

Horticulture Hints

Spring
2017



Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

LouEASyana GARDENING

It is very important to focus on weed control this time of year in shrub and flowerbeds. Cool-season weeds are in active growth as the days get longer and warmer, and they will flower and set seeds. Left unchecked, the prolific seed production this spring will lead to even more problems next spring, so efforts made over the next couple of months are especially critical.

Ideally, all of your beds should be mulched with about 2 to 3 inches of a mulching material, such as chopped leaves, pine straw, pine bark or other suitable materials. Mulches help considerably but are not totally weed-proof. If weeds do manage to make it through the mulch, dig them out promptly making sure you get any bulbs or roots in the ground that might resprout.

You may also carefully apply a herbicide, such as glyphosate (Killzall, Eraser, Roundup and other brands) just to the weeds to kill them. Use shields or plastic bags to cover ornamentals in the bed to prevent the spray from contacting their foliage.

The use of a weed preventer, such as Preen or Amaze, will not be helpful in dealing with growing weeds. After you have weeded the bed, however, you can apply a weed-preventing herbicide to keep weeds from coming back. These products also could be applied to beds right after planting shrubs, ground covers or flowers to prevent weeds (do not apply to seeded beds, however). Follow the label directions carefully, and use these products only around plants that the label indicates are tolerant of the herbicide.

As you begin to see these cool-season weeds come into bloom, don't put this job off any longer. Weeding is not the most fun or glamorous part of gardening, but a garden simply cannot exist unless you keep up with it.

Dan Gill

Consumer Horticulture



Spring 2017 Louisiana SUPER PLANTS!



The Louisiana Super Plants program is an educational and marketing campaign of the LSU AgCenter that highlights tough and beautiful plants that perform well in Louisiana landscapes. Louisiana Super Plants have gone through several years of university evaluations or have an established history of performing well throughout Louisiana.

Louisiana Super Plants have a proven track record; they are "university tested and industry approved." Homeowners and professionals alike can benefit from using Louisiana Super Plants to ensure successful landscaping efforts.

Plants of the 2017 Louisiana Super Plants spring selections should be available at participating area nurseries by the time promotion begins. To see a list of participating nurseries in your area, go to the Louisiana Super Plants website at www.lsuagcenter.com/superplants.

Compact SunPatiens (*Impatiens hybrid*)

- Outstanding performance in Hammond Research Station trials and landscape plantings.
- Large growing plants can grow 14-32 inches tall and 14-24 inches wide.
- They really do grow in full sun.
- A variety of vibrant colors are available.
- Abundant constant bloom from spring to fall.
- Resistant to impatiens downy mildew.
- Plant in spring (late March, April, early May) when weather is milder – plants establish better then.
- Mounding shrub-like growth habit creates great impact in the landscape.



Henry's Garnet Virginia Willow (*Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet')

- Outstanding native shrub for Louisiana landscapes.
- Deciduous.
- 2-5 feet tall and 3-5 feet wide.
- Grows well in full sun to part shade.
- Tolerates damp, poorly drained soil.
- A reliable, adaptable native that is not fussy or difficult to grow.
- Two seasons of interest.
- 6-inch drooping spikes of white flowers appear in late spring.
- The foliage reliably turns burgundy red in the fall.
- Promoted during the spring blooming season, but also excellent to plant in fall or winter.



Previous Louisiana Super Plants Selections to Plant in Spring/Summer

Plant in a Full Sun Location – about 8 hours or more of direct sun:

- Bandana Lantanas
- Little Ruby Alternanthera
- Senorita Rosalita Cleome
- Serena Angelonia
- Serenita Raspberry Angelonia
- Luna Hibiscus
- Mesa Gaillardia
- Serenita Raspberry Angelonia

Plant in a Part Shade to Part Sun Location – about 4 to 6 hours of direct sun:

- BabyWing Begonia
- Butterfly Pentas (also Full Sun)
- Evolution Violet and Evolution White Salvia (also Full Sun)

Plant in Shade to Part Shade Location – about 2 to 4 hours of direct sun

- Kauai Torenia



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Summer Bulbs

Summer flowering bulbs provide an excellent way to introduce color and interest into the summer landscape. Most summer flowering bulbs are native to tropical or subtropical climates and will reliably bloom here for many years. Indeed, for some of these plants, the trick is not getting them to grow, but keeping them under control. Summer flowering bulbs are generally planted in April and May, although plants growing in pots can be planted through the summer.

These plants fill a wide variety of uses in the landscape, providing valuable additions to flower beds, perennial borders, ground covers and containers. There are summer bulbs adapted to just about every growing condition in your landscape, from sun to shade and well-drained beds to boggy areas. Think of them as long-lived herbaceous perennials that will contribute flowers and/or foliage to the area where they are planted for many years.

Summer bulbs will grow more vigorously if you prepare the planting bed properly and fertilize them occasionally. You should generally dig generous amounts of organic matter, such as compost, aged manure or peat moss, into the area before you plant your bulbs. A light sprinkling of a general-purpose fertilizer should be incorporated along with the organic matter.

For existing summer bulb plantings, fertilizing in April and again in July with a general-purpose granular fertilizer is quite sufficient. You may have found that some of your summer bulbs have grown vigorously in the past without fertilization (perhaps even more vigorously than you anticipated or desired). Under those circumstances you do not need to, and probably shouldn't, fertilize them.

These summer bulbs thrive in Louisiana:

Full sun to part sun: Agapanthus, Belamcanda, Bulbine Calla, Canna, Crinum, Crocosmia, Dietes, Garlic Chives (*Allium tuberosum*), Gladiolus, Gloriosa Lily, Habranthus, Hymenocallis, Iris, Lilies, Oxalis, *Scilla peruviana*, Stargrass (*Hypoxis angustifolia*), Tigridia, Society Garlic (*Tulbaghia*), Zephyranthes.

Part shade to shade: Achimenes, Alpinia, Arisaema, Bletilla, Caladium, Calla, Costus, Curcuma, Globba, Hedychium, Hymenocallis, Kaempferia, Walking Iris (south La.), Oxalis.



Consider Color When Planting Flowerbeds

Lots of warm-season bedding plants are added to landscapes this time of year to provide color through the summer months. Creating an attractive, colorful look with bedding plants is easier than ever, but it's a good idea to do a little thinking and planning before you go to the nursery. You will generally be more pleased with the results.

First, decide on a color scheme. It's flabbergasting that gardeners who take the time to worry if the colors of their couch, carpet and curtains go together, will grab anything in bloom at the nursery and plant them together in a flowerbed. No one can tell you what colors you should use in your flowerbeds, but you know what you like. Think about it, and consider which colors you will combine for this season. Generally, avoid purchasing bedding plants in cell packs of mixed colors so you will have control over which colors you combine.

If you are unsure of yourself, combine cool colors together (reds with a blue tint, burgundy, rose, pink, magenta, purple, violet, lavender, blue, navy and any variations of those colors), OR warm colors together (reds with an orange tint, orange, gold, yellow, rust, peach and any variations on these colors) for reliably harmonious results. Blue, white and gray will combine with just about any color scheme.

Use color where you want to focus attention, such as at your front door. Never use color to "beautify" an unattractive feature in your landscape such as a trash can area. You will simply make sure everyone notices it.

Generally, reduce the number of colors you use for best results. In other words, use the colors you like in combinations that you like, but don't use every color you like at the same time in the same bed.

It is also important to plant individual colors in masses or groups, especially if the bed will be viewed from a distance (as in a front bed being viewed from the street).

Use pastel colors in area that will be viewed primarily in the evening because they show up better in low light. Pastel colors make a space look larger and more open and tend to create a serene, restful mood. Vibrant, rich colors, on the other hand, energize the landscape and can help make a larger area seem smaller and more intimate.

The large amount of green foliage that appears in the landscape makes it more forgiving of wild color combinations, but it's best not to push it too far. Again, I wouldn't presume to tell you what colors you like and should combine to create flowerbeds you'll be proud of – I'm just saying to give it some consideration.

Controlling Fire Ants

Imported fire ants inflict painful stings and create unsightly mounds in our landscapes, and most of us would be happier if they weren't around. A variety of products and methods are available to effectively control fire ants. There is no treatment, unfortunately, that will eradicate them from a yard permanently. The product chosen is often determined by the situation and the preferences of the individual doing the treatment. When using a pesticide, always read the label very carefully before you purchase it to make sure you understand and are comfortable with how to use it, and to make sure it is appropriate for the situation.

BAITS

Fire ant baits consist of a pesticide combined with a material fire ants will consume as food. Use fresh bait, and apply it when the ground and grass are dry and no rain is expected for the next 24 hours. Apply baits when the worker ants are actively searching for food.

DUSTS

Some products, such as those containing acephate, are applied as a dry dust. Ants walking through the treated soil get the dust on their bodies and transport the insecticide into the mound. Within a few days the entire colony should be killed. To use a dust, distribute the recommended amount evenly over the undisturbed mound.

MOUND DRENCHES

Other insecticides used to control fire ants are mixed with water and then applied to the mound as a drench. These liquid mound drenches kill ants underground, but must be applied in sufficient volume to penetrate the entire nest. Generally, about 1 gallon of diluted mixture is poured gently over the top of each mound.

GRANULES

Granular products offer another method of getting insecticide into fire ant mounds. To treat a single mound, measure the recommended amount, and sprinkle it on top of and around the mound following label directions.

ORGANIC CONTROLS

A few active ingredients used in fire ant control products, such as boric acid, pyrethrin, pyrethrum, rotenone, citrus oil extract and diatomaceous earth, are organic pesticides. Diatomaceous earth, a natural silica-based dust, will kill some ants, but it rarely eliminates ant colonies when used alone. Avoid breathing in the dust-like particles.

HOME REMEDIES

Be advised that some home remedies don't work well. Spreading grits on a fire ant mound will only feed the pests. Laying orange or grapefruit peel on a fire ant mound will only make them move to another spot. Shoveling one mound on top of another in an attempt to force the ants to kill each other is not effective. Do not use gasoline or other petroleum products for fire ant control. While many of these products will kill fire ants, they are extremely flammable and will kill grass and other plants.

For more information on fire ants, go to www.lsuagcenter.com and enter "fire ants" in the search box.



Louisiana Irises

Blooming from late March to early May, the Louisiana iris is a floral ambassador that has carried our state's name all over the world. Louisiana iris is the name used worldwide for a unique group of native Louisiana iris species and their hybrids. Their extraordinary beauty and reliability in the garden have made them increasingly popular, but they still deserve more recognition and use here in their home territory.

Though a number of iris species are native to Louisiana, only five species, *Iris brevicaulis*, *Iris fulva*, *Iris giganticaerulea*, *Iris hexagona* and *Iris nelsonii* are known as "The Louisianans." Only in south Louisiana do all five species occur together. These five species are closely related and will interbreed with each other but with no other species. The crossing, or interbreeding, of these species has resulted in the modern hybrid cultivars we grow today. Their large, attractive flowers cover a broad range of colors, including many shades of blue, purple, red, yellow, pink, gold, brown, lavender, burgundy and white.

The best time to plant Louisiana irises is in August and September when they are dormant, but you can buy and plant them in spring while they are in bloom with good success as well. When purchased and planted in spring, however, Louisiana irises need to be handled carefully to avoid damaging the foliage and flower buds, and you may need to stake the plants after planting to hold them upright after planting (established Louisiana irises do not need staking).

Louisiana irises should be grown with as much direct sun as possible. Although they will tolerate shade for part of the day, at least about six hours of direct sun are needed for good blooming. You can plant



Louisiana irises in beds by themselves, combined with other perennials or even in aquatic gardens.

When preparing a spot to plant them in a typical bed, incorporate a generous 3-inch layer of compost, rotted manure or peat moss and some general purpose fertilizer into the soil. These irises grow best in a soil high in fertility and organic matter.

Aquatic culture is one of the easiest and most natural ways to grow Louisiana irises and the foliage tends to stay more attractive in the summer. Simply place a potted iris into your decorative pond or aquatic garden so that the rim of the pot is a few inches below the water's surface. Louisiana irises also grow well and look great planted in the ground on the edges of large ponds.

The large seedpods that form after flowering should be removed as soon as you notice them to keep the plants more attractive and vigorous. Next fall, in October or November, fertilize the irises as they begin their winter growing season.

Summer Bedding Plants

As soon as the danger of frost has passed in your area, you can begin to plant warm-season bedding plants. In south Louisiana this generally begins in late March or early April, and in north Louisiana around April or early May.

A group of plants we use as summer bedding plants are actually tender perennials, not true annuals. These plants have more stamina than true annuals and this is important given our very long summer growing season, from April/May to October. These plants have the ability to look good in October from a spring or early summer planting and are highly recommended for Louisiana gardens. On occasion, these plants may survive a mild winter and provide a second summer of color.

Warm-season bedding plants for sun to part-sun include: abelmoschus, ageratum, alternanthera*, amaranthus, balsam, blue daze*, celosia, cleome, coleus (sun-tolerant types), coreopsis, cosmos, Dahlberg daisy, dusty miller*, gaillardia, gomphrena, iresine*, lantana*, lisianthus, marigold, melampodium, narrow-leaf zinnia,

ornamental pepper*, periwinkle*, pentas*, portulaca, purslane*, rudbeckia, ruellia*, salvia*, scaevola*, sunflower, tithonia, torenia, perennial verbena, zinnia.

Warm-season bedding plants for part-shade to shade: balsam, begonia*, browallia, caladium (perennial tuber), cleome, coleus*, impatiens*, pentas*, salvia*, torenia.

*Tender perennials.



Checklist for March, April and May



1. Plant warm-season bedding plants beginning in mid-March (south Louisiana) or mid-April (north Louisiana) and continuing through early May. For best results, plant petunias by mid-March and wait to plant periwinkles (vinca) until late April.
2. After spring bulbs that reliably return each year have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns yellow before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms.
3. Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature fluctuations. Excellent mulches are pine straw, chopped leaves and pine bark. Mulch should be applied 2 inches thick for effective weed suppression.
4. Divide and transplant older, large clumps of chrysanthemums in early March. Failure to divide plants can result in weak, spindly growth with few flowers.
5. Coleuses are great bedding plants for Louisiana's landscapes. Try some of the newer sun-loving varieties in sunny beds.
6. Fertilize shrubs in the spring using a general-purpose fertilizer. Carefully follow the label directions.
7. Watch for insect problems this spring. Lace bugs on azaleas and aphids or whiteflies on gardenias are common. Also examine camellias, sasanquas and hollies for scale insects on the lower foliage. Control with acephate, imidacloprid or horticultural oils sprays.
8. To encourage more rapid re-blooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after their first flower cycle is completed this spring.
9. Roses may develop insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles are especially a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby.
10. Garden centers will have many crape myrtles in May and June. Plant these shrubs and trees (depending on the variety you select) for great flowering all summer. Most varieties also have exfoliating, colored bark.
11. If your crape myrtles have had problems with crape myrtle aphids and the unattractive, black sooty mold they cause, treat your trees now to prevent problems this summer. Apply a drench of imidacloprid insecticide to the base of the tree, and the tree will be protected from aphids all summer.

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Vegetable Gardening

Spring, Jump and Leap Into the Vegetable Garden!

Gardeners get ready! Spring is one of the busiest seasons for vegetable gardeners. Pending how much rain your yard received, you may or may not have had time to turn over the garden soil and prepare rows. Gardeners get this completed before mid-March in south Louisiana and early April in north Louisiana. These are our average last frost dates. Recognize that late freezes can and do occur. If the local weather person is predicting a late freeze, push your planting dates back to after the freeze.

Vegetables to Plant

...in March

Direct-plant snap bean, Swiss chard, radish, lettuce, collard, mustard, turnip and sweet corn seeds into the ground. Plant tomato, pepper and eggplant transplants after March 15 in south Louisiana and April 1 in north Louisiana. Cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons really need warmer soils to perform their best. Make sure all frost is over before planting these. Technically, you can use the same dates given for other crops (March 15 and April 1), but to be on the safe side, you might wait a week or two extra for these.

...in April

Plant snap beans, butter beans, radish, collards, cucumber, eggplant, cantaloupe, okra, Southern peas (field peas), peanuts, pumpkin (for a really early harvest), winter squash, summer squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes (late April), tomatoes (transplants), peppers (transplants) and watermelon. Remember that most pumpkins require 90-120 days to reach full maturity, and some giant pumpkins may even require up to 160 days before they are ready to be harvested. These days must all be frost-free. If you are aiming to harvest pumpkins at or a little before Halloween, adjust your planting date according to the variety of pumpkin you are planting. Giant pumpkins should be planted earlier, but typically, small to medium pumpkins are planted late-June to the first week of July for a Halloween harvest.

...in May

Most spring vegetables can be planted in May, since the soil has warmed and danger of frost has passed. Plant sweet potatoes (transplants), okra, Southern peas, pumpkin, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelon, cucumber, butter beans, squash, cantaloupe, collard and eggplant (transplants). Snap beans, butter beans, sweet corn, tomatoes and peppers (transplants) should be planted in the early days of May to prevent poor fruit set as a result of high temperatures. Sweet corn seed should also be planted early because worm control becomes more difficult as the season progresses.

Crop Highlights

Sweet corn. Planting corn early may reduce exposure to corn earworm populations. The earliest planting should be made seven days before the average last frost date for your area. Plant every two to three weeks to provide a continuous supply of sweet corn. Remember to plant the same variety in a block of at least three rows side by side at each planting. This will help ensure good pollination and well-filled ears. Planting a yellow corn adjacent to a white corn in small gardens may cause bicolor corn ears to form because of cross-pollination. To avoid cross-pollination, wait three weeks between planting varieties.

When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seeds every 8 to 12 inches in the row and cover to about 1/2 inch to 1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3 to 4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Side-dress a 100-foot row with 1 1/2 to 3 pounds of calcium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches tall and again when the plants are 24-36 inches tall. One pint of fertilizer or 2 cups is about 1 pound. Three ounces of seed will plant a 100 ft. row.

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

Harvest sweet corn early in the morning while it is still cool. Chill or cook immediately after harvesting. Sweet corn that is ready to harvest should have a well-filled ear. Kernels should be bright and plump, and their juice should be milky.

Varieties such as Seneca Horizon, Funks G90, Gold Queen, Merit, Silver Queen (white) and Golden Cross Bantam always perform well. Many other varieties are available and do well in Louisiana. Give Ambrosia, Incredible, Miracle and Delectable a try as well as Temptation, Obsession, Honey and Cream, Peaches and Cream, Luscious and any of the XTRA-Tender numbered series.





Snap beans. Plant bush varieties every two weeks, starting right after the average last frost date. This will provide a continuous harvest for an extended period.

Good bush snap beans for Louisiana are Ambra, Bronco, Contender, Valentino, Dusky, Festina, Hialeah, Magnum, Storm, Strike, Provider and Bush Blue Lake 274. An All-America Selections winner is Derby. Try Roma II for a good-eating, flat Italian pod bean. For a purple pod bush snap, try Royal Burgundy in early spring. Those who prefer yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax and Goldmine.

One-half pound of snap bean seeds will plant a 100-foot row. Plant seeds 1-2 inches apart in the row. High temperatures at bloom may cause many of the flowers to fall off. Generally, snap beans do not produce well when planted in late May. For best quality, harvest pods before the developing seeds cause the pod to bulge. Beans can be held for up to seven days at 40-45° F and 90-95 percent humidity.

Pole snap bean varieties produce larger yields since they produce for a longer period than bush varieties. Space seeds about 6-12 inches apart. About 2-3 ounces of seeds will plant a 100-foot row. For pole snaps, the All-America Selections winner is Kentucky Blue. Rattle Snake and McCaslan have done well in Louisiana. For those who want a bean that sets well in the heat, try the vigorous Yardlong Asparagus Bean and harvest pods when 12-18 inches long.

Tomatoes. Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives six to eight hours direct sunlight. If the garden is too shady, few blossoms form, and many of those that form fall off before setting fruit. Begin transplanting in mid-March in south

Louisiana and at or after April 1 in north Louisiana – after the danger of frost is over. If a frost occurs, you will need to cover the newly planted plants! Early blight is a common disease in tomatoes. Spray with copper fungicides early in the season at the base of the plant. Switch over to garden herbicides later in the season. Scout weekly for insects.

Space tomato plants 18-24 inches apart. Fertilize with 6-7 pounds of 13-13-13 per 100-foot row prior to planting and side-dress at first and second bloom with calcium nitrate or potassium nitrate.

Tomato vines may be determinate or indeterminate. Indeterminate types have a vegetative terminal bud that continues to grow. Determinate types have a fruiting terminal bud that keeps the plant from growing beyond a predetermined height. Determinate types are better suited for container gardening. Indeterminate types will need to be staked in the garden.

Indeterminate varieties that grow well in Louisiana include Better Boy and Big Beef (large); Champion and Pink Girl (pink); and Sweet Million, Sweet Chelsea, Jolly, Small Fry, Juliet, Elfin, Cupid, Mountain Belle and Sun Gold (cherry).

Determinants have very productive vines that grow to heights of 4 feet. Determinants should be pruned only once or twice up to the first cluster.

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Celebrity (an All-America Selections winner, best taste); Carolina Gold, Florida 91, Mountain Spring, Cherry Grande (cherry) and Floralina. Also try Sun Master, Sunleaper, Mountain Spring and Phoenix.



Note: The tomato spotted wilt virus has nearly eliminated tomato production in some areas. If you had trouble with it, plant Bella Rosa, Mountain Glory, Amelia, Quincy, Tribeca, Tribute and Fletcher varieties.



Bell pepper, eggplants, okra.

Wait to transplant or direct-seed okra, bell pepper (transplants) and eggplant (transplants) until the weather has warmed considerably. These vegetables are sensitive to cold soils and weather. Once stunted by cool weather, they recover slowly.

A garden site with full sun is required for growing bell peppers. Any shade will greatly reduce fruit set. Space peppers about 18 inches and eggplants 18-36 inches apart.

Recommended open-pollinated varieties of bell peppers include Capistrano, Jupiter and Purple Beauty. Recommended hybrid bell peppers are Revolution, Heritage and the large King Arthur, Valencia, Paladin and Plato, Camelot (X3R), Aristotle, Gypsy, Tequila (purple) and Mavras (black).

Note: Tomato spotted wilt virus has hindered bell pepper production in many areas. The varieties Stiletto, Patriot and Excursion II are resistant to tomato spotted wilt virus. Try these varieties if you have had trouble producing bell peppers.

Recommended hybrid eggplant varieties are Fairy Tale, Calliope, Classic, Epic, Dusky, Santana, Hansel or oriental Ichiban. The green eggplant varieties produce well in Louisiana and are less bitter than the purple varieties in hot, dry weather. The Louisiana Market Bulletin is a fairly good source for green eggplant seed and other hard-to-find vegetable seeds and plants. Kermit is a green variety of eggplant that might be worth a shot.



Cucurbits. All squash, cucumber and melon members of the cucurbit family can be planted in May, but yields may be lower than normal with the late plantings. Plant cucurbits outdoors well after the danger of frost is over. Do not keep transplants in pots longer than three to four weeks prior to planting in your garden.

Recommended cucumber varieties for slicing are Dasher II, General Lee, Thunder, Speedway,

Poinsett 76, Slice More and Intimidator.

For pickling, try Calypso, Fancipak, Jackson and Sassy.

Recommended summer squash crooknecks are Prelude II, Dixie, Gentry, Goldie, Supersett, Destiny III and Medallion.

Recommended yellow straight-neck squash varieties are Goldbar, Liberator III, Enterprise, Cougar, Multipik, Patriot II, Superpik and Fortune.

Recommended zucchini varieties are Justice III, Independence II, Tigress, Lynx, Spineless Beauty, Senator, Gold Rush (AAS) and Payroll.

Recommended scallop or patty pan squash varieties are Peter Pan and Sunburst.

Recommended hard shell (winter) squash varieties are Waltham Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut, Tay Belle Table Queen, Honey Bear, Cream of Crop, Table King and Imperial Delight.

Viruses are a big problem in squash production. Try planting some of the new virus-resistant varieties: Prelude II and Destiny (yellow crookneck); Liberator and Conqueror (yellow straight neck); and Declaration, Payroll, Judgment III, Revenue and Independence (zucchini).

Recommended cantaloupe varieties are Ace, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Magnum 45, Super 45, Ambrosia, Earlidew (honeydew type) or Honey Max (honeydew type).

Recommended watermelon varieties are Crimson Sweet (OP – open pollinated), Jubilee II (OP), Fiesta, La Sweet (OP), Jamboree, Jubilation, Patriot, Regency, Royal Star, Royal Jubilee, Royal Sweet, Sangria, Stars 'n Stripes and Starbrite. Seedless varieties include Revolution, Summer Sweet 5244, TriX Carousel 212 or 313, Cooperstown and Millionaire. Ice box type: Sugar Baby. Yellow: Summer Gold and Tender Gold.

Apply 2-3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row before planting. Side-dress with 1 1/2-2 pounds of a complete fertilizer (13-13-13) per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Remove all but three to four well-shaped fruit from each plant when they reach 4-5 inches in diameter.

Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh often is coarser and stronger. Good varieties to try include Atlantic Giant, Prize Winner, Aladdin, Big Autumn, Merlin, Autumn Gold, Magic Lantern, Orange Smoothie, Sunlight, Early Abundance, Darling, Munchkin and Baby Boo. See the 2016 article on the LSU AgCenter's website: <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/articles/page1478118930573> for more information from our 2016 pumpkin evaluations.

Cucurbit hints: Don't be concerned if the first several squash fruit fall off the plant before they reach an edible stage. The first flowers to form in early spring squash are the female flowers (with the miniature fruit). Male flowers do not form at that time, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, though, the male flowers appear and normal fruit set begins. In summer, the process reverses – with the male flowers usually developing first and the females later.

Cucumber yields may be doubled by growing plants on a trellis. To get cucumber vines to climb a trellis or fence, you may need to tie them to the trellis in the beginning. Once they catch hold, they will continue to climb.

Use pesticides on cucurbits late in the afternoon so as not to reduce the bee population. Side-dress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with 1 1/2 pounds of calcium nitrate per 100-foot row as vines begin to run. Weekly applications of a general-purpose fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) starting at first bloom will protect the foliage and improve yield. Plastic mulch will reduce fruit rot and enhance the production of cantaloupes and the other cucurbits.

Lima beans (butter beans).

Lima beans require warmer soil (70° F, at least) than snap beans to germinate, so wait until soil warms (usually in early to mid-April) before planting. Bush varieties to plant are Henderson's Bush, Fordhook 242, Thorogreen, Bridgeton, Nemagreen, Dixie Butterpea or Baby Fordhook.

Plant lima beans every two weeks through mid-May to extend the harvest. One-half pound of seeds will plant a 100-foot row when three or four seeds are planted every 12 inches within the row.

Recommended pole lima beans are King of the Garden, Carolina Sieva, Willow Leaf, Christmas and Florida Speckled. Plant seeds 6-12 inches apart. One-quarter pound of seed will plant a 100-foot row.

Sweet potatoes. Bed seed potatoes during April and into May. Transplants should be ready to cut in four to five weeks. Sweet potato slips (transplants) can be set out in late April if soil is warm enough (higher than 70° F). Cut plants from plant bed about 1 inch above soil line and transplant. Purchase weevil-free plants.

Cutting rather than pulling helps reduce sweet potato weevils and many disease problems. Cuttings



develop feeder roots within a day or two if the soil is warm and moist. Holding the cut slips in the shade for two to three days before transplanting will help increase survival. Use a low-nitrogen fertilizer such as 6-24-24 or 8-24-24 at 2-3 pounds per 100-foot row.



Okra. Soil needs to be warm (65-75° F) for okra seeds to germinate. Soak seeds overnight in tap water to soften seed coat before planting. Recommended varieties are Emerald, Annie Oakley (hybrid), Cowhorn, Cajun Delight-AAS, Red Burgundy and Clemson Spineless.



Peanuts. Shell peanuts, and plant about four seeds per foot of row. Plant peanuts in April and May. Spanish peanuts have the smallest seeds. Runner types have intermedi-

ate size seeds, and Virginia types have the largest. Fertilize lightly with 1-2 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row. Soil should be high in calcium. Try not to follow peanut crops with tomato crops or other relatives of the nightshade family. Rotate between seasons.



Onions, shallots, garlic. Harvest mature onion, garlic and shallot bulbs during the early summer. When mature, the tops begin to turn yellow or brown and fall over. Pull them, trim tops and roots and lay the plants on top of the row or place in burlap sacks for a couple of days to let them dry, if weather permits. Then store them in a cool, shaded and well-ventilated place. (Ideal storage for onions after drying is at temperatures of 45-50° F in a place with 65-70 percent relative humidity.)



Irish potatoes. Begin digging 90-110 days after planting. Plant tops start turning yellow as tubers reach maturity. Allowing the potatoes to remain in the ground a few days after tops die or after tops are cut will help set or toughen the skin and reduce skinning, bruising and storage rot.

To keep potatoes for several weeks, allow cuts and skinned places to heal over at high temperatures. Then store in a cool, dark place with high humidity. Do not store where they will receive light because they will turn green and develop an undesirable taste.

*Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D.
Community/School Vegetable
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Turfgrasses and Lawns

Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can be effective tools for reducing weeds in your yard, but the best way to manage weeds is to grow a thick, healthy lawn. Lawns that are managed properly are lush and healthy, with few weed problems.

Visit www.lsuagcenter.com and search for the keywords "lawn BMP" for more information on growing a beautiful lawn.

Preemergence herbicide.

Weed preventer or preemergence herbicides can be helpful in preventing the emergence of several annual grasses and broadleaf weeds. Preemergence herbicides may be applied safely in late winter to early spring to all established southern lawns.

Most preemergence products for home gardeners are granular and should be applied with drop or broadcast spreaders and "watered in" soon after application. These types of herbicides kill weeds as they germinate, so application timing is extremely important. You have to apply before the weeds such as crabgrass germinate.

Residents in the New Orleans area and southernmost areas of the state should apply preemergence herbicides in late January or early February (definitely before Valentine's Day), and then follow up with another application in mid-April. From Alexandria to Baton Rouge, residents should apply just after Feb. 14, with a follow-up application in late April. If you live in north Louisiana, try to get these herbicides applied in late February to early March, with a follow-up application in mid-May. Some preemergence herbicide trade names to look for are Crab-Ex, Scotts Halts, and Hi-Yield Crabgrass Preventer with Dimension. Consult product labels.

Postemergence herbicides.

Postemergence herbicides are used to kill weeds that already have emerged in the lawn. Winter broadleaf weeds usually are prevalent in the late winter to early spring throughout the state. These broad-

leaf weeds often can be controlled by using selective liquid postemergence "trimec type" herbicides that contain formulations with three weed killing ingredients – 2,4-D, dicamba and mecoprop.

Some examples of broadleaf herbicides are Bayer Advanced Southern Broadleaf, Ortho Weed B Gon Max for Southern Lawns, and Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone. Some product manufacturers recommend a follow-up spray two or three weeks after the first application. Broadleaf weed killers are widely available and can be used on most southern grasses. Injury can occur, however, when using them on St. Augustinegrass and centipedegrass as the weather gets warmer in late spring.

Atrazine is very effective on winter broadleaves and also controls annual bluegrass. This herbicide is consistently one of the most effective herbicides on winter broadleaf weeds in the LSU AgCenter's lawn weed management trials. Atrazine does not control wild onion, false garlic or blue-eyed grass (actually an iris). The herbicide may be safely applied on St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass and zoysiagrass, as well as dormant bermudagrass during the spring. Most garden centers have a good supply of atrazine on their shelves.

Clean your sprayers thoroughly with an ammonia solution if the same sprayer is used for applying insecticides or fungicides on good plants. It is best to buy a sprayer specifically dedicated for weed killers, however, to avoid accidental injury to desirable plants. As always, be sure to read and follow product label recommendations before using any pesticide.

What about weed-and-feed products? Weed-and-feed herbicides can be used at the times recommended for the first fertilizer application of the year. Apply weed-and-feed in the New Orleans area from mid- to late March. For north Louisiana, mid-April is the time. Just be aware that applying weed-and-feed too early (late February to early March) may encourage outbreaks of large patch disease.

Fertilizing the Lawn

Lawns vary in the amount of fertilizer required during the growing season. See the table below for information regarding the number and timings of fertilizer applications recommended for lawn species grown in Louisiana. Bermudagrass and St. Augustinegrass are the biggest users of fertilizer compared to other lawn grasses. Centipedegrass and zoysiagrass only require 1 to 2 applications of fertilizer per year.

Lawn	Number of fertilizer applications/year	Recommended months
Bermudagrass	3 to 4	March, May, July, September
Centipedegrass	1 to 1.5	April and possibly June at ½ rate
St. Augustinegrass	3	April, June, August
Zoysiagrass	2	April and July

Choose fertilizers with a high first number, zero or low second number and a low/medium last number. An example of potential lawn fertilizer analysis that would be appropriate for yards includes 21-7-14 or 33-0-6. A spring application of weed-and-feed could serve as your first fertilizer application.

Soil tests would be most helpful to determine exactly what nutrients are needed to make your lawn beautiful. Contact your parish extension office concerning soil sampling your yard today.

*Ron Strahan
Weed Scientist/Turfgrass Specialist*

Fruits

Winter Chilling Requirements for Fruit Crops

To bloom in spring and then produce fruit, deciduous fruit trees such as peaches, plums, and nectarines and some varieties of berry bushes, such as blueberries, require a dormancy period during winter with a certain number of chilling hours.

The dormant buds of many plants require a period of cold weather to grow, flower and develop properly, but requirements vary widely by species. For dormant buds of fruit trees, this is commonly referred to as the chilling requirement. Chilling hours are calculated as a tool for fruit producers to gauge whether their crop has been exposed to cold temperatures for a long enough time period.

Fruit producers should consider the chilling requirements of fruit types they select for planting. In coastal south Louisiana we may only receive 200-300 chilling hours, while the central part of the state may get 400-500 hours, and the northern part may accumulate 600-700 hours in a typical winter

Winter Chilling Requirements in Louisiana

The cold or chilling requirement of peach and nectarine trees, and sometimes other plants, is generally listed in the catalogs of most nurseries that sell these plants. For example, Sentinel peach is listed as having an 850-hour chilling requirement. This means that to successfully grow this variety in a

particular area, it should receive an average of at least 850 hours of temperatures at or below 45° F during the fall and winter period. Most varieties have the same chilling requirement for leaf and fruit buds. A number of nurseries carry so called "low chill" varieties of various fruit crops that may be good choices for many climatic zones in Louisiana.

What Happens During Winter Chilling

During the fall and winter, deciduous fruit plants enter a dormant period, which is generally referred to as the plants' "rest period." Plants enter the rest period in the fall as air temperatures begin to drop below 50° F, leaf fall occurs and visible growth ceases. Another less visible change takes place as well. Plants enter the dormant, or rest, period as the level of growth-regulating chemicals in buds changes. In other words, as the growth-regulating inhibitors increase and the growth-regulating promoters decrease, plants begin their dormant period.

As the chilling requirement of a plant is being satisfied by low temperatures, the level of promoters begins increasing while the level of inhibitors decreases. The higher levels of promoters in the buds allow normal resumption of growth and flowering in the spring as the chilling requirement is met.

Measuring Winter Chilling

The type of low temperatures needed to satisfy the rest requirement of fruit plants, especially tree fruits, has been carefully studied. Temperatures of approximately 35-55° F provide most of the chilling effect needed by fruit plants; how-

ever, the most efficient temperature at which a plant receives chilling is 45°F.

Temperatures of 32° F and lower contribute little or nothing to the actual chilling being received by the plant. And daily temperatures of 70° F and higher for four or more hours can actually negate chilling that was received by the plant during the previous 24 to 36 hours.

Studies of chilling temperatures have resulted in the development of a number of models that are designed to better measure the accumulation of chilling and determine when rest is satisfied. These models were developed as improvements over the old method of measuring chilling accumulation by monitoring daily temperatures of 45° F and lower beginning October 1 each year.

Among the models tested across the Deep South, the Modified 45 has provided the best prediction of when rest is satisfied by cold temperatures. This model uses a more sophisticated method of determining when rest actually begins in the fall (rather than arbitrarily using October 1 as the starting date) and measures hours at or below 45° F. It does not take into account the negative effect high temperatures may have on chilling accumulation, and it does count chilling hours below 32° F.

Selecting Adapted Varieties

In apples, for instance, some high chill varieties like Red Delicious require up to 1,400 hours of chilling temperatures. So they do well only north of the Carolinas. On the other hand, Anna and Tropic Sweet need only 250-300 hours and are good choices for growers in south Louisiana. If you plant a Red Delicious in south Louisiana it may sleep right through our March spring, grudgingly wake up to leaf out in late April or May, refuse to flower and just generally sulk and pout until you dig it up and send it to your Aunt Maude up in Michigan where it belongs.

*David Himelrick
Fruit Crops Specialist*





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Soil testing can eliminate the guesswork and reveal exactly how much fertilizer, lime or sulfur is needed for specific plants to be grown in a particular type of soil. The LSU AgCenter Soil Testing and Plant Analysis Laboratory is the only lab that makes fertilizer recommendations based on Louisiana-specific research. Get your mail-in soil testing kit by contacting the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing Lab, your parish LSU AgCenter Extension office or local garden center.



LSU AgCenter Soil Testing Lab . 225-578-1219 . www.LSUAgCenter.com/SoilTest

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Horticulture Hints



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Parish agents, please adapt these suggestions to your area before disseminating.

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