



GNO Gardening Magazine

December 2019



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Cover Photo: The colorful seedheads of *Gomphrena globosa* growing in the New Orleans Botanical Gardens.

Photo by Chris Dunaway

Seed Saving Basics and How to Properly Store Your Garden Seeds

Saving your own seeds can be a great way to reduce next spring's seed order and also propagate things within your own garden that you enjoyed. Sharing seeds is

also a popular pastime among gardeners and can help to create or proliferate varieties of plants that are adapted to local conditions.

The early winter months are a great time to enter into the seed saving hobby.

Vegetables, warm season flowers, and native perennials are either wrapping up their life cycle or entering dormancy for the cold winter months. Hybrid parent plants will not produce true to type, but the seeds resulting from their possible genetic scramble can be an interesting home science experiment. Many plants will readily cross pollinate with other varieties

of the same species, resulting in a roll of the dice that can produce plants that look like either parent, a combination of them, or exhibit hidden recessive traits from past crosses. Breeding plants and predicting the outcomes of these crosses is a whole different, future article. For the beginning seed saver, plan to start simple and be willing to gamble a bit. Some easily saved things to try out first include peppers, okra, peas, beans, tomatoes, basil, cilantro, lettuce, nasturtium, milkweed, hibiscus (natives), cosmos, zinnias, sunflowers, tithonia, marigolds, poppy, cleome, cypress vine, and sweet peas.

How to Save Seeds:

1) Plan to save seeds from your best plants. Select parent plants that are strong, disease and pest free, and that produce the desired qualities (flavor, color,

size) that you would like to pass on. Figure out if the parent plants are self-pollinating, open pollinated, or hybrids. Correctly identify the variety or species that you are working to preserve and learn about its life cycle. Knowing this information will aid you in determining when and how to collect the seed.

2) Wait until the seed pods are completely dry, or if you are saving vegetable or fruit seeds, wait to pick them until peak ripeness.

Over-ripeness can be even better for many vegetables or fruits. Immature seeds won't germinate, so give them time to fully develop and ripen.

Seed pods should be brown,

dry, and easily split open to expose the seeds. Fleshy fruits should be soft and beginning to rot a bit before seeds are extracted.

3) Separate the seed out from the rest of the plant material. Once you have harvested the pods or fruits you would like to save seeds from, you need to further process them and get the seed dried down before storing or planting it. Fleshy fruits and veggies should be stripped of their seeds, and any remaining pulp removed from the seed. Washing them may help, as can rubbing the seeds/pulp on a fine meshed screen or colander to remove this material.

Be sure to not remove the

(Continued on Page 4)



Photo by Chris Dunaway

There is no shortage of seeds with this
Candlestick Shrub *Cassia alata*

December Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety
Beets	Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace Fl, Ruby Queen
Brussels Sprouts	Jade Cross E, Long Island Improved
Cabbage	Blue Vantage, Platinum Dynasty, Stonehead, Cheers, Blue Dynasty, Emblem, Rio Verde
Carrots	Danvers 128, Purple Haze, Thumbelina, Apache, Enterprise, Maverick, Sugar Snax 54
Celery	None Given
Chinese Cabbage	None Given
Collards	Champions, Flash, Georgia Southern, Top Bunch, Vates
Garlic	Creole: Early, Louisiana, White Mexican; Italian: Early Red, Lorz; Large: Elephant (Tahitian)
Kale	None Given
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner
Leeks	Alora
Lettuce	Esmeralda, New Red Fire Fl, Nevada, Tall Guzmanine Elite
Mustard Greens	Florida Broadleaf, Greenwave, Red Giant, Southern Giant Curled, Savannah, Tendergreen
Onions	Red: Red Creole, Southern Belle; White: Candy, Savannah Sweet; Vidalia: Candy Ann, Caramelo, Century, Georgia Boy, Mata Hari
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross
Shallots	Matador, Prism
Spinach	Bloomsdale Long Standing, Melody, Tyee, Unipak 151
Swiss Chard	None Given
Turnips	Alamo, All Top, Purple, Top White Globe, Seven Top, Southern Green, Top Star, Tokyo Cross

Seed Saving Basics and How to Properly Store Your Garden Seeds

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protective outer seed coat, this can damage the seed permanently. Pods and seed heads can be cleaned by hand or crushed whole in a bag and sieved out. Often, smaller seeds will fall to the bottom of a container so that the fibrous pod or other leaves and sticks can be picked out easily. Having a variety of sized sieve or colanders can help, as can carefully utilizing a fan or a slight breeze to blow the chaff away from the seed. Seed size and weight will determine the best method to use.

4) Spread seeds out to dry. Well-dried seeds are viable seeds. Spread seed out on paper towels or newspapers in a warm, dry environment with good air circulation to cure. Label each batch with the date collected, what it is, and location that it was collected from, if applicable using a piece of masking tape. Seeds should be completely dry to the touch and can sit out to further cure for several weeks before they are bagged.



Photo by Chris Dunaway

The visible colorful portion of a gomphrena "flower" are actually modified leaves or bracts that support the tiny true flower and protect the developing seeds. The image of the left is of unprocessed *Gomphrena globosa* seeds. The image at right is of cleaned seeds.

movement in and around the seeds while they are waiting to be planted. Blank, traditional paper seed packets are available online at an affordable price. Plastic baggies and small plastic containers, lidded jars, and other containers can be used for extremely dry seed. Transfer label information to the storage container. Identifying seeds in the months ahead becomes easier if the information is legible. Old seeds can be identified and discarded as needed if every batch of seed is labeled with the collection date.

6) Store seeds properly to keep them viable.

Protect the germination rate of your saved seeds by storing them correctly. Packets or envelopes of seed can be gathered together into a larger sealable container. Large jars or plastic tubs with lids work well. A constant, dry temperature of 32-41 degrees Fahrenheit is best, making a refrigerator drawer an ideal spot to store seeds for later. Add a silica gel packet to each container to keep moisture down and prevent the seeds from molding. Silica packets are sold at craft stores or can be recycled from other packaged materials that you may have. Seeds that you have purchased may also be stored safely in this way.



Photo by Chris Dunaway

It is important to label and properly store your seeds. Include the collection date and location.

5) Bag and label seeds. The best type of storage bag or envelope is paper, this allows for some air

Seed Saving Basics and How to Properly Store Your Garden Seeds

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Avoid storing seeds in areas with very high or very low temperatures, high humidity, or wide temperature swings. This decreases seed germination rates. Freezing seeds can also work well, but seed containers should be taken out and allowed to come to room temperature to avoid creating condensation and ruining seed by exposing it to humid air and accumulated moisture.

7) Use stored seeds within one year of collection. Ideally stored seeds will be used the following year for planting. Over time, seed viability will decline exponentially. Storing seeds correctly can curtail this to an extent, but many seeds are relatively short lived. Certain species, however can be stored for many years. For a chart of seed viability rates, check out the resources listed at the conclusion of this article.

~Anna Timmerman

Seed Saving Resources and Further Reading:

Web Links:

Seed Storage from Seed Saver's Exchange: [http://blog.seedsavers.org/blog/how-](http://blog.seedsavers.org/blog/how-to-store-seeds)



Goldstrum Black-Eyed Susan *Rudbeckia fulgida* flowers and dried seed heads. Photo by Chris Dunaway



Photo by Chris Dunaway

Goldstrum Black-Eyed Susan *Rudbeckia fulgida* seeds

[to-store-seeds](http://www.seedsavers.org/how-to-save-seeds)

How to Save Seeds from Seed Saver's Exchange:

<https://www.seedsavers.org/how-to-save-seeds>

Seed Viability Chart from Johnny's Selected Seed:

[https://www.johnnyseeds.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-](https://www.johnnyseeds.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-JSSSharedLibrary/default/dw913ac4d0/assets/information/seed-storage-guide.pdf)

[JSSSharedLibrary/default/dw913ac4d0/assets/information/seed-storage-guide.pdf](https://www.johnnyseeds.com/on/demandware.static/-/Library-Sites-JSSSharedLibrary/default/dw913ac4d0/assets/information/seed-storage-guide.pdf)

Seed Collecting from The North American Native Plant Society: <http://nanps.org/seed-collecting/>

How to Collect and Store Seeds from the Lady Bird

Johnson Wildflower Center:

<https://www.wildflower.org/learn/collect-store-seeds>

Saving Flower Seeds from Diane Linsley: [https://](https://www.dianeseeds.com/flowers-saving.html)

www.dianeseeds.com/flowers-saving.html

Recommended Books:

Seed to Seed, Suzanne Ashworth

The New Seed Starter's

Handbook, Nancy Bubel

Breed Your Own Vegetable

Varieties: The Gardner's and

Farmer's Guide to Plant Breeding

and Seed Saving, Carol Deppe

The Complete Guide to Saving

Seeds, Robert E. Gough

What's Bugging You – Mealy Bugs

Does this picture look familiar? This is a pepper plant heavily infested with mealybugs.

Mealybugs can be a severe problem for a lot of our plants – ornamental and edible. They multiply fast, hide well and seem to be a super insect.

Mealybugs are in the Pseudococcidae family which are unarmored scale insects that are common in every warm moist environment – including inside greenhouses and homes even when it is freezing outside. Depending on where you do your search, there are as



Photo of a pepper plant infested with mealybugs. Photo by Dr. Joe Willis

many as 274 mealybug genera – that's a lot of bugs. However, they all have some characteristics in common. Adult mealybugs are soft-bodied, oval and up to 1/8" long. Most of the species we encounter also have a fluffy white wax covering. The adult male is a gnat-like insect with two wings and two wax tails. Females are wingless and move by crawling. Mealybugs can also be spread by wind under the right conditions. An adult female will lay from 50-100 eggs in a waxy egg sac which protects them from many contact insecticides. And she always finds a good hiding place for them. There are some species of mealybugs that give live birth rather than laying eggs. Mealybugs go through incomplete metamorphosis and have three nymph stages. It is very common to

have every stage of development on an infested plant because they reproduce so fast and will continue to do so until conditions are unfavorable.

Many gardeners consider mealybugs one of the hardest insects to control. They are piercing-sucking insects and produce honeydew that ants love and lead to sooty mold. Because of their feeding habit, systemic insecticides can be very effective. This includes azadirachtin (see article on Neem) and imidacloprid containing insecticides.

Contact

insecticides such as horticultural oils (see last month's GNO Gardening), insecticidal soaps (see next month's GNO Gardening), diazinon, pyrethrins and synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin also work on these soft-body suckers. However, remember that contact insecticides have to contact the insect to be of benefit so complete coverage is essential for good control. In most instances, several repeat applications of your control measure of choice are needed for adequate control. The interval of application will be on your product label.

As to biocontrol, mealybugs have natural enemies like ladybug larvae and adults. Mealybugs have also been controlled using the fungus *Lecanicillium lecanii*.

~Dr. Joe Willis

Neem

Neem Oil comes from the neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), a fast-growing ornamental shade tree native to Southeast Asia and India. For thousands of years it has been used for its insecticidal properties and in cosmetics and medicines. Neem oil can be found in all parts of the plant, but the concentration is highest in the seeds.

Neem seeds contain a number of biologically active compounds – the most active and best studied is azadirachtin. Azadirachtin is not a single compound but over 25 different, but very closely related compounds.

When discussing commercially available products called Neem, it is VERY IMPORTANT to understand what is being referred to. That's because there are two products that are sometimes referred to as Neem. Raw neem seed oil contains all the biologically active compounds. However, this product is further refined by alcohol extraction which

separates out the azadirachtin and other terpenoid compounds. This yields what is usually referred to and sold as Neem Oil or Neem Oil Extract. When you check the active ingredients on Neem Oil, it is most often "clarified hydrophobic extract of neem oil". This is the neem seed oil from which the azadirachtin and similar compounds have been removed; henceforth referred to as neem oil. Azadirachtin from the alcohol fraction is further purified and used as the active ingredient in several commercial insecticides such as AzaTrol, AzaMax and Azatin. Azadirachtin will be listed as the active ingredient in these pesticides.

Neem oil has several modes of action. The oil forms a

coating on the insect body blocking the breathing openings (spiracles) and suffocating the insects. It has also been shown to have repellent effect against certain insects and mites (see the individual product label). Neem oil has also been shown to prevent the germination and penetration of some fungal spores

such as powdery mildew. Neem oil is a contact pesticide; therefore, complete coverage when spraying is essential for good control. Commercial neem oil products usually contain 70% clarified hydrophobic extract of neem oil and are used at concentration of 0.5-2.0%. Always read and follow label directions.

Azadirachtin is a powerful insecticide that effects insects in several ways – it is an antifeedant, insect growth regulator, sterilant, repellent and oviposition inhibitor. Azadirachtin has weak systemic properties and is sometimes sold as a root drench with activity against chewing and

piercing-sucking insects. Azadirachtin has no fungicidal activity.

Neither neem oil nor azadirachtin are persistent in the environment and are quickly broken down by UV light and microbes. This is both good and bad. Rapid degradation indicates it will have very little long-lasting environmental impact, but it also means that for good pest control, it must be applied on a regular basis during times of high pest pressure. Both products are practically non-toxic to mammals, birds, reptiles, plants (same precautions as horticultural oils), bees and other beneficial insects. However, it can be lethal if applied directly

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Sample neem oil insecticidal product.

Neem

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to beneficial insects; therefore, do not apply when pollinators are active. Both are slightly to moderately toxic to fish and aquatic organisms; therefore, they should not be applied to or used around bodies of water or where runoff might happen.

Like many oils, these products can be irritating to eyes, skin or mucous membranes. Neem oil is made up of fatty acids and glycerides (both common in our diets) and, if ingested, will be metabolized. Azadirachtin was found to pass through the body and

over 90% eliminated within 7 hours.

Neem oil and azadirachtin have shown activity against over 60 different insect pests and more than a dozen fungal diseases. The individual product label will tell you what plants it can be used on and what it is claimed to control. Remember, the label is the law and the number one source of product information.

Many neem oil and azadirachtin products are OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) listed as useable in certified organic production practices.

~Dr. Joe Willis



Photo of a gardener applying neem oil insecticide. Note they are wearing protective gloves.

December Checklist/Garden Tips

Move tender container plants indoors on nights when temperatures are predicted to be in the low thirties or lower to prevent damage. Leave them inside in sunny windows or place them back outside when the freeze is over.

Although cold, dry winds can dry out leaf tissues and cause brown edges, plants do not feel wind-chill. When you see low temperatures predicted, focus on the actual temperature rather than wind-chill. If it's getting down to 38 degrees with a wind-chill of 25 degrees, you do not have to worry about a freeze.

Plan now for freezing temperatures. Decide what tender plants you will choose to protect and what will be left to its own chances. Make sure you have enough materials on hand to protect those plants that you will cover. Suitable materials include plastic, fabric sheets, blankets, tarps and cardboard boxes to name a few. Each plant to be protected needs to have a covering large enough to extend to the ground. It also helps to have stakes available to drive into the ground around plants to help support the coverings over the plants and bricks to weight down the bottom edges of the covering.

Cool season herbs like cilantro, dill, fennel, parsley, borage, sorrel, and chervil can be directly seeded into garden beds. Soak your parsley seed for a few hours in warm water to help them germinate better.

Super Plant Spotlight – Sorbet Viola

If you want to add some bright color to your landscape that will be there from fall into early spring, try some Sorbet series violas. These bright little beauties will make a mound about 6" tall and 12" wide and will bloom continuously. Plants are very uniform in growth and cold hardy.

Violas can grow in full sun to partial shade, but the more sun they get the more they will flower. They like moist but well-drained soil with a pH in the 5.5 – 6.0 range but perform well over a wide pH range. Provide them with a slow release fertilizer at planting and maybe again in early spring and they should keep going until the warm



Yellow Duet Sorbet Violas growing at the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station.

temperatures take them down. They come in a multitude of colors and are often available as single colors or mixed packs.

They can be used inground, in raised beds or in containers and are especially attractive as border plants along the front of beds. They have very few insect or disease problems. Usually diseases only occur when they are grown in poorly drained beds or when planted too tightly to allow good air flow. The flowers are a delicacy to rabbits and are even edible to humans. They are often used to brighten up salads or candied (See GNO Gardening Magazine, February 2019).

Try Sorbet Violas and I don't think you will be disappointed.

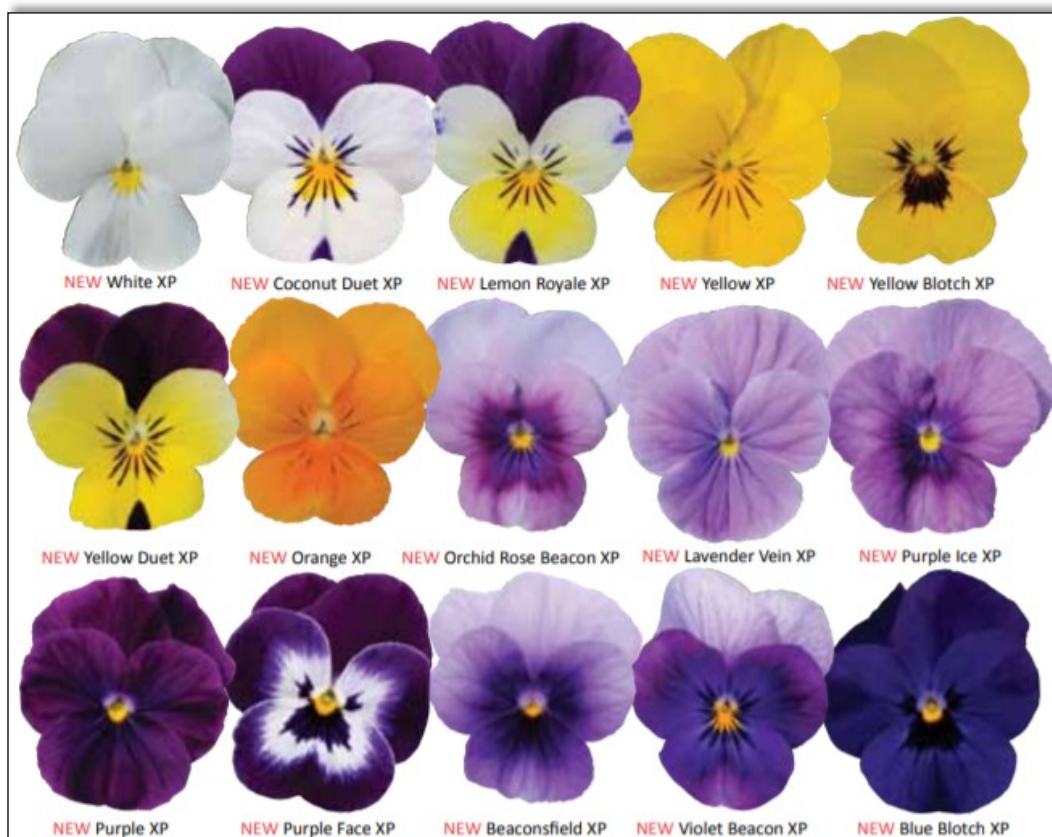


Photo of other cultivars in the Sorbet series of viola. Photo courtesy of Pan American Seed.

~Dr. Joe Willis

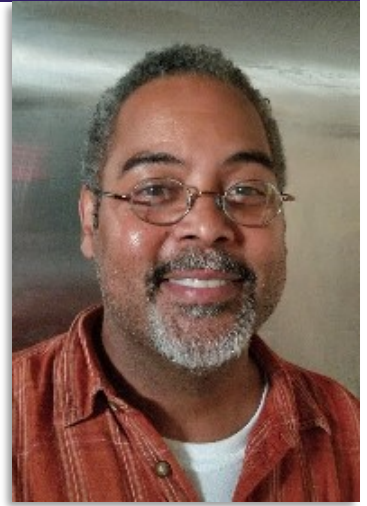
In the Kitchen with Austin

Sweet Potato Kale Soup

This easy to make soup is perfect to keep you warm through the cold winter and it uses fresh seasonal ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3-1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 3 cans (14-1/2 ounces each) vegetable broth
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 5 cups chopped fresh kale
- 12 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper



Directions:

In a large pot, saute onion and Italian seasoning in oil until onion is tender.

Stir in the broth, beans, sweet potatoes and kale. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered for 10 minutes. Stir in the garlic, salt and pepper. Simmer 10-15 minutes longer or until potatoes are tender.

Ladle the soup into bowls and serve. I like this soup even more the next day.

Leftovers keep well, covered and refrigerated, for about 4 days. The soup freezes well, too.

Bon Manger!



Coming Events

LSU AgCenter Poinsettia Sale

Saturday, December 7th, 8 AM- NOON

@ The LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, 4560 Essen Ln., Baton Rouge, LA

Free Admission

<https://www.facebook.com/events/154522085464745/>

The Greater New Orleans Iris Society Native Louisiana Iris Planting

Saturday, December 7th, 9AM—NOON

@Town Of Jean Lafitte's Wetland Trace boardwalk

Free

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1042402775954202/>

*Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

Wreath Making with Amy Graham

Saturday, December 7th, 10 AM-NOON

@ Longue Vue House and Gardens, 7 Bamboo Rd., New Orleans, LA

\$65

<https://www.facebook.com/events/688555834968290/>

*Master Gardener Continuing Ed Hours

Discover Your Forest/Trail Clean Up

Saturday, December 7th, 10 AM-NOON

@ The Woodlands Conservancy, 449 F Edward Herbert Blvd., Belle Chasse, LA.

Free, please arrive at 10 AM and byo mug or cup!

<https://www.facebook.com/events/462250164647403/>

*Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

Christkindl on Marais

Saturday, December 14th, 4-7 PM

@ The Garden on Marais, 4600 Marais St., New Orleans, LA

Free

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2551750115057119/>

LSU AgCenter Louisiana Fruit and Vegetable Grower's Association Field Day

Wednesday, December 18th, 8 AM – NOON

@Hill Farm Teaching Facility, LSU Campus, Baton Rouge, LA

Free with RSVP

<https://www.facebook.com/events/500170617234669/>

*Growers attendance preferred

Farmers Markets in the Greater New Orleans Area

Jefferson Parish

Fat City Farmer's Market

3215 Edenborn, Metairie
Every 2nd and 4th Sunday, 9AM-1PM

Gretna Farmer's Market

739 Third Street, Gretna
Every Saturday, except the Saturday of Gretna Fest,
8:30AM-12:30PM

Kenner Rivertown Farmer's Market

2115 Rev. Richard Wilson Drive, Kenner
Every Saturday, October-July, 9AM-1PM

Nawlins Outdoor Market

1048 Scotsdale Dr., Harvey
Every Saturday & Sunday, 9AM-5PM

Old Metairie Farmer's Market

Bayou Metairie Park, Between Metairie Lawn Dr. and
Labarre
3rd Tuesday of the month, 3:30PM-7:30PM

Westwego Shrimp Lot

100 Westbank Expressway at Louisiana St., Westwego
Daily Mon-Sat 8AM-8PM, Sun 8AM-6PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Ochsner West Campus

2614 Jefferson Highway, Ochsner Rehab Facility
Wednesdays, 3PM-7PM

Bucktown Farmer's Market

325 Hammond Hwy., Metairie
Weekly on Fridays, 3-7 PM

Orleans Parish

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Uptown

200 Broadway Street at the River, New Orleans
Tuesdays, 9AM-1PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Bywater

Chartres and Piety, at Rusty Rainbow Bridge
Wednesdays, 3PM-7PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Mid-City

3700 Orleans Avenue, New Orleans
Thursdays, 3PM-7PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Bucktown

325 Metairie-Hammond, Highway at Bucktown Harbor
Fridays, 3PM-7PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Downtown

750 Carondelet St at Julia, New Orleans
Saturdays, 8am-12PM

Crescent City Farmer's Market- Rivertown

Williams Boulevard at the River
Saturdays, 9AM-1PM

Sankofa Market

5029 St. Claude St., New Orleans
Monday-Thursday, 9:30AM-4:00PM

ReFresh Farmer's Market

300 North Broad St., New Orleans
Mondays, 4:00PM-7:00PM

Vietnamese Farmer's Market

14401 Alcee Fortier Blvd., New Orleans East
Saturdays, 5:30AM-8:30AM

Marketplace at Armstrong Park

901 N. Rampart, New Orleans
Thursdays, 3PM-7PM

Mid-City Arts and Farmer's Market

Comiskey Park, New Orleans
Market dates vary, check <http://midcityaf.org>

Treme Farmer's Market

814 N. Claiborne, New Orleans
Market dates vary, check <https://gloriastremegarden.com/treme-farmers-market/>

Laughing Buddha Farm Hubs

Bywater, Broadmoor, Lakeview, Irish Channel, Mid-City, Algiers Point, Uptown Locations
<https://www.laughingbuddhanursery.com/events>

Second Saturday Community Market at the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center

11000 Lake Forest Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70127
Second Saturday of the month, 8:30-11:30 AM

Marketplace at Armstrong Park

901 Rampart St., New Orleans, LA 70116 (Between St. Ann and St. Philip) 3-7 PM

St. Bernard Parish

St. Bernard Seafood and Farmer's Market

409 Aycock St., Aycock Barn, Old Arabi
2nd Saturdays, 10AM-2PM

December Checklist/Garden Tips

Don't forget to add nature's generous bounty of leaves provided this time of year to your compost piles, or use them to mulch shrub and flower beds. You should have a 3-4 inch mulch layer over your garden soil. Mulch insulates the soil, keeps the soil moisture consistent, helps prevent plant disease and neatens everything up. Shred larger leaves with your lawn mower before adding them to the compost pile or using them as mulch. Stock pile pine straw and cypress leaves in plastic bags to use to cover low growing plants for freeze protection. Use the wand of your vacuum cleaner to remove the air from the bags to compress the material to save space. See a demonstration at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/1030624690304124/videos/3299251646811530/>

You can also make your own home-made baler to make your own bales of pine straw and cypress leaves for future use. See my demonstration video at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fb8v9SXUAFg&t=7s>

Winterize your garden tools before you put them away. Clean and sharpen tools, apply a thin layer of protective oil to the blades, and coat wooden handles with sealer, tung oil or varnish to protect the wood and keep it in good shape. Drain the gas from lawn mowers and other gas powered equipment (see the owner's manual for recommendations).

Poinsettias are a great addition to interior holiday displays, place them near a window to give them a longer "shelf-life". Wait to water them until the soil feels dry to the touch.

If you bought tulip or hyacinth bulbs last month, plant them at the end of December. If you want to have hyacinths blooming indoors, plant them halfway into a shallow bowl with pebbles or marbles in the bottom. Add just enough water so that the bottom of the bulbs stay wet, adding water when it stops making contact. Place them someplace sunny. It takes four to six weeks for them to bloom, bringing a welcome jolt of spring into the house.

If we get a hard freeze, wait a few days to evaluate the damage. Many cole crops will bounce back, as will some landscape plants. Things usually look worse the next morning after a frost than they actually are. Waiting gives the plants a chance to recover, and you can see the extent of the true damage. Prune cannas, philodendrons, clerodendrons, and gingers back to the ground that got burned. They will be back in the spring.

Many garden chemicals are water based and can be destroyed by freezing. The loss of chemicals can be expensive and spilled chemicals can create dangerous conditions. Keep chemicals in a location that doesn't freeze, and if there are children in the house, they should be stored in a locked location.

Cut back any lingering tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) to encourage Monarch butterflies to migrate south. Cut the plants back to the ground if possible, they will be back in the spring just in time for the return of the butterflies.

Consider creating holiday arrangements and centerpieces using plant material from your yard and gardens. Many of our most common landscape plants make excellent seasonal greenery, including magnolias, nandina, hollies, juniper, cypress, and camellias. Cut some greenery and spend some time creating arrangements for your table or mantelpiece. This can be a fun holiday activity to share with family members. The fragrance of evergreens also adds to the seasonal ambiance!

If you have any of the holiday cacti, including Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter cacti, be sure to put it on display. Once the blooms finish, place it in a sunny window to recover and prepare for next year's flowering. Allow the soil to dry out between all waterings. Prolonged soil moisture can rot the roots. Fertilize lightly with a little water-soluble fertilizer once a month to keep it happy.

Plant cool season bedding plants now, and be sure to keep them deadheaded so that they bloom well into the spring months. Great things to plant now include snapdragons, foxgloves, dianthus, pansies, petunias, violas, columbine, delphinium, and cyclamen.

Lawn Care Do's & Don't's

Do's:

1. You may apply selective herbicides to eliminate broad leaf weeds in the lawn.
2. Cool damp weather is ideal for the appearance of Large Patch Disease in your lawn.
[Click here to find information about large patch disease from the LSU AgCenter.](#)
3. Mulch fall leaves and let them decompose in place if possible or collect them with a bagging mower and add them to your compost pile or use them as mulch in your gardens.
4. Take a soil test. Test kits are available in our offices in the Botanical Gardens, the Yenni Building, and New Orleans City Hall as well as local garden centers. Follow this link to see Dr. Joe demonstrate how to take a soil sample: <https://www.facebook.com/1030624690304124/videos/1452161988150390/>

Don't's

1. Do not spread fill over the lawn until it is actively growing again in the spring.
2. Do not add more than 2 inches over actively growing grass.
3. Do not apply fertilizer to the lawn again until April of next year.
4. Do not apply phosphorous winterizer to the lawn without taking a soil sample first. We have ample amounts of phosphorous in our soil already.
5. Do not attempt to install a new lawn until spring.
6. Do not cut more than 1/3 of the height of lawn grass at a single time.
7. Do not aerate the lawn.
8. Do not dethatch the lawn.



Soil test kits can be picked up at our parish offices and at local garden centers.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

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



Follow us on Facebook at [GNOGardening](#)

For more information visit LSUAgCenter.com

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