



March 2017

Say No to Bare Soil: Mulch and Cover Crop Basics

If you are even a casual gardener in the New Orleans area, chances are you are regularly frustrated by weeds. Weeds are persistent. Weeds are everywhere. Weeds can take the fun out of gardening. By covering up the garden's soil using mulch and cover crops, time spent weeding can be greatly reduced and soil health, soil moisture, and populations of natural predators of garden pests can be greatly improved.

these guys to grow. By covering the soil, we can greatly reduce the number of weeds and reap some additional benefits.

In addition to being a hotbed for weeds, bare soil is also at risk of disappearing due to erosion and wind. With nothing to hold it in place, garden soil can wash away and into the local waterways. Strong



A mix of field peas and oats on the left, next to a bed of buckwheat on the right.

In nature, there isn't very much disturbed or bare soil around. In areas where the soil is exposed, we are more likely to find plants germinating that would fit the category of a weed. Seeds can lay dormant in the soil for many years, waiting for the right opportunity to sprout and choke out a garden. When we work in our gardens, tilling, digging, and planting; we create a fresh and optimum area for

winds can pick up our garden soil and deposit it elsewhere. Fire ants also seem to prefer bare soil for building their nests, which can be a painful disaster for a gardener working in the beds. Bare soil tends to dry out and develop a "baked" crust in the summer-time, which inhibits water absorption from irrigation or rain. Water is wasted and never reaches the plant roots if it just rolls away over top of the soil crust.

Say No to Bare Soil: Mulch and Cover Crop Basics (Continued)

Mulch is a good answer to all of these problems. Most gardens require a minimum of one inch of mulch material to see beneficial results. A maximum depth of three inches is even better. Much deeper than that and the soil has a difficult time in drying out after a heavy rainstorm. Keep mulch an inch or two away from the stem of the plant, this helps to prevent the formation of root rot and fungal infections.

Several materials are available in the GNO area, with pine straw and wood mulches being the most popular. Other materials include hay or straw (be wary of weed seeds!), cardboard, leaves and lawn clippings, and plastic weed barrier fabrics. All of these or a combination of them can be effective. Steer clear of cypress mulch, as it is unsustainable harvested or poached from our local swamps. Whatever material you choose, a fresh layer will need to be added each spring and fall to replenish what has broken down. Pine straw or plastic fabric mulch is a good choice for vegetable gardens and will not impact the soil pH. Wood mulches are a better and longer lasting option for ornamentally landscaped areas, especially if you are not regularly weeding and maintaining them. When using leaves or grass clippings, be sure to age them for several months first to prevent spreading pathogens as well as anti-sprouting agents.



Collect leaves and pine straw when available.

Cover crops can also be a good way to cover bare soil in a vegetable garden while also adding nutrients to the soil. Typically cover crops are planted thickly in a garden bed and tilled under before they set seed or get too large. Cover crops such as cow peas, buckwheat, ryegrass, clovers, crowder peas, vetch, and field peas can be a good choice for veggie gardens that draw a lot of nutrients. Plant the cover crop in beds that are empty and till it under before replanting vegetables. The cover crop acts as a “green manure” and adds organic material to the soil in addition to



Incorporate the cover crops into the soil using a shovel or tiller.

protecting the soil between plantings. Seeds for cover crops are available at local garden centers as well as in many seed catalogues. Give it a try!

Mulching or cover cropping provides additional benefits such as holding in moisture during dry periods. By protecting damp soil from the sun, water is available to plants for a longer period of time. Covering the soil also provides habitat for beneficial wildlife such as lizards, toads, and spiders. Snails and slugs as well as many insect pests are no match for a healthy predator population, so cover that soil!
~Anna Timmerman

March Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Snap Beans (bush or pole)	Bush-Blue Lake 274, Bronco, Derby, Lynx, Strike Pole-Blue Lake, Kentucky Blue, McCaslin	½ inch	2-3 (bush) 12 (pole)	48-55 (bush) 60-66 (pole)
Sweet Corn	Merit, Silver Queen, Honey 'n Pearl, Ambrosia	½ inch	10-12	69-92
Summer Squash	Gold Rush, Justice III, Multipik, Patriot II	⅛ inch	36	50-90
Hot Peppers (transplant)	Grande, Tula, Mariachi, Mitla,	-	--	140
Cantaloupe	Ambrosia, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Vienna	¼ inch	18-24	80-85
Southern Peas	Queen Anne, California #5, Quickpick, Colussus	½ inch	4-6	70-80
Tomato (transplant)	Better Boy, Big Beef, Cupid, Pink Girl, Juliet, Sweet Milton, Bella Rosa, Carolina Gold	-	--	100-115
Collards	Champion, Flash, Georgia, Top Bunch, Vates	⅛ inch	6-12	75
Cucumbers	Dasher II, Diva, Fanfare, General Lee, Indy, Olympian, Sweet Success, Sweet Slice	¼ inch	12-18	50-65
Cucuzzi	None Given	½ inch	24	65
Lima Beans (bush or pole)	Dixie Butterpea, Jackson Wonder, Thorogreen Florida Speckled, King of Garden	½ inch	3-4 (bush) 12 (pole)	60-67 (bush) 77-90 (pole)
Bell Peppers (transplants)	Aristotle X3R, Jupiter, Lilac, Plato, Tequila	-	15-18	70-80
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner	⅛ inch	6	55-75
Okra	Annie Oakley, Cajun Delight, Clemson Spineless	½ inch	12	60
Pumpkins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Prankster, Sorcerer	½ inch	36-60	90-120
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross	⅛ inch	1	22-28
Swiss Chard	None Given	¼ inch	6-8	45-55
Winter Squash	Honey Bear, Sweet Mama, Table Queen, Tivoli	½ inch	18-24	100
Eggplant	Dusky, Night Shadow, Epic, Santana, Calliope	⅛ inch	18-24	80-85

Cabbage, the Irish, and St. Patrick's Day

Thinking back to that St. Patrick's Day when I carried my prized cabbage, along with a carrot I caught, around the Irish Channel neighborhood of New Orleans, I began to wonder how the cabbage portion of corned beef and cabbage became so intertwined with this yearly celebration of Irish heritage.

We need to go back to the old country to understand how cabbage became entwined with Irish culinary history. Beginning in the 1600s, land laws forced onto the Irish by the English Crown eventually led to a system where mainly British landowners controlled vast tracts of Irish farmland, while mostly poor Irish farmers paid them rent to use the land. The tenant farm system left most farmers with barely enough food to survive on since the majority of the crops they grew went to pay the proprietors. Beginning in the late 17th century, potatoes became their main crop; they provided a high yield so farmers could pay their rents and still have something left over for dinner. Pigs were the main protein (for the luckier farmers), but most of the livestock also went to pay the rent.

Cabbage was another vegetable these farmers and the rural poor relied on for food, since it was nutrient-dense and grew well in Ireland. One of the first written accounts of cabbage cultivation comes from the 17th century, but it's likely the vegetable was being grown in Ireland before this time.

Cabbage became an even more important food staple during the Great Potato Famine. Beginning in 1845, a potato blight that began in Belgium spread across Europe and had devastating effects in Ireland, since the poor there almost completely subsisted on this root vegetable. When the blight caused potatoes to begin to rot in fields and in storage bins across the land, many turned to cabbage for sustenance. And they ate a lot; it's been deter-

mined that the annual cabbage intake of the Irish around that period would have been about 65 pounds per person per year, based on crop production.

As the famine continued to rage, eventually killing more than a million people in Ireland over the course of a little more than five years, waves of Irish immigrants began to hit America's shores. They brought with them their food preferences and recipes from home, including colcannon—potatoes and cabbage boiled and mashed together—and Irish bacon and cabbage.

Though great quantities of corned beef were indeed produced in Ireland beginning in the 17th century, it was mainly for export, since most Irish couldn't afford this extravagance and instead ate bacon with their cabbage, since pork was much more affordable. The name "corned beef," coined by the British, refers to the large salt crystals used in the preservation process, which were said to

resemble corn kernels.

In America, the majority of Irish immigrants flocked to large metropolitan areas like New York, Boston and New Orleans, and often lived near Jewish enclaves. They soon turned to the plentiful and affordable corned beef found at local



Kosher delis for their celebratory dinners, including the St. Patrick's Day meal.

My prized cabbage ended up getting eaten along with some corned beef that night and it turns out I wasn't alone in scarfing down that green leafy vegetable. St. Patrick's Day is the biggest holiday for fresh, green cabbage consumption in the U.S., according to the United States Department of Agriculture. But perhaps I—and the rest of America—should have chosen colcannon or bacon and cabbage for a more authentic St. Patrick's Day experience. It's never too late, but to be honest, I'm partial to corned beef, although I may throw some bacon into the mix, just to keep it real. ~Andrew Amelinckx-Modern Farmer

Volunteer Spotlight



Mallory gives the goats their favorite snack. Pages from her book.

Mallory Naquin—Our volunteer spotlight is a little different this month since not only will I write about our volunteer but her favorite project as well. Mallory is a recently graduated dietician who explains that her mission is to help people create healthy relationships with food. She says, “An essential part of developing that relationship is understanding where your food comes from and what it takes to produce it.” Although she says she has enjoyed gardening all her life it took on new significance when she began learning how to cook and realize she could grow her own food. “There’s nothing like eating a tomato right off the bush from the backyard. Except making a freshly roasted tomato soup with it!”

After completing her internship at Tulane, Malory completed a year of service with Americorps and worked with Edible Schoolyard NOLA in their teaching kitchen at Samuel Green Charter School. It was here that she met some of the other Louisiana Master Gardeners and decided to become one herself. After completing the course Malory was fortunate enough to get hired in a full time position as the

culinary and nutrition educator at Langston Hughes Academy. And although Malory now works for the school, she puts in numerous hours after classes and on weekends and has earned our spotlight.

Created in 2006, the Edible Schoolyard New Orleans (ESYNOLA) integrates organic gardening and seasonal cooking into the curricula, culture, and food programs at five public charter schools: Samuel J. Green Charter School, Arthur Ashe Charter School, Phillis Wheatley Community, Langston Hughes Academy, and Joseph S. Clark High. ESYNOLA is based on the original Edible Schoolyard founded in Berkeley, California by chef and food education activist Alice Waters. ESY NOLA provides students with engaging hands-on learning experiences through weekly gardening and cooking classes and school-based seasonal

events that promote the food traditions of New Orleans. Students in grades K-8 participate in lessons that reinforce classroom coursework and core subjects (science, social studies, language, and math). At the Edible Schoolyard, the garden and

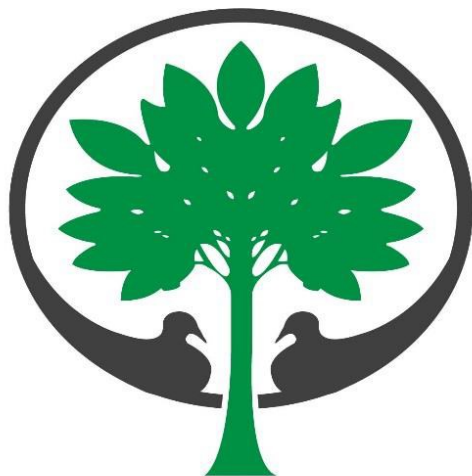
kitchen are interactive venues where textbook lessons come to life. Through these experiences, students become stewards of our land and natural resources, and discover that teamwork yields genuine benefits in the garden, kitchen, and in life.



A portion of the gardens at Langston Hughes Academy.

Upcoming Events

2017 PLANT SALES



NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK
**BOTANICAL
GARDEN**

The Pelican Greenhouse is located just off Henry Thomas (Golf) Drive, South of the I-610 overpass. Bring a wagon and arrive early.

MARCH 11
Rose Sale–Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

APRIL 8-9
Spring Garden Show
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

MAY 13
Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. – Noon

JUNE 3
Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

JULY 1
Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

AUGUST 5
Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. - Noon

SEPTEMBER 9
Pelican Greenhouse
9:00 a.m. – Noon

OCTOBER 7-8
Fall Garden Festival
10:00 a.m. – 5:00 pm

For additional information, call 504/483-9464, visit our website at www.neworleanscitypark.com, or e-mail to plants@nocp.org

Plants are now available for sale in our new Garden Gift Shop



2017 Spring Garden Show



Saturday, April 8, 9am to 5pm
Sunday, April 9, 10am to 4pm



Now accepting vendor registrations.

To register for a sales or educational booth at the show send us an e-mail to GNOGardening@agcenter.lsu.edu



The **HERB SOCIETY** *of* **AMERICA**
New Orleans Unit

Spring Plant Sale

Benefitting the New Orleans Botanical Gardens , Longvue Gardens Walled Herb Gardens, and educational programs of the Herb Society of America New Orleans Unit.

Saturday, April 1.

9am until 3pm

2202 General Pershing, New Orleans

Annuals * Perennials * Culinary

Ornamentals * Butterfly Plants * Natives



Greater New Orleans

Iris Society

Rainbow Festival

Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden

City Park, New Orleans

Sunday, April 9, 10 AM - 5 PM

Judges Training by MJ Urist (before opening)

“Arranging Irises Off The Cuff” by Dr. Jim DelPrince

MSU Coastal Research and Extension Center

NOMA Auditorium 1-2 PM

Irises in the garden and on display Music, Information



Sale Irises at 10AM until gone!

March Checklist

Established perennials should be fertilized this month. This is most efficiently and economically done by using a granular fertilizer with about a 3:1:2 ratio (such as 15-5-10) scattered evenly through the bed following package directions. After the fertilizer is applied, water the bed by hand to wash any fertilizer granules off the foliage and down to the soil.

Now is a good time to sharpen your mower blades.

Thoroughly water new plantings once or twice a week as needed, especially those in full sun.

Thrips are a common problem on roses in spring and early summer. Thrips are tiny insects that infest the flowers buds, and are always worst on the spring and early summer flowers. Symptoms include buds that do not open properly, and when the flowers do open the petals have brown, scorched edges. Thrips do not damage the bush, but it is heartbreaking to see the flowers ruined. Spray once or twice a week with Acephate or Mavrik for control during the early summer blooming season.

Powdery mildew, a fungus disease that attacks a wide variety of plants, can begin to show up this month. The disease appears as a white, powdery spot or area on foliage or flower buds. This disease can damage the foliage and cause flower buds to abort. Control with chlorothalonil or other labeled fungicides.

Finish up planting trees and shrubs into the landscape by the end of this month.

Treat tulips as annuals and remove the whole plant when they finish flowering since they will not bloom again next year. Chop up the foliage and bulbs and add them to your compost pile.

Continue to plant roses purchased in containers. Bare root roses available at various places, like hardware stores, garden departments of chain stores and supermarkets, should have been planted last month. If you see the bare root bushes have begun to sprout, they are not your best choice for a quality plant.

Plant summer flowering bulbs into the garden beginning in late March. Don't be alarmed if they don't take off and grow rapidly right away. Most of these bulbs are tropical and will wait until April or even early May to make vigorous growth. Wait until April to plant caladiums.

If you plant a super sweet corn variety (noted on the seed package or in the vegetable description), it must be isolated from any regular sweet corn you plant or cross pollination will reduce the quality of the super sweet corn. In this corn is unique. You do not have to worry about cross pollination affecting the flavor or quality of any other vegetable, such as planting hot peppers next to sweet peppers, or zucchini next to yellow squash.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

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



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