

# THE HOME GARDENER

VOL. 7, No. 1



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**(March, April, and May)**

## The Home Gardener

LSU AgCenter  
Louisiana Master Gardener™ Extension Volunteer Program  
East Baton Rouge Parish  
4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge LA 70809



VEGETABLES PACK A POWERHOUSE  
OF NUTRITION, pp. 9, 10



EDIBLE WILD PLANTS, pp. 4,5

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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.

### 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

Bruce Gomez, Louisiana Master Gardener (deceased)  
Arlene Kestner, Ph.D., Louisiana Master Gardener  
Art Landry, Camellia Society  
Betty Miley, Louisiana Master Gardener  
Donna Montgomery, Louisiana Master Gardener  
Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener  
Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Amazing Asparagus, p. 3  
Tips and Tidbits, pp. 3, 4  
Edible Wild Plants, pp. 4, 5  
Watch Out for Falling Trees, p. 6  
Telltale Heart Rot, p. 6  
Morning Glory and Moonvine, p. 7  
Rosemary, An Herb Profile for the Home Gardener, pp. 7, 8  
2009 Hurricane Names, p. 8  
Vegetables Pack a Powerhouse of Nutrition, pp. 9, 10  
Camellias – March, April, May, pp. 11, 12  
Natives, p. 12  
Master Gardener Mail Bag, p. 13  
Thoughts About the Moon, p. 13  
Baton Rouge in Spring, p. 14  
Gardening for Butterflies, pp. 14-17  
Hummingbirds, p. 18  
Bromeliads, pp. 19, 20

Direct Questions or Comments to:  
Attention: The Home Gardener  
East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners Program  
4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge LA 70809  
225-763-3990  
[LMG@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto: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 complementing co-curricular and extracurricular horticulture programs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network under the direction of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.



**AMAZING ASPARAGUS!** It's the season for planting asparagus, and if you've ever dug a daylily, you've seen a preview of what lies beneath an asparagus plant. A distant daylily cousin, asparagus grows from huge, spider-shaped roots so strong and resilient that plants often persist for fifteen years or more. The succulent spears are delicacies of spring, but asparagus plants are tough!

Blessedly early, asparagus is usually the first vegetable to satisfy a gardener's hunger for fresh-from-the-ground nourishment as the young spears emerge from cold ground in March and April. Later, as spring turns to summer and the harvest season ends, ferny asparagus fronds make wonderful filler for fresh flower arrangements.

Asparagus is very easy to grow from dormant crowns (roots), which are dug from nursery fields and shipped in late winter. The soil can be any type as long as the site is sunny and well drained. To further improve fertility and drainage, enrich the soil with lots of compost, manure, leaf mold, and just about any other form of organic matter you can find. If your soil is acidic, be sure to mix in lime as well; asparagus grows best with a soil pH just shy of neutral—between 6.5 and 6.7.

You can start asparagus from seeds, though this is a slow process that requires patience (as in three years to first harvest), as well as diligent dedication to weeding. Crowns that are one or two years old, on the other hand, are all but foolproof, and you can begin harvesting a few spears the second spring after planting.

Of special note, asparagus doesn't get along well with onions, leeks or garlic!

## TIPS AND TIDBITS



**TORNADO** – based on the Latin word, *tornare*, which means to turn, tornadoes are more than twisting winds. When tornadoes develop, the sudden drop in barometric pressure is sometimes dramatic enough to lift buildings off the ground. From 1886 until 1952, the U.S. Army Signal Corps, and later the National Weather Service, did not use the word “tornado” when issuing weather forecasts and warnings. The policy was set because it was thought that people would panic if they were told that tornadoes were likely.

**PURE WATER FOR CUT FLOWERS** – As soon as the first daffodils bloom, do you cut a few to bring indoors? Cut flowers last longer when kept in water that does not have added fluoride, a standard additive to public water supplies. Many bottled waters are fluoride-free, as is most well water. Rainwater is usually a safe bet, also.

**JOHNSON GRASS** – Considered one of the ten worst weeds in the world, Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*) looked like a good forage crop to a South Carolina farmer named John Means back in the early 1800s. He shared seeds with Colonel William Johnson in Alabama in 1840, which won “guinea grass” its proper name, Johnson. Thus the monster weed was let loose in the South. Around 1845, John Mean's brother abandoned his grass-choked farm and moved to Louisiana, but Means was stuck. He complained that “the big grass has inspired such terror” no one would consider buying his farm, so he got another job. He became governor of South Carolina from 1850 to 1852.

**WHY WEEDS?** In the natural scheme of things, we might think of weeds as the bandages of the planet world. Where nature finds a scarred and open place (like a garden), weeds move in to get the spot ready to evolve into a sustainable ecosystem. A world without weeds would be a wasteland, because weeds are the emergency squad that shows up to repair the damage done by floods, fire, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. As gardeners, we share a common goal with weeds, which is to make the space around us more fertile and fruitful.

“A good garden may have some weeds.” - *Anonymous*

## EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

by Betty Miley, Louisiana Master Gardener

Gardeners grow food. Foragers find food.

Gardeners over a certain age remember Euell Gibbons as an expert on collecting and cooking wild plants. For over 50 years, Mr. Gibbons foraged and ate all kinds of nuts, berries, roots, leaves, even tree bark. He claimed to have created a granola snack when he was a child: "I invented my first wild food recipe by pounding together hickory nuts and berries to make a candy bar when I was five years old." He also lived dangerously by "eating poison ivy leaves to gain immunity to the plant. I eat three of the tiny little leaves—that's one leaf with three little leaflets—when they're still red. 'One every day in the month of May.' "

*Professionals in medicine and botany discourage such a risky practice;* for obvious reasons, they advise against eating anything with *poison* in its name. Homeowners generally view all wild plants, not just poison ivy, as weeds, invaders in their well-tended vegetable gardens or flowerbeds. Ironically, many wild plants that pop up out of nowhere can provide more nutrition than the cultivated edible plants that must compete with these hardy trespassers. We are just now learning to appreciate the nutritive value of wild plants, which our ancestors understood and used as part of their regular diet.

**Potherbs** are wild greens whose leaves are boiled or steamed until tender, from 10 to 25 minutes. They contain high levels of vitamins and minerals, such as iron, calcium, vitamins A and C, folic acid, and lutein (an antioxidant). Some edible wildings that may show up in an otherwise tame home garden may include these:

- Nettles, including the infamous stinging nettle (*Urtica chamaedryoides*), actually make a tasty green dish after cooking takes away the stinging sensation. Collecting and preparing raw plants does require gloves or very careful handling.

- Poke/pokeweed/poke salad/poke salad (*Phytolacca americana*) (see photograph) should never be used in a salad, since all parts of the plant are poisonous. Cooking, then discarding the water, removes the toxicity from the young leaves and renders the greens safe for eating. The mature plant is colorful and attractive, a good specimen for teaching children that beautiful things can hide their harmful side effects.



**Salad** fixings from wild plants can come from a surprisingly large group of plants with edible parts:

- Fiddleheads, the curled young leaves of Bracken Fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and Lady Fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), make an excellent addition to chilled salads or cooked dishes.

- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), originally from Europe and Asia, has escaped into the wild and put down roots in American lawns. Its leaves substitute nicely for endive.

My mother used to steam the leaves, add a few pieces of fried bacon, then thicken the mixture with flour and a little vinegar and sugar. We ate the delicious stew over boiled potatoes.

Pokeweed, a shrub-like perennial, can reach 8-10 feet tall in a few months and has attractive dark fruit and bright red stalks; the red color signals that the fruit and stems are quite poisonous to humans.

**Root crops** grow underground tubers that foragers substitute for potatoes.

- Groundnut (*Apios americana*) reportedly tastes like a hybrid of Irish potato and boiled peanuts (Allen, p.30).
- Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*) belongs to the same family as sunflowers, which produce seeds enjoyed by people and birds. Also called sunchokes, the insulin-starchy vegetable can be found in supermarkets and may be prepared in several ways: sliced raw for salads or slaws, steamed, baked, or boiled and mashed.

Foragers use many other plants in various recipes, raw or cooked, as spinach substitutes, fried or sauteed with meat or butter, or ground into flour. Typical forager cuisine often consists of curly dock, thistle, plantain, chickweed, sheep sorrel, lamb's quarters, violets, clovers. Most forage chefs use the leaves in their recipes but in some cases find ways to prepare the flowers, stems, and seeds. Common elderberry, for example, produces large flower clusters that may be eaten raw, or dipped in batter and fried, or steeped to make a tea.

### **Interested in foraging?**

Before attempting any forage meals, learn how to identify edible wildings. Examine photographs in the many field guides that have become popular in recent years. Consider attending programs or field trips conducted by knowledgeable foragers. Follow instructions for food preparation before serving any dish made with wild plants. Be aware of any and all *potential risks* that a plant may cause, including allergies or digestion problems. Steer clear of any wild vegetation that may have been exposed to herbicides, chemical spraying, or unsanitary conditions.

Foragers insist that wild food tastes better than what the farmers and grocers put on store shelves. Foragers would never think of eliminating dandelions in their yards; on the contrary, they look forward the arrival of this "weed" in spring so that they can eat its yellow flowers and fresh young leaves. They look out for greenbrier (*Smilax* species) for two good reasons: to avoid the fearsome thorns and to snap off the fresh tips that taste like asparagus. Foragers enjoy the thrill of the hunt, the capture and consumption of wild-growing plants. They recommend that the rest of us join them and create new recipes, like wild rose petal jelly, puffball soufflé, and stinging nettle lasagna.

### **Sources**

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## WATCH OUT FOR FALLING TREES!

If only we could tell when trees are planning to fall, our lives would be much easier. Trees can't talk, so we have to guess. Will it be tomorrow, next month, next year or 10 years from now?

The center of a tree contains a core of heartwood—dense and strong wood that supports a tree in the same way steel beams support buildings. Though heartwood is dead, it retains strength as long as it is safely encased in sapwood and bark. But damage to those outer layers will expose the heartwood to water, boring insects and fungi. The result is a condition known as heart rot, which progressively hollows out the tree.

Damage can occur in different ways. Broken limbs, lightning strikes, fire injury, and topping can all lead to rot. However, heart rot does not always result from an outside force. Some large trees naturally form a sort of bowl about 10 to 12 feet from the ground where all the main limbs spread out from the trunk. Water collects in this bowl and eventually causes rot.

What should you do if you discover a large tree with heart rot? The safest thing is to cut it down. Keep in mind, heart rot never gets better; only worse. If a tree that is known to be dangerous falls and injures someone or damages property you may be held liable.



### TELLTALE HEART ROT



You can tell if your shade tree has heart rot by looking for these signs:

- a cavity in the trunk that usually starts near the ground
- a wedge of sunken or flaking bark that proceeds up the trunk
- lots of woodpecker holes in the trunk
- carpenter ants entering and leaving a hole in the trunk
- flat, shelf-like mushrooms growing on the side of the trunk
- a dark ooze that drips out of a hole in the trunk after a rain

## MORNING GLORY AND MOONVINE

by: Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener

With the first warm spell on the way, I begin thinking of my two favorite vines – morning glory and moonvine. Both these vines are easily grown from seed, but the seedcoats are hard and you must *scarify* them (from Latin, “to scratch”) before planting. This involves scratching or nicking opening in the seedcoats through which moisture can enter. I scarify moonvine seeds by scraping them on a metal file until I can barely see a patch of white. Then I soak them in plain water for twenty-four hours before planting. The seeds of the morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea* and hybrids) are too small to file, but it is easy to lay them on rough concrete and roll them around with you hand for a few minutes before you plant them.

One of the neat things about growing moonvine and morning glory together is that the two plants bloom at different times of day. The pure-white blossom of moonvine open in the evening and perfume the night air, while morning glories open by daybreak and then close in early afternoon.

Do bear in mind that morning glory is a very enthusiastic reseeder. At any rate, growing morning glories adjacent to an open expanse of lawn that is regularly mowed eliminates the problem of morning glory seedlings popping up all over your vegetable garden in future season.

## ROSEMARY: AN HERB PROFILE FOR THE HOME GARDENER

by: Arlene Kestner Ph.D., Louisiana Master Gardener



Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), a perennial native to the Mediterranean, is a perfect plant for south Louisiana herb gardens. These winter hardy plants are grown for their culinary use and will make an exceptional statement in the landscape. The plant takes two forms: an upright form and a prostrate or weeping form. The upright form can easily grow in height to 4 feet. Depending on the variety of rosemary, flowers appear throughout the year and range in color from deep blue to pale blue sometimes pink or white.

### Cultivation.

Although rosemary can be grown from seed, it is best to start with a purchased plant. Rosemary should be planted in a sunny garden spot with well-drained soil. As with other herbs, rosemary will benefit from a side dressing of organic fertilizer. This plant may also be grown in a container. Do not overwater rosemary.

The soil should dry slightly between waterings. Although I have many rosemary varieties growing in my garden, I prefer ‘Tuscan Blue’ and ‘Arp’ cultivars for culinary use. Both of these varieties are available at local garden centers.

### USES.

Harvesting may be done throughout the year. Avoid cutting into woody parts as this will hinder development of the plant. Rosemary is used as a seasoning for meats such as beef, lamb and pork, poultry, and vegetables especially potatoes. Because of its strong flavor, rosemary should be used sparingly. A half-teaspoon of fresh leaves can easily flavor a large pot of stew.

## ROASTED ROSEMARY POTATOES

3 medium size baking potatoes  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves, coarsely chopped  
1 large garlic clove, thinly sliced  
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Slice each potato lengthwise and then into wedges. Place potato wedges in a mixing bowl and drizzle with olive oil. Add rosemary and garlic to potatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Spread potato mixture on baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes or until potatoes are light brown and crispy. Serves 3.

Recipe © Arlene Kestner



## 2009 HURRICANE NAMES

Ana  
Bill  
Claudette  
Danny  
Erica  
Fred  
Grace

Henri  
Ida  
Joaquin  
Kate  
Larry  
Mindy  
Nicholas  
Odette

Peter  
Rose  
Sam  
Teresa  
Victor  
Wanda

For every year, there is a pre-approved list of names for tropical storms and hurricanes. These lists have been generated by the National Hurricane center since 1953. At first, the lists consisted of only female names; however, since 1979, the lists alternate between male and female.

Hurricanes are named alphabetically from the list in chronological order. Thus the first storm or hurricane of the year has a name that begins with “A” and the second is given the name that begins with “B”. The lists contain names that begin from A to W, but exclude names that begin with “Q”, or “U”.

There are six lists that continue to rotate. The lists only change when there is a hurricane that is so devastating, the name is retired and another name replaces it.

## VEGETABLES PACK A POWERHOUSE OF NUTRITION

*by: Donna Montgomery, MS, Nutrition Specialist, Retired,  
LSU AgCenter; Louisiana Master Gardener*

The state of our economy has many families turning to backyard vegetable gardening to produce vegetables for family meals. Even with a small amount of land or just containers on a patio, you can grow vegetables for you and your family. There are many advantages to growing vegetables. In addition to saving money, you will be improving your family's diet. Get children involved! Children involved in growing and harvesting veggies are more willing to eat them.

Vegetables pack a powerhouse of nutrition. Five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables are recommended each day. Eaten as part of a balanced diet, they may help to reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases, like some types of cancer.

Different vegetables provide different nutrients that help our body perform properly. Beta-carotene (a precursor to Vitamin A) helps maintain healthy skin and has been associated with reducing cancer risk. Vitamin C helps heal cuts. Fiber helps keep the body's digestive tract moving smoothly, and antioxidants help protect cells from damage caused by daily wear and tear which again helps to reduce risks of certain cancers.

Did you know that some vegetables have more nutritional value than others? Color or plant type can be a clue to nutritional value. Four examples of these groups are: dark green and leafy (spinach, kale), deep yellow and orange (carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squash), bright red (tomatoes, red bell peppers), and cruciferous (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower).

Here are a few tips to help you get the most vitamins from your vegetables.

- Choose dark green, red, yellow or orange fresh vegetables, or frozen varieties.
- Steam, microwave, stir-fry or boil in a small amount of water until tender-crisp.
- Save cooking liquids for sauces, soups and stews. Avoid bruised, wilted or damaged produce.
- Prepare veggies close to serving time.
- Wash quickly by rinsing or gently brushing.
- Minimize chopping and peeling. Trim sparingly.
- Steam, microwave, stir-fry or boil in a small amount of water until tender-crisp.
- Save cooking liquids for sauces, soups and stews.

You know that vegetables are good for you. They also taste great, are easy to prepare in many ways and add eye appeal to meals. Here are two recipes you may enjoy trying.

## Marinated Carrots

5 cups carrots, sliced  
1 medium onion, sliced  
1 bell pepper, sliced  
1 can tomato soup  
½ cup sugar  
¾ cup vinegar

½ cup salad oil  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1 teaspoon prepared mustard  
½ tablespoon horseradish  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon black pepper



**Note:** 1 (16 oz.) bag frozen carrots has 3 cups. If you're in a hurry, buy two bags of carrots.

Slice and cook carrots until tender-crisp. Drain. Add onion and bell pepper to carrots. Heat remaining ingredients together until hot. Pour over all vegetables. Cool. Store covered in refrigerator. Wonderful on crisp lettuce as a salad.

## Broccoli Salad

2 large bunches broccoli, washed  
and cut in very small pieces  
½ cup chopped green onions  
1 cup chopped pecans, toasted

½ cup chopped purple onion  
2 cups red grapes  
½ cup crisp, crumbled bacon (optional)

### Dressing

¼ cup sugar (can use Splenda®)  
1 cup low-fat mayonnaise  
2 tablespoons white vinegar



Mix ingredients, leaving out bacon until ready to serve. Add dressing 1 hour before serving. When ready to serve, add the crumbled bacon.

Enjoy!

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The name "broccoli" comes for the Latin word *brachium*, which means "branch," or "arm."

Broccoli was first grown in the Italian province of Calabria and was given the name Calabrese.

The carrot is a highly refined version of a common weed, Queen Anne's lace. Both plants originated in the Middle East.

The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is Beta-Carotene. Fruits and vegetables that are yellow/orange in color contain Beta-Carotene and carrots are one of the richest in this nutrient. Our bodies convert Beta-Carotene into Vitamin A.



## CAMELLIAS - MARCH, APRIL, MAY

by: Art Landry, Baton Rouge Camellia Society

The spring months in the Baton Rouge area are a busy time for our camellias. The late blooming Varieties are still blooming in March and sometimes into April. New growth usually starts in March and continues into April. The article on camellias in the last issue (Winter Edition) described how to plant a new camellia plant in our area. It is best to plant your camellias before March, but planting can still be done now or later if special care is taken.

If you have a camellia to plant, follow the instructions given in the Winter, 2008 issue. Pay extra attention to getting the new soil settled around the root. Make sure the container has been well watered up to a day or so before planting. The ground is usually moist this time of year so mixing the supplemental soil with the soil removed from the hole should work well. Put a good layer of mulch around the plant, water well, but do not fertilize when planting a new plant – enough fertilizer is already in the container from the nursery.

Your existing camellias should have new mulch added on top of the old mulch. Use any organic material like chopped leaves, or pine straw. The old mulch under the new layer will decay over the seasons and produce nutrients and humus. Smaller plants can be fertilized with an application of nursery special fertilizer. You can divide your fertilizer into two smaller applications – ½ in February/March and the other half in April/May. Just sprinkle around the root system and water in.

Spring is the time to complete pruning of your camellias. Camellias thrive on regular pruning once they are established and several feet in height. You should remove dead or weak branches anytime. When you cut blooms cut the stem back to a main trunk or branch. Over the blooming season, this will provide a light pruning and encourage more vigorous growth

in the spring. Try to finish your pruning and encourage more vigorous growth in the spring before the new growth starts.

Finish removing all spent blooms, partially opened buds and old flower from the ground and plant when the new growth starts. Your pruning of established plants will help in this chore and putting new mulch will be better without the old blooms laying under it. Don't put the spent blooms in mulch pile or compost pile in case they contain petal blight spores – bag up and put in the garbage.



We often get extended spells of dry weather in the spring, so look for evidence your plants may need a good soaking by checking the soil under the mulch. If we've gone a couple of weeks without rain in the spring, give a good soaking by watering with a slow trickle from the hose until the water runs off and stops soaking in. Then let the root ball rest for a week or so without rain before giving it another soaking. Plants use more water during the spurt of new growth in spring, so adjust your watering accordingly.

Camellias make excellent container plants and will reward you with blooms on your patio, porch or garden through the season. Select early blooming varieties and midseason varieties for an extended period of blooms from September through March. Late blooming varieties do not do as well for us since our growing season starts so early. When you grow a camellia in a container, use a good garden mix that will drain well but still retain moisture. (Adding some clay or perlite will help a loose and porous mixture retain moisture.)

Container plants need fertilizing more often than plants in the ground since some of the nutrients are washed out every time you water. Use a time-release type of fertilizer (like Nursery Special or Growers Supreme), which releases the nitrogen over time and also contains essential trace elements. Apply light applications of fertilizer every month or two from February through October for vigorous growth. If the plant is at desired size already, apply half that amount. Repot to larger pot until the desired maximum size plant is reached.

Prune each year to keep the plant at the desired size.

If you've cleaned up the old blooms, put on fresh mulch on top of the old, fertilized and pruned the plants that needed it, then you're ready to enjoy the new growth period. Watch the watering needs throughout the spring and summer, enjoy their greenery in your garden and anticipate the start of another bloom season.

*Editors' note: Art Landry participated with a major role in establishing the Stone Collection of plants at the Burden Research Center.*

## NATIVES

*by: Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Gardening with native plants allows us to work with Mother Nature, not against her. Native plant gardening means using plants best adapted to the conditions where you live that are remarkably self sufficient. By using native plants, we can actually reduce our workload—both labor and chemicals.

A favorite plants that stills grows on my property in East Feliciana is the **Sweet Shrub**. With the arrival of Spring each year the brownish red flowers, although not spectacular, have a wonderful fruity fragrance. The leaves are dark green and aromatic, as well.

Finding sweet shrubs at local nurseries may be difficult. I was fortunate enough to be able to gather seed capsules after the flowers faded. The capsules hang on the bush until winter, changing from green to dark brown. Seeds can be sown in fall or stored in the refrigerator and sown in the spring.

Root cuttings are somewhat more difficult. Take a cutting, mash the bark at the cut end, and dip this end in rooting powder or solution and stick the cutting into moist potting soil.

Some helpful information on the **Sweet Shrub**:

Latin Name: *Calycanthus floridus*

Common Name: Sweet Shrub, Carolina allspice, strawberry shrub

Height: usually 6 to 8 feet, occasionally 12 to 14 feet

Sun or shade to part shade.

Soil: Acid to neutral

Drainage: moist, some flooding tolerated

Leaves: 2 to 6 inches; long, dark green sometimes yellow in fall

Bloom: dark reddish brown, 1 to 2 inches, blooms in spring with a sweet fruit fragrance; not edible

Root system: shallow

Companion plants: oak, hickory, hydrangeas, paw paw, witch hazel



## Master Gardener Mail Bag. . . .

*What is a good variety of fig tree to plant in south Louisiana?*

Brown Turkey, Celeste and new choices include LSU Everbearing, LSU Gold and LSU Purple.

*Which blackberry plant is a more aggressive grower?*

Thorny selections spread much more aggressively than thornless types.

*What is the best time to trim my azaleas?*

Cut back early spring blooming azaleas within 2 to 3 weeks after they have finished blooming.

### THOUGHTS ABOUT THE MOON



#### • **March - Full Worm Moon**

As the temperature begins to warm and the ground begins to thaw, earthworm casts appear, heralding the return of the robins. The more northern tribes knew this Moon as the Full Crow Moon, when the cawing of crows signaled the end of winter; or the Full Crust Moon, because the snow cover becomes crusted from thawing by day and freezing at night. The Full Sap Moon, marking the time of tapping maple trees, is another variation. To the settlers, it was also known as the Lenten Moon, and was considered to be the last full Moon of winter.

#### • **April - Full Pink Moon**

This name came from the herb moss pink, or wild ground phlox, which is one of the earliest widespread flowers of the spring. Other names for this month's celestial body include the Full Sprouting Grass Moon, the Egg Moon, and among coastal tribes the Full Fish Moon, because this was the time that the shad swam upstream to spawn.

#### • **May - Full Flower Moon**

In most areas, flowers are abundant everywhere during this time. Thus, the name of this Moon. Other names include the Full Corn Planting Moon, or the Milk Moon.

## BATON ROUGE IN SPRING

by: *Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Spring rains, cool and fresh;  
Gardens revive, plants thrive.  
But not at my house.

Spring season leaps forth.  
Ephemerals show glory.  
Where do they come from?

Lizards chase, eat bugs,  
Take down bad guys, most of them.  
They take good bugs, too.

Ten feet from the ground  
Caverns open 'mid limbs of trees.  
Birds think it's for them.

Mystery of life.  
Vigor and beauty, it grows.  
Spring has sprung, for joy!

## GARDENING FOR BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies provide unequalled splendor and motion. Our fascination with these magical creatures is as evident today as it has been throughout history. Speaking to our gentler and possibly our romantic selves, butterflies have a calming effect.



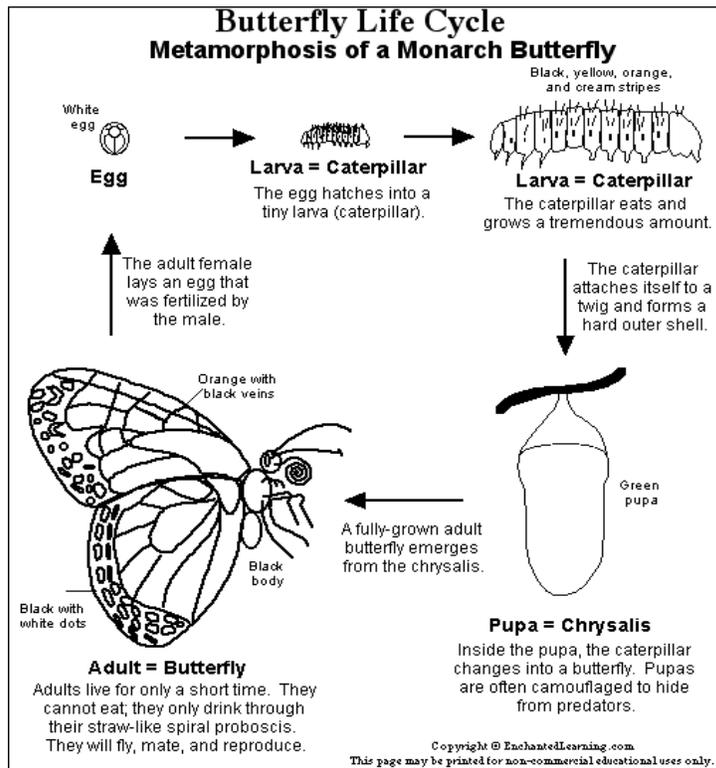
A growing number of Louisiana gardeners are expressing their desire to attract butterflies to their yards. Increasing awareness of the natural habitat loss of some butterfly species because of land commercialization has many people concerned about butterfly survival. In creating a unique habitat, gardeners enjoy knowing they are helping to maintain the survival of these lovely insects along with the enjoyment of enriching their own lives.

Benefits of gardening to attract butterflies are too numerous to list. Some, however, may include:

1. They are excellent pollinators. Feeding primarily on flower nectar, they carry pollen from one flower to another.
2. Serving as sensitive ecological indicators, butterflies are indicators of the natural balance of our environment (changes in natural communities).
3. Butterfly habitats attract other wildlife and provide an excellent place for children to learn.

Butterfly gardening, or gardening with special thought to adding plants and features attractive and beneficial to butterflies, may be a rewarding hobby. A butterfly garden may be a few containers of one or two butterfly-attracting plants or a very sizable garden with many different species to attract butterflies. To create a “butterfly friendly” environment, there are few simple requirements: food, water, shelter and a place to reproduce.

## BUTTERFLY LIFE CYCLE



## GARDENING TO ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES

In addition to plants, other features are necessary in attracting these winged beauties. Nectar is important, as is drinking water. Water must be in a place that is not deep so butterflies can comfortably rest and drink. Butterflies cannot drink from open water. Sinking a shallow pan into the ground, which can be refilled when the garden is watered or during rains, is one possibility. Others are a birdbath filled with pebbles and water or a dish filled with moist sand. These locations will also let butterflies replenish needed minerals from the rocks or sand.

Some butterflies like the juice from fruit, so rather than throwing away leftover or fermenting fruit or the peeling, place them in the garden. A piece of watermelon or the rind is a tasty treat and a nutritious source of sweet syrup for energy.

Basking spots are of great importance, because butterflies are cold-blooded insects and depend on the warmth of the sun for energy to maintain proper body temperature. Spring and fall are perhaps the most important times in the absorption of the sun’s energy since night-time and morning temperatures may be low. Placing stones or boards in a sunny spot gives butterflies a place to thrive in the sunshine. In addition, the sun enhances their wing colors.

## **PLANTING LOCATION**

The objective of a butterfly garden is to take part in the endlessly fascinating hobby of gardening and to lure beautiful butterflies to your home. In the largest sense, a garden is composed of the entire landscape, whether it be a small backyard or acres of space. One of the first considerations in planning the garden should be the relationship of the plantings to the house.

Making a rough sketch showing the relative size and position of existing elements on your property and the potential use of the major elements will give you a place to begin. Consider situating flower beds, showy shrubs or flowering trees in view of windows and doors so you can enjoy the plants and butterflies from inside your house. Evaluating the existing landscape site will allow you to discover features already there. Many trees and shrubs provide the necessary environmental structure for all stages of the butterfly's life.

A location that receives several hours of sun each day will help produce an abundance of nectar-producing flowers. Butterflies and the plants they are attracted to need plenty of sunshine. There are a few exceptions, such as impatiens (*Impatiens wallerana*). Warmth of the sun is absolutely necessary for the survival of butterflies. They cannot produce their own body heat and must depend on the sun for survival. If the garden is too shady, carefully prune trees and shrubs to open up the designated area.

In determining the size of the butterfly habitat, consider the available space and the amount of time you are willing to spend maintaining the garden. If space is limited, a few plants, such as lantana, in containers will attract butterflies. Begin with a manageable size and, if desired, increase the size of the garden over time. Adjusting the location of plants (along with the trial and error of finding what plants are preferable or grow well for you) are all a part of the fun of gardening. After selecting a site with adequate sunlight, consider the drainage. A well-drained location is necessary for the survival of most plants, especially for annual and perennial garden plants.

## **PLANTING AND BED PROPOGATION**

Raised beds are ideal for butterfly garden plantings. This is especially recommended when using herbaceous annual and perennial flowering plants. A well-drained soil is essential. Amend heavy clay with organic matter (pine bark, peat moss) and sharp sand. Amend light sandy soils with organic matter only. A light application of a slow release (2-3 month) completed garden fertilizer should be made at planting. Be sure to have a soil sample analyzed before planting. This will give you information on the current nutrient status of the soil and its pH.

Select quality plants. Container-grown annuals and perennials are available at most retail garden centers. Vines, shrubs and trees for butterfly attraction are excellent companion plants for the flowering annuals and perennials. These plants provide nighttime protection for the butterflies and add different forms and textures to the garden area. Be sure to plan a design for buying plants. Plant tall-growing plants toward the back of beds, with medium height plants in the center or middle area, and use short plants for borders, edgings and bed fronts. Plant in masses (especially annuals) of single species to make the garden more attractive to butterflies.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Many items are important in proper maintenance programs. Be sure to provide proper watering and fertilization. Mulching should be considered after the bed construction and planting.

## WATERING

Supplemental irrigation may be needed during the growing season to assure steady growth and optimum performance of plants. When normal rainfall does not provide adequate moisture (about 1 inch/week from spring through fall), water will be needed, especially if proper preparation produced a well-drained bed area. A thorough soaking is preferred instead of frequent sprinklings. In general, water about once a week, when needed. It is probably best to underwater plants than to overwater. Overwatering and frequent wetting of foliage lead to increased disease incidence.

## FERTILIZATION

As with any garden, regular fertilization will enhance performance of plants in a butterfly garden. Remember to fertilize at planting. It is important to maintain proper soil moisture after fertilization. Dolomitic limestone can be applied, if needed, to raise soil pH. Do this based on results of the soil sample.

## MULCHING

Mulching can be one of the most beneficial cultural practices used in gardening. Several inches of mulch can be added on a season basis. Excellent mulches include pine straw, bagasse, compost, pine bark mulch or nuggets, tree clippings, grass clippings and many other types of organic matter. Benefits of mulching plants include maintaining a cooler root zone in the summer and a warmer root zone in the winter, moisture conservation, weed suppression and increasing soil organic matter.

## DEAD-HEADING

Dead-heading is the process of removing spent flower. Retention of old flower on plants leads to seed production. If a plant expends energy on seed production, flower production is sacrificed. Some plants are self-cleaning, but may require that old flowers be removed. Periodically removing these old flower will keep the butterfly garden flowering for an extended period.

Pruning of vines, shrubs and trees may be needed. Pruning is the removal of plant parts to improve the overall function or landscape performance of that plant. Enhancing plant vigor, controlling size, removing dead branches and regulating flowering are benefits of pruning.

## PLANT SELECTION

Many plants can attract butterflies to a garden area. They can include annual and perennial flower, deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs, vines and other material. Butterflies use many different species as hosts or nectar plants. Some butterflies are attracted to a wide range of plants. Others may be attracted to just one or two individual plant species.

Be sure your butterfly garden includes both host and nectaring native plants.

**Host Plants:** Black Cherry, Hackberry, Maypop, Native Milkweeds, Oaks, Paw Paw, Spice Bush, Willow, Wax Myrtle

**Spring Nectaring Plants:** Bee Balm, Coreopsis, Moss Verbena, Native Salvias, Native Verbenas, Phlox, to name a few.

## HUMMINGBIRDS



The end of the winter hummingbird season is upon us and ruby-throated migration will soon begin. The first glimpse of an adult male with its glowing red throat is always a sight for sore eyes.

### RECOMMENDED PLANTS FOR HUMMINGBIRD GARDENS

**Trees:** Crybaby tree, Japanese plum or loquat, mimosa, citrus.

**Shrubs:** Turk's cap, Mexican cigar plant, shrimp plant, firespike, hibiscus, lantana, azalea, pentas, red buckeye.

**Vines:** Coral honeysuckle, Japanese honeysuckle, cape honeysuckle, cypress vine, trumpet creeper.

**Annuals and perennials:** Salvia, pineapple sage, iris, red hot poker, impatiens, coral plant, cardinal flower, standing cypress, bee balm.

### FEEDERS

Hummingbirds are powerfully attracted to anything red. Feeders with bright-red parts are especially useful for enticing the fast-flying, tiny birds into the open where they are more easily seen. The sugar syrup dispensed from the feeder supplements the bird's natural diet of nectar and insects with an unlimited amount of calories to fuel their rapid metabolism.

The best formula for feeders should approximate natural nectar. A good, simple formula can be made at home by dissolving 1 part of cane sugar in 4 parts of boiling water. Allow the sugar syrup to cool before filling feeders. Several commercial nectars or mixes are marketed, but none provides better nourishment than a simple homemade sugar syrup.

Place feeders high enough so that domestic cats cannot attack the birds while they are feeding, and place them near windows for maximum viewing pleasure. Feeders are most effective when located within view of flowers that attract hummers.

- Hummingbirds are little more than flight muscles covered with feathers. 30% of a hummingbird's weight consists of flight muscles.
- Hummingbirds require lots of energy. They have the fastest wing beats of any bird and their hearts beat up to 1,260 beats per minute.
- A Hummingbird's flight speed can average 25-30 mph, and can dive up to 60 mph.

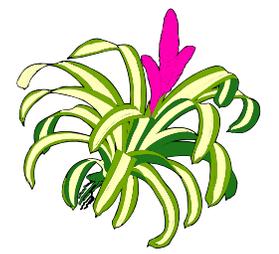
"I live in the garden; I just sleep in the house." - *Jim Long*

The smaller seeds plant shallow. The bigger seeds plant deeper. If you forget this simple rule, your seeds will all be sleepers.

## BROMELIADS: DON'T LET THEM SCARE YOU

by: Bruce Gomez, Louisiana Master Gardener (deceased)  
(reprinted from Spring, 2007)

*Don't be afraid.* There are varieties that are easy to grow and do very well in our Baton Rouge climate. Just remember that these plants are not full sun lovers. Dappled shade filtered through trees or short burst of sunlight as the earth rotates is best.



A micro climate under an oak tree seems to a great environment for these plants but not every one has a spreading oak over there yard and creative adaptations are as bountiful as your imagination allows you to be. They grow well in a wire hanging basket with sphagnum moss and a coconut liner, they grow well in hollowed out drift wood and of course in their own individual pot. These plants are effective in your landscape when displayed prominently so make sure that their placement in your landscape is appealing and eye catching.

The most common of bromeliads are the pineapple plant (*Ananus comosus*). Cut the top off of a pineapple purchased at any grocery store and put in a pot with your favorite potting soil. Make sure the soil is rich in compost. You will grow a beautiful plant, which likes a little more sun but still does well in light shade. It will produce a pineapple in due course under the right conditions.

The second is Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*), which is native to South Louisiana. Yes, it is considered a Bromeliad and any one who has Spanish Moss growing on their trees is indeed growing a bromeliad. Now Spanish Moss is plentiful having survived a recent disease which it overcame and bounded back in

all its glory but it recovered. Even with this good news so don't run out and pull some off the trees. (At one time, the decline was thought to be an environmental problem, with the fungus discovered later.)

Now Spanish Moss is considered a native plant and as such should be protected. Plants, in public areas or parks, should be admired but not dug up or "borrowed". If you are lucky enough to have some in a tree in your yard or you find some blown to the ground during a high wind do protect it. One of the beauties of nature is to see an old oak which is moss draped.

There are three classifications of Bromeliads as to *habitation* and these are:

Epiphytic: grow attached to a tree.

Terrestria:l: grow in a soil mixture.

Saxicoious: grow in rocks.

In order to grow Bromeliads you need to *understand the growing habits* of the plants in order to be successful with their survival. This article will be limited to the Botanical Classifications of *Aechmea*, *Billberigia*, and *Neoregelia*.

Construction of the plant: Bromeliads have scales on their leaves, which enable them to absorb water and nutrients. These scales help prevent these plants from drying out during dry conditions. Many Bromeliads have cups in the center of the plant, which holds water and nourishes the plant.

Where to grow: Bromeliads grow in a variety of places but the two most familiar to the growing public are the ones grown on wood or in pots. If grown on wood, make sure it is not treated lumber and the wood is porous.

Bromeliads have shallow roots that will attach itself to a porous board. The plant growing on driftwood or old boards give the appearance of growing in its natural habitat. Usually the

Bromeliad is held to the board, by being wired, or in some instances, hot glued to the board though this is not the preferred method. Find a piece of wood with a cranny and put the bromeliad in the cranny with sphagnum moss stuffed around the root of the plant and wire as necessary and water.

There are several planting mediums that are successful if you are using pots. Most use a mixture of either peat or sphagnum moss ( 2 parts) and one part sand, perlite or other potting material, which allows the water to run through the pot or board. Make sure that your pot is scaled to the size of the plant. Although these plants have small root systems, the size of the plant needs to be taken into consideration in order to support the size of the plant.

Hanging the pots provides a beautiful display mechanism and also insures that the plants have adequate air circulation, which is very important to the health of the plant.

As mentioned earlier, the bromeliad needs light but not burning sun and humidity to flourish. Make sure water stays in the bulb of the bromeliad.

Bromeliads love to be outdoors. Move your bromeliads outside as soon as the threat of frost is gone and bring them inside for protection in late December depending on the prevailing weather conditions. If inside is defined as the “house”, remember to make sure they are in a well lighted area. Since the dry atmosphere of the house is not friendly to Bromeliads, frequent misting or using a cool mist humidifier is beneficial. In a mild winter, Bromeliads can make it outside in a southerly, and very protected, area with some sort of cover over them during low temperatures. If a

hard freeze is expected, get your plants in a warm area with humidity provided.

Offsets or “pups” are the easiest way to propagate Bromeliads. This is done in the usual manner of separating the “pup” with several roots from the main plant. Refer to planting tips.

In the life cycle of a bromeliad, the main plant dies after it blooms. However its gift of continuation lies in the sprouting of “pups” around the base of the plant. Do not be alarmed by this occurrence. Look for the new “pups”.

Fertilize sparingly. Remember that these are shade plants primarily and caution should be taken not to over fertilize. They need little fertilizer to achieve what a sun loving plant will achieve in terms of growth.

Watch for diseases. Scale and mealy bugs may cause a problem. Washing the leaves with a strong stream of water or wiping the leaves removes most critters. Isolate sick plants from plants to prevent infection spread. Use the appropriate spray if the infestation is not control washing and wiping. Do not use insecticides or pesticides indiscriminately or as the first resort and read the precautions label before using. While these are common sense recommendations, it is better to be safe than sorry.

The Bromeliad Society is an excellent resource for information on growing these fascinating plants. Some of the basic information for this text is attributable to the Society publications. Web sites are [www.bsi.org](http://www.bsi.org). (click on Louisiana) and [www.fcbs.org](http://www.fcbs.org).





# SPRING 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@eatel.net](mailto: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  
225-763-3990  
[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)