awards for 2009. This is the 14th year of the program.

2009 Winners
Cardoon cardunculus
Cleome Senorita Rosalita
Hydrangea Limelight
Chrysocephalum Flambe
Eggplant Slim Jim
LSU AgCenter and Southern University
AgCenter County Agents/Area Agents
Doing Horticulture Work

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RNR = Renewable Natural Resources; PPCP = Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology; AEAB = Agricultural Economics and AgriBusiness; HRS = Hammond Research Station; ENT = Entomology
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In This Issue

◊ Razzle Dazzle Crape Myrtle Evaluations
◊ Underutilized Landscape Trees
◊ Top Ornamental Peppers
◊ Southern Living Plants
◊ New Hybrid Tea Rose Research Project
◊ Mississippi Medallion Plants - 2009
◊ Azalea Leaf Gall

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