



May 2018

What to Do When Honey Bees Swarm

Some strange bee behavior is being reported in our area as the temperatures warm up. Large swarms of honey bees are appearing, gathering in a living mass of live bees on the branches of trees, playground equipment, street light poles, and on homes. While alarming, these swarms are natural and relatively harmless, however if they must be dealt with, killing them should not be an option. Though frightening, bees in this stage of their life cycle are relatively docile and will not attack unless provoked.

Honey bees pollinate many food crops, ornamental plants, and native species. Worldwide, honey bees are facing a crisis in the form of Colony Collapse Disorder. Entire hives of bees will disappear seemingly overnight, leaving dead workers and a dying brood behind. In the years leading up to 2016, more than ten million beehives were lost, which is twice the natural rate of loss for hives. The cause of Colony Collapse Disorder is still unknown, but several proposed causes include parasite pressure from mites, various pathogens, poor genes, the loss of habitat, immunodeficiency, and the use of a class of pesticides called neonicotinoids. Scientists around the world are studying this issue, but one thing is for sure- honey bees are in trouble so every colony counts.

Bees swarm in the spring as a way to reproduce and form a new colony. Often a queen bee will fly and

take a large number of workers with her, leaving behind the rest of the bees of the hive and several larval virgin queens. These are the largest swarms of the year, and often split the hive into two. One of the larval queens will mate after hatching and become the new queen of the old hive. The voyaging swarming



bees form a protective mass around the queen, who chooses a new hive site. This new site could be a hollow tree, the inner wall of a house, or some other inconvenient place. Exterminating the bees should be the last resort, in many cases the swarm can be captured and put to work pollinating plants and producing honey for human consumption.

Later in the year, smaller swarms with young queens may take place, but the majority of the swarming activity takes place on warm, sunny days following a cold or rainy period in the springtime.

This change in weather triggers the queen to interrupt the brood cycle and to stop eating. The queen slims down for her flight to a swarming site, which will have been chosen by scout bees. The queen will fly to the new location very slowly, followed by her workers. They may choose a tree or structure near the home hive to rest since the queen is unable to fly for very long or very far. From this resting site, up to fifty scout bees are sent out to search for new nest locations. The swarm may stay at the rest stop for a few

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May Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Amaranth	None Given	⅓ inch	10-12	110-150
Cantaloupe	Ambrosia, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Vienna	¼ inch	18-24	80-85
Cucuzza	None Given	½ inch	24	65
Cushaw	None Given	½ inch	24-36	110
Eggplant	Dusky, Night Shadow, Epic, Santana, Calliope	⅓ inch	18-24	80-85
Hot Peppers (transplant)	Grande, Tula, Mariachi, Mitla,	-	--	140
Lima Beans (bush or pole)	Dixie Butterpea, Jackson Wonder, Thorogreen Florida Speckled, King of Garden	½ inch	3-4 (bush)	60-67 (bush)
Luffa Gourd	None Given	½ inch	48	90
Malbar Spinace	None Given	¼ inch	12-18	Ongoing
Mirlitons	None Given	Special	-	30 from flowering
Okra	Annie Oakley, Cajun Delight, Clemson Spineless	½ inch	12	60
Peanuts	None Given	1 inch	6	130
Pumpkins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Prankster, Sorcerer	½ inch	36-60	90-120
Southern Peas	Queen Anne, California #5, Quickpick, Colussus	½ inch	4-6	70-80
Soybeans	None Given	1 inch	4-6	45-65
Sweet Potato	Beauregard, Evangeline, Hernandez, Jewel	Special	12	90-120
Watermelon	Seedless: Cooperstown, Gypsy, Matrix, Millenni- um Seeded: Mickey Lee, Sugar Baby, Amarillo	¼ inch	48	90-110
Yardlong Beans	None Given	1 inch	24-36	75

May 12 10AM-2PM

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What to Do When Honey Bees Swarm

(Continued)

hours or up to three days. The bees are interested in finding a new home quickly, and do not want to be out in the open, vulnerable to predators. The swarming bees do not forage and have only the food left in their stomachs.

Beekeepers often will capture the swarms for free or for a small fee. Swarming bees could be either from feral colonies or from the hives of domestic beekeepers. Beekeepers may use a gentle bee vacuum to move the bees to a transport container. Often the bees can be gently shaken into a box or empty hive, to be transported to the apiary or bee yard. At times, the swarm may be sprayed with a sugar water solution which makes it difficult to fly. The bees can then be swept or gently placed into a transportation box. If no human intervention takes place, swarming bees will find a new home within a day or two usually.

If a swarm has landed in an inconvenient place (such as a school playground), the LSU AgCenter maintains a list of beekeepers who may be contacted to remove it. This list can be found at http://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/environment/insects/bees_wasps/honeybee-removal-and-swarm-collection. The Louisiana Beekeepers Association, Inc. has a list of local beekeeper clubs who may assist with swarm removal as well. Their website is www.labeekeepers.org. Protecting important pollinators like honey bees is becoming a hot button issue. An excellent Urban Pollinator Conservation publication series is available free of charge from the LSU AgCenter at http://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/lawn_garden/home_gardening/publications.

Be sure to plant plenty of pollinator-friendly plants in your landscape this summer to ensure that there is plenty of food for these important insects. Some favorite flowers of honey bees include crepe myrtles, sunflowers, mint, lantana, honeysuckle, Monarda, zinnia, verbena, coneflowers, golden rod, pentas, cosmos, clover, and Rudbeckia. Bees have a color preference, as they see in ultraviolet, most flowers pollinated by bees flower in either yellow, white, or blue which show up vividly to honey bee's eyes.

~Anna Timmerman

Okra – Gumbo – Lady's Fingers - *Abelmoschus esculentus*

Whatever you call it, it is an iconic southern vegetable staple that is easy to grow, nutritious and useful in many ways. It is a member of the Malvaceae or mallow family which also includes such ornamentals as Hibiscus, hollyhocks, musk mallow and rose-of-sharon as well as economically important food, fiber and lumber plants like cotton, cocoa, cola tree, durian fruit, jute, linden (basswood), and balsa wood and such natural wonders as the baobab and bottle tree.

If you ask me, every southern garden should have one or more okra plants growing somewhere in the landscape. To begin with, the okra flower is large and gorgeous – five white to yellowish petals with a dark spot at the base. Some of the red varieties even have pink tinted flowers. They are attractive to humans and pollinators alike.

The pollinated flower becomes an attractive capsule that can be ribbed or roundly smooth and colors of light green, dark green, red or burgundy depending on variety. And of course the pentagonal cross-section is unmistakable. Some varieties have a single strong central stem and can grow over 12 feet tall during our growing season. Others have been selected to have a shorter multi-branching growth style.

Planting

Okra is planted in our area from early March through early August. Most cultivated varieties will start bearing in 50 to 60 days after planting. Optimal germination and plant establishment is achieved if you soak your seed in water overnight and plant $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " deep in warm soil (soil temperature consistently above 70 degrees). You can also start your okra early in seed trays in the greenhouse and transplant out when the soil has warmed. Okra rows should be 3 feet apart and the final spacing for plants would be from 1-2 feet apart depending on variety. Soil pH is best between 5.8 and 6.8 but okra will grow and produce just fine in soils with pH up to 7.6. Okra likes well-drained soils and will excel in sandy soils. And of course, since okra loves the heat, it wants as much sunlight as it

can get – a minimum of 6 hours of direct sunlight daily for acceptable production.

If you did a soil test then you already have recommendations on fertilization. But a good general rule of thumb approach is 3-4 lbs. of 8-8-8 per 300 square feet preplant and side-dress after first pod set and every four to six weeks thereafter with a good nitrogen fertilizer. This could be 2 lbs. of calcium nitrate or 1 lb. of ammonium sulfate per 300 square feet.

Okra is pretty drought tolerant but during extended dry spells, you should irrigate once a week with 1 to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " of water. This is especially important for tender pod production.



Okra Flower-Similar in appearance to Hibiscus flowers

Okra is generally a carefree plant to grow with very few pests of concern. During wet humid periods downy mildew or powdery mildew may appear but seldom requires control measures. There are also some leaf spot fungi that like okra, but they too seldom require control measures. Occasionally aphids, spider mites or whitefly populations may get high enough to warrant control or pod damage from stink bugs but that is a rarity. Root-knot nematodes can become a real problem. There are no chemical controls for nematodes so crop rotation and soil solarization are your best solutions.

If you want to spot plant okra here and there around your landscape for ornamental as well as culinary purposes, it still needs those growing conditions. And the normally tall varieties can be topped just above a leaf node during the growing season to promote a branching bushier profile. You can even do this in your vegetable garden to keep the plants to an easily harvestable height.

Both open-pollinated and hybrid varieties are available. Some of the recommended open-pollinated varieties are North & South, Emerald, Clemson Spineless, Burgundy, Lee and Cow's Horn. Some recommended hybrid varieties are Annie Oakley II and Cajun Delight. However, okra is made for the south

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Okra – Gumbo – Lady's Fingers - *Abelmoschus esculentus* (Continued)

and any variety you try should perform well for you. Some really nice ones are Jambalaya, Silver Queen, Bull Dog, Candle Fire, Carmine Splendor, Baby Bubba and Louisiana Green Velvet. If you think okra is too large for your garden – Bull Dog, Jambalaya, Candle Fire, Baby Bubba and Lee are all compact varieties and will even do well in containers.

Harvesting

For eating, pods are generally ready to harvest when they are 3-4 inches long. Usually 3-4 days after the flower has opened the pod from that flower will be ready to harvest. Some varieties stay tender with pods a little longer than 4 inches but if the pods stay on the plant too long they quickly become fibrous and inedible. Harvest of okra should be done every other day. If you don't harvest the okra pods, the plant will not flower as much. It's like deadheading.

One cup of okra has 33 calories, 2 g of protein, 12% of RDA fiber, 38% of RDA Vitamin C, 14% of RDA Vitamin A, 22% of RDA folate as well as anti-oxidants, B-complex vitamins and minerals. With one of the common names of okra being "gumbo", you already know one famous use of the vegetable. It is also used as a thickening agent in a lot of stews and soups. This is because of the okra slime or mucilage which is made up of sugar residues called exopolysaccharides and proteins called glycoproteins. Cooking will actually increase the viscosity. But since it is proteinaceous, cooking with acidic components will cause the proteins to coagulate and the sliminess goes away.

Other great ways to enjoy okra is grilled or roasted. The pods get nice and brown and the dry cooking eliminates the sliminess. Sprinkle with salt and maybe some lemon juice and it's hard to beat. Pickled okra is also a well-known and favored way to use the little pods and you'll find one in almost every Bloody Mary south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

One thing you may not be aware of is that the flowers, leaves and mature seeds are also edible. The flowers can be used much like squash blossoms and the young leaves used just like beet greens. The mature seeds were a valuable coffee substitute during the Civil War and many people still use them that way today. To be honest, I haven't tried okra

flowers, leaves or coffee but if any of you have, please let us know what you thought of it. They also press the seed for okra oil.

And we can't forget about the okra pod Santas.

One final note: okra plants are covered with tiny hairs that cause itching and redness on many people so wear long sleeves and gloves when harvesting or working with okra.

~Dr. Joe Willis



Silver Queen



Bulldog



Candle Fire



[Grilled Okra w/ Red Curry Lime Dressing](#)

Celebrate
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Pollinator Garden

May 11 . 9 a.m.-Noon
LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens

Educational sessions and booths
Free pollinator plant
Grand opening of the Pollinator Garden



LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens
Burden Museum & Gardens . 4560 Essen Lane . 225-763-3990
DiscoverBurden.com



Master Gardener Volunteers extend the outreach of the LSU AgCenter helping to educate the public with research based programs.

Milton H. Latter Memorial Libraray-The Master Gardeners' project at Latter Library on St. Charles Avenue is a cottage style garden, covering a small but significant portion of the grounds. The plants are a mixture of annuals and perennials, including Louisiana Super plants, native plants, salvias, and just plain pretty plants. The majority being nectar plants to attract butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds. Recent but-



terflies sighted are Red Admirals, Monarchs, Cloudless Sulphurs, and Spicebush Swallowtails. Neighbors and patrons of the library comment on the flowers and ask specifically about what's there, as well as general gardening queries. Young children accompanying their parents are invited

to plant new plants, observe butterflies drinking nectar, watch Monarch butterflies lay eggs or hunt for caterpillars and chrysalides.



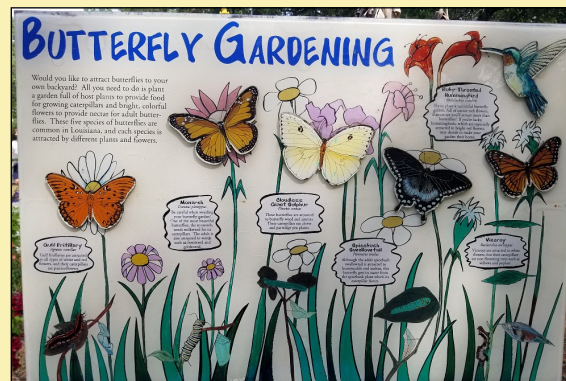
Can you spot the butterfly in the pollinator garden at Latter Library?

Audubon Zoo Butterfly Garden-This project started as part of the restoration effort after Hurricane Katrina. It has evolved into maintaining the Butterfly Garden in the Zoo as a demonstration butterfly garden. It is a wonderful, tactile teaching tool as so many adults and children visit the Audubon Zoo every day.



The Bee Palace

As we work in this garden, we talk to adults and children about the plants, their purposes, and great importance in attracting butterflies and bees – as well as the importance of the pollinators themselves. A magnificent Bee Palace was built for the Solitary Bees, attracting a lot of attention to the garden. A colorful and educational sign shows how interconnected the garden is to the wildlife it attracts.



[For more information about these and other programs visit MGGNO.org](http://MGGNO.org)

Coming Events

Date/Time	Event	Cost	For More Info
May 10	Master Gardener Appreciation Day @ Hammond Research Station	Free to Louisiana Master Gardeners	https://www.facebook.com/events/572167536503491/
May 11	National Public Gardens Day @ LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens Baton Rouge	Free	https://www.facebook.com/events/1749799535081029/
May 12	1920's Garden Meet Up @ New Orleans Botanical Garden	\$8	https://www.facebook.com/events/228081607932463/
May 12	AgMagic on the River Public Day @ Docville Farm	Free	http://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/mmosley/articles/page1516644606389
May 15	Graminoid (grasses, sedges, and rushes) Identification Workshop @ Allen Acres	\$300	https://www.facebook.com/events/160201761444312/
May 15	Louisiana Super Plants @ Longue Vue House and Gardens	\$5, Free for members	https://www.facebook.com/events/1935545146760655/
May 19	Edible Plant Workshop in Belle Chasse, LA	\$100	http://www.woodlandsconservancy.org/event/plant-identification-workshop/
May 27	Wire Bonsai Sculpture Workshop @ Longue Vue House and Gardens	\$28.45 nonmembers, \$23.16 members	https://www.facebook.com/events/2128777867390492/

To have your garden-related event added to future calendars, please email atimmerman@agcenter.lsu.edu.

CITY PARK PLANT SALES



**NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK
BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

May 12

Pelican Greenhouse

9am-Noon

June 9

Pelican Greenhouse

9am - Noon

July 14

Pelican Greenhouse

9am - Noon

August 11

Pelican Greenhouse

9am - Noon

September 8

Pelican Greenhouse

9am - Noon

Fall Garden Festival

October 6, 10am - 5pm

October 7, 10am - 4pm

The Pelican Greenhouse is located just off Henry Thomas (Golf) Drive, South of the I-610 overpass. For additional information, call 504/483-9464, visit our website at www.neworleanscitypark.com, or e-mail to plants@nocp.org

Who's Bugging You?



Young spittlebug with its protective foam coating.

Have any of you seen these guys in your lawn recently? If you have and you try to pick one up you quickly learn where their common name comes from as they jump over 2 feet (115 times their length) into the air in 0.9 ms. These are Two-lined Froghoppers (*Prosapia bicincta*), members of the order Hemiptera. The adults are $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long with a black body and two bright orange stripes across the elaters. But you may know them better because of their plant-sucking nymph stage which produces a cover of foamed-up plant sap resembling saliva – Spittlebugs.



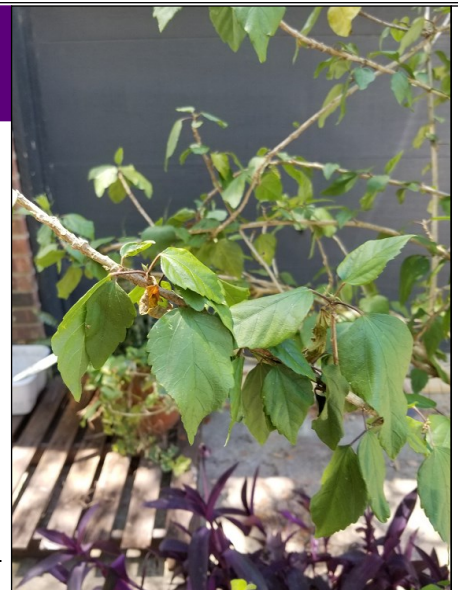
Adult froghopper

The foam protects the nymph while it feeds and grows. They feed on many grasses, weeds and ornamentals sucking plant juices. The nymphs are smaller than the adult and usually a pale greenish-yellow. There are 2 generations per year – the first in late spring/early summer and the second in late summer/early fall. Spittlebugs are so-called because of the protective foam they produce and several insects have nymph stages commonly called spittlebugs but the two-lined is a common sight here

Repotting Hibiscus

My tropical hibiscus is showing some of the classic signs of being pot-bound. In this situation, the roots of the plant have filled most of the space in the planter and are now choking each other preventing proper uptake of water and nutrients. When this happens the plant will exhibit signs of stress similar to drought and nutrient deficiency. To alleviate this problem you may move the plant to a pot about 25% larger than the current planter or prune the roots and repot.

To repot, Carefully remove the plant from the pot. Cut away 25% of the roots. Replace in the pot and add potting mix to fill in. Add slow release fertilizer to the top of the soil or use water soluble fertilizer. Be sure to keep the plant well watered for the first two weeks.



Small, yellowing, and wilting are signs of pot-bound roots.



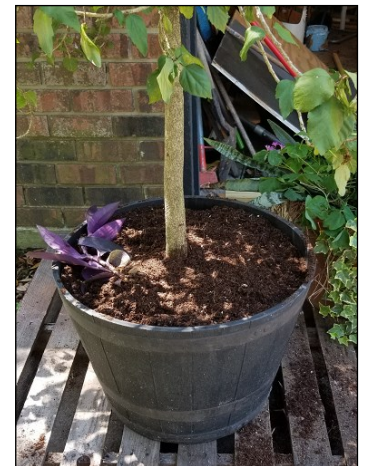
Pot-bound roots retain shape of pot.



Cut off $\approx 25\%$ of the existing roots.



Place plant back in original container.



Refill the pot with well draining potting soil.

May Checklist/Garden Tips

This month is the last chance to apply broad leaf weed killers before the weather gets too hot. Button weed is particularly troublesome around the state. This low, mat-forming weed has one inch pointed leaves and small, four petaled white flowers. Most people don't notice it until July, but it is beginning to grow now. LSU AgCenter trials show Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone to work best, especially when applied to young plants in early summer.

During dry weather don't forget to keep your compost pile evenly moist. Dry organic matter will not decompose. Do, however, avoid keeping the pile saturated as this will create bad odors.

Powdery mildew on many ornamentals (crape myrtles, roses, euonymous) and vegetables (squash, cucumbers) continues to be a problem due to dry weather. Treat with chlorothalonil or other labeled fungicides.

Birds will peck holes in tomatoes just before you decide they are ripe enough to harvest. If birds are a problem, cover your plants with bird netting or harvest the fruit in the pink stage and ripen them inside. Bird netting also works well to protect fruit crops, such as blackberries, blueberries and figs, from bird damage, and is available from local nurseries or feed stores.

Grow cucumbers on trellises to save space, increase production and improve the quality of the cucumbers produced.

Termite mating season is upon us and millions of sexually mature Formosan termite alates will be seen flying around light poles at night for the next several weeks. Although termites are active year round, the heightened activity makes it more easy to find the harborages in which they live. Check for the soil and debris that the termites use to hide themselves on local structures and trees.

[Click here to see how to inspect a structure.](#)

[Click here for more information on termites in trees.](#)

Cannas that have brown, deformed leaves with holes in them have been attacked by canna leaf-rollers, a caterpillar that is devastating to cannas in our area. Control is difficult and requires regular spraying all summer. If you decide to treat, use a systemic insecticide such as acephate and make weekly applications.

[Click here to see a video on Canna Lilies by Dan Gill.](#) [And here for more.](#)



Canna Roller Larvae



Typical Canna Roller Damage to Leaf

May Checklist/Garden Tips

Soil subsidence may require fill to occasionally be spread over the lawn area. Filling can be done now through August. If you intend to fertilize, do so before applying the fill. Mow the lawn immediately before spreading the fill. Choose a light, sandy soil (such as pump sand or river sand) for filling. Avoid spillway sand as it is more likely to contain weed seeds that will introduce weeds into your lawn. Grass will not reliably grow through more than two inches of fill. Where fill must be applied deeper, remove the sod, spread the fill and replace the sod on top. Or, spread the fill and if the original grass does not grow through, plant new plugs or sod to replace it.

Constant watering rapidly leaches nutrient elements from the soils of container grown plants. To replace them it is best to use either soluble fertilizers or slow release fertilizers. Soluble fertilizers are easy to apply especially when you use a hose end applicator, but they must be applied every two weeks to maintain a constant supply of nutrients. Slow release fertilizers provide nutrients over several months from one application and so cut down on labor.

Remove the developing seed pods from such plants as Louisiana irises and amaryllis when they finish blooming. This keeps the plants more attractive and prevents them from wasting effort on seeds that are not needed. It would be better for the plants to put that energy into growing leaves and roots.

Watch azaleas for azalea lace bug damage. Small white spots on the upper surface and small dark brown spots on the back of leaves indicates they are present. Spray with a broad spectrum insecticide getting under the leaves thoroughly.

Caterpillars will feed on the foliage and flowers of ornamentals and the foliage and fruit of vegetables. The tomato fruit worm eats holes in tomatoes. Sevin, spinosad and BT regularly applied will keep them in check.

Plant basil plants now and enjoy a wonderful fresh seasoning for summer cooking. Many herbs already in your garden, such as thyme, sage, oregano, lavender, dill, cilantro and parsley, are at their most productive now and will play out as the weather gets hotter. Harvest freely and dry or freeze the extras.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

E-mail us at: GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu



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