

# THE HOME GARDENER

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## WINTER 2008 - 2009

### The Home Gardener

LSU AgCenter Horticulture Hints  
East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners Program  
805 St. Louis Street  
Baton Rouge LA 70802-6457



Winter Wonders in Louisiana, p. 4



Soups On!, pp. 5,6

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# LOUISIANA MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

The Louisiana Master Gardener Program is a service and educational activity offered by the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. The program is designed to recruit and train volunteers to help meet the educational needs of home gardeners while providing an enjoyable and worthwhile service experience for volunteers. The program is open to all people regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, gender, religion or national origin. Master Gardener programs are all-volunteer organizations sanctioned by land-grant institutions in each state and function as an extension of the college or university. In Louisiana, the program is sponsored by the LSU Agricultural Center and is directed by the Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service and Extension's local county agents.

For more information regarding the Louisiana Master Gardener Program, call 225-389-3056.

**The Home Gardener** is a publication of the East Baton Rouge Parish Master Gardeners Program. Area home gardeners receive a variety of information on vegetable gardening, landscape ornamentals, fruit and nuts, turfgrasses, hummingbird and butterfly gardening, excerpts from the LMG curriculum materials, and a potpourri of entertaining and research-based information.

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### *Louisiana Master Gardener Objectives*

- To expand the capacity of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service to distribute horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community.
- To develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture. Depending on community needs, these may be environmental improvement activities, community and school garden programs or public horticultural events.
- To enhance 4H programs by complimenting co-curricular and extracurricular horticulture programs.\
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network under the direction of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.

## EEEEK !!! GINGER POTTERS' FOLIAR NECROSIS !!!

by Jon Goeckel, Louisiana Master Gardener

Ever hear of “foliar necrosis”?? Well, if you are a ginger potter, i.e., you like to grow ginger in pots; this is a condition you will want to avoid.

Most gingers do exceptionally well when grown in pots. This enables gardeners to control rhizome spread, optimize sunlight conditions, protect against cold and most importantly, allows the gardeners to reposition plants so that their magnificent inflorescence can be enjoyed in different locations in the home or garden. As is the case with many container grown large, flowering tropical plant, fertilizer and proper watering practices are important.

Last summer, I became a first time active ginger potter. My plants developed nicely—I remember thinking this is going to be a piece of cake. Then disaster struck—I fertilized! I used a slow release plant food, 12-30-15 according to the manufacturers’ instructions. Within a week my healthy ginger foliage turned ugly. The edges of my leaves turned brown and shortly thereafter, withered and died. I didn’t know it at the time, but I had foliar necrosis. My healthy ginger plants were ready for composting.

This led me to do what I should have done in the first place—research and look for direction. I found an article on the Internet by LSU’s Jeff Kuehny, “Ornamental Gingers and Flowering Potted Plants”. This explained my necrosis problem. If only I had the foresight to do this research before I planted my gingers, I would not have lost an entire growing season.

It seems gingers are boron accumulators. Boron is a trace element in many “special fertilizers and plant foods.” You have to look hard to find trace element analysis—most manufacturers limit package analysis to N, P, K. However, if you dig a little deeper by contacting the manufacturers’ customer service number they can supply trace element analysis. Many states require trace analysis before the product can be sold. The fertilizer I used had a boron analysis of .02% by weight. Doesn’t sound like much, but it was enough to cause my necrosis problem. Kuehny’s article (previously referenced) recommends Scotts’ Tropical Foliage Water Soluble Fertilizer, 24-8-6. This produce has 0% boron.

I hope my experience helps other ginger potters avoid necrosis. Many gingers are selected for their foliage, as well as their inflorescence. Foliar necrosis turns a showy plant ugly in short order. Research the plant’s needs as well as the fertilizer.

My research turned up another growing hint that will be of interest to ginger potters. Ginger rhizomes are susceptible to rot. Over watering should be avoided. Select containers and soil to promote good drainage. During the dormant winter cycle, containers should be positioned to avoid prolonged exposure to rain, i.e., placed under the eaves on the south side of the house. Laying pots on their sides will also prevent water accumulation and subsequent root rot.

Good luck with your ornamental gingers. They do extremely well in containers in East Baton Rouge Parish and can add that tropical touch to a garden or patio. Remember – be careful with fertilizing and water!

American Heritage Dictionary, 1981 inflorescence: 1. Botany. A characteristic arrangement of flowers on a stalk or in a cluster. 2. A flowering. florescence: The condition, time, or period of blossoming.

“The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size.” - Gertrude S. Wister

## WINTER WONDERS IN LOUISIANA

by Vicki Vance, Louisiana Master Gardener



Many people are still under the false assumption that all hummingbirds leave Louisiana after mid-October. While it is true that the vast majority of ruby-throated hummingbirds have departed by then, our gardens are prime shelters for many hummingbirds that migrate here for the winter season. Rufous hummingbirds are often spotted as early as late July – definitely not “winter” weather in our minds!

Some identifying characteristics of our most common winter visitors include the following:

**Black-chinned** – Adult males are easily recognized by their bright green backs, purple-edged black throat gorget and longer bills. Size and soft vocals are comparable to ruby-throated hummingbirds. Black-chinned hummingbirds can be rather elusive and are known for their fast tail pumping action while feeding. Females of this species are so similar to many other species, particularly Ruby-throated, that it can be difficult to identify them.

**Buff-bellied** – A long reddish bill, buff colored belly and brilliant green throat and chest make the Buff-bellied easy to spot and identify. It is known to hide deep in dense evergreen shrubbery and may be heard well before being seen. Male and female Buff-bellied hummingbirds are quite similar in coloring, with the male’s coloration more distinct.

**Calliope** – The smallest hummingbird in North America, the adult male Calliope has a brilliant violet jagged-edged gorget that stretches from bill to chest where it is a sharp contrast to its white chest. Its soft chirp is quite distinct from the clicking of fellow winter resident, the Rufous. Female Calliope does not have the distinctive gorget, but can be identified by its short bill and buff-colored sides.

**Rufous** – The most common Gulf Coast winter visitor, the Rufous is easily recognized by its rusty brown and/or green back and tail, orange/gold/red gorget and aggressive behavior. Female Rufous are brownish/green with rusty coloration on its tail, often with large center throat spots with stippling on the sides. Its loud, hard clicking/chirping makes it very easy to recognize a Rufous has arrived.

Evergreen cover is an essential element of your garden when trying to attract winter hummingbirds. Protection can be offered by planting hollies, yaupons, camellias, wax myrtles and ligustrum. Cool weather flowering shrubs such as abutilons and winter honeysuckle offer nectar in addition to a hummingbird’s diet of insects. Many hummingbirds prefer “Little Beginner” feeders to be placed within the cover of an evergreen shrub rather than in an open location.

Water misters and waterfalls are other features that hummingbirds will utilize. It is quite lovely to start your day off watching a hummingbird hover in the spray of a mister or preening its feathers in the splash of a waterfall.

If you keep your feeders clean and filled while continuing to plant shrubs and nectar producing plants, you are sure to experience the delights of Louisiana’s winter wonders.

“January is the quietest month in the garden. ... But just because it looks quiet doesn't mean that nothing is happening. The soil, open to the sky, absorbs the pure rainfall while microorganisms convert tilled-under fodder into usable nutrients for the next crop of plants. The feasting earthworms tunnel along, aerating the soil and preparing it to welcome the seeds and bare roots to come.”

*Rosalie Muller Wright, Editor of Sunset Magazine, January, 1998*

“From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens - the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye.” *Katherine S. White*



## SOUPS ON!

by Donna Montgomery, MS Nutrition Specialist, Retired LSU AgCenter

What better way to take the edge off winter's chill than by sitting down to a bowl of hot soup? Soup is a good choice for this hectic time of year. It is easy to prepare, store, freeze and serve.

Soups are a great way to increase the servings of vegetables in your diet as well as increase the fiber. Soups can help with weight control as long as they are low in fat. Another plus is that most soups are high in fiber.

### French Market Bean Soup

*This is the best bean soup recipe I've ever tasted. If you want to lower the fat, simply use only chicken breasts.*

2 cups dried beans and peas \*  
ham hock or ham bone (optional)  
bouquet garni  
1 (16-oz) can tomatoes, coarsely chopped  
2 cups chopped onion  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
2 stalks celery, chopped  
salt and pepper to taste  
1 pound lean smoked sausage, thinly sliced  
2 chicken breasts  
2 chicken thighs  
1/2 cup chopped parsley  
1/2 cup red wine

\* Mix together different varieties of dried beans and peas or buy a combination of beans and peas in the supermarket.

Wash and drain dried beans. Add 3 quarts of water, ham hock and bouquet garni (*this is a mixture of herbs such as bay leaf, thyme and parsley tied together in a small piece of clean cheese cloth. Remove before serving*). Cover and simmer for 3 hours. Add tomatoes, onions, garlic, celery and seasonings. Simmer uncovered 1 1/2 hours. Soup should get to a creamy stage. Add sausage and chicken. Cook until tender. Remove chicken from bones and shred. Ten minutes before serving, add parsley and wine. This is best if made the day before serving. *Serves 8.*

### Corn and Crawfish Chowder

*This soup is so-o-o quick and easy in addition to being delicious. Add a tossed green salad, crusty French bread, a glass of white wine and, voila, you are an instant gourmet. Enjoy!!*

1 bunch green onions, chopped  
1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter (*use 2 tablespoons light margarine to cut fat and calories*)  
1 pound crawfish tails or small peeled shrimp  
Salt, pepper and creole seasoning to taste  
1 (10 3/4-oz.) can cream of shrimp soup  
1 (10 3/4-oz.) can cream of celery soup  
1 (15-oz.) can cream style corn  
1 (12-oz) can niblets corn  
1 pint half and half (*use fat-free half and half to cut fat and calories*)



Sauté green onions in butter until soft. (*To cut fat, sauté in 2 tablespoons light margarine.*) Add crawfish tails or shrimp and seasoning. Sauté 5 minutes. Add soups and corn and continue to cook on low until blended. Add half and half. Cook on low until blended and hot. *Serves 6.*

## Baked Potato Soup

*If you like baked potatoes, you will love this soup. If you are trying to cut fat and calories, follow the recommendations in parentheses. You will cut calories but not taste.*

3 slices bacon (*use 1/2 cup chopped ham to cut fat*)  
1 cup diced onion  
2/3 cup flour  
6 cups chicken stock  
4 cups diced baked potatoes  
2 cups heavy cream (*use fat-free half and half to cut fat*)  
1/4 cup chopped parsley  
1 1/2 teaspoons chopped garlic  
1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1 1/2 teaspoons red pepper  
1 1/2 teaspoons coarse ground black pepper  
1 cup grated cheese (*omit to cut fat and calories*)  
1/4 cup finely chopped green onions tops



Fry bacon. Chop. Cook onions in drippings. Add flour, stirring to prevent lumps. Cook 3 to 5 minutes. Add chicken stock slowly. Reduce heat. Add potatoes, milk, parsley, garlic, basil and seasonings. Simmer for 10 minutes. Do not boil. Add cheese and green onions. Heat till cheese is smoothly melted. Garnish with cheese, bacon and green onion tops. *Serves 6.*

January is usually the coldest month in Louisiana, and January is also National Soup Month. Pull out your pot and enjoy soup tonight!

## SEDUCTIVE SWEET OLIVE

*by Vivian Adair Neeby, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Sweet Olive (*Osmanthus fragrans*) is one of the old staples of East Baton Rouge Parish gardens. It begs for our attention, producing a fragrance that can be enjoyed wafting across the garden for several hundred feet. In our planting zones, 8b for cold and 9a for heat, the evergreen hardwood Sweet Olive performs wonderfully. For an “old south garden” or a “southern courtyard”, this specimen cannot be surpassed.

The fragrance of the Sweet Olive is called tantalizing and seductive. A long lived plant, Sweet Olives start as slow growing shrubs but can reach the proportions of small trees. Depending on conditions, they can be 12 to 25 feet in height and 8 to 12 feet in width at maturity. Flowers are produced on their own stems, are very small measuring perhaps 3/16 to 5/16 inches and are an off-white color. The leaves are dark green and glossy not unlike a magnolia.

Sweet Olive grows well in our area, but demands good drainage. Much of this area has heavy clay, so it is essential that importance is given to choice and preparation of the site to provide excellent drainage. This delightful plant will thrive given slightly acidic fertile soil, excellent drainage, and provided with some shade from our intense heat during the day. Once established it is relatively drought tolerant, another great consideration for choosing this shrub, considering our long stretches of near-drought conditions. It will grow in sun and thrives in partial shade. Some thrive in nearly shady conditions as long as the requirements are met. It can be placed in a relatively obscure place in the garden, hidden in a fence or hedge row, and still be enjoyed to its fullest since the fragrance, not the visual impact, is its most desirable quality.

A relatively pest free plant, it offers its seductively fragrant bloom from autumn through winter and well into spring. Not only does it adapt to our weather conditions, Sweet Olive seems to be brought into bloom by sudden changes in climate, both temperature and humidity. That is exactly what we expect from our local

climate. A specimen located in an open area, if confronted with our occasional deep freeze with temperatures into the low teens needs some protection. Unprotected, it can be damaged, but usually recovers with careful pruning. And with thoughtful pruning, Sweet Olives that outgrow their sites can easily be brought back to a desirable size.

Perhaps because they are slow growing, Sweet Olives are not readily available commercially. They can be propagated using the same techniques as that of other broadleaf evergreens. Sweet Olives do produce seed, and seed can be sown in the fall, but the containers must be protected from frost. The usual method of propagation is from cuttings. Propagation from cuttings is done in late fall through winter.

Taken together, the fragrance, our climate and the natural inclinations of Sweet Olive, the ability to propagate the specimen and its longevity, this charming plant can only enhance an East Baton Rouge area garden.

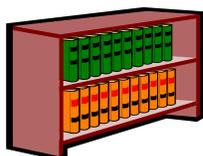
## PROPAGATION FROM TIP CUTTINGS

*by Vivian Adair Neely, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Tip cuttings of “semi-ripe” wood are most productive, although some success has been made with hard wood and soft wood tip cuttings. “Semi-ripe wood” is a twig of current year’s growth, firm at the base and soft at the tip. Always use tip cuttings when harvesting stems for propagation. “Heel cuttings” will probably be most successful. “Heel cuttings” are rich in growth hormones and protect the twig from rot. To acquire heel cuttings, pull away side shoots up to 4 inches long so the shoots keep a heel, which is an appendage of bark, from the main shoot. Prepare for planting by trimming off any length of bark that may be adhering to the twig, scraping bark off the opposite side of the twig from the heel. The strength in the heel is where the shoot attaches to the parent plant. The tip cuttings of semi-ripe wood, then, are best done using the heel cutting.



Follow good propagation techniques. Use sterile clippers and blades. Provide moist, good quality potting soil. Use a good quality rooting hormone. Take cuttings of no more than 4 inches. Cut just below a node or where the twig meets the branch.. Use a dibble or some other clean object to make holes in the soil. Remove all but the last two leaves from each twig, and cut off half of each of the two remaining leaves. Scrape or skin bark on one side of base of cutting. Dust or dip the base with a sterile rooting hormone, shaking off any excess. Put the twigs in the holes, making sure the leaves do not touch, and gently firm the potting soil around the twig so it will stand. Place in green house or under clear plastic, out of the sun, with plastic not touching the twigs or leaves. Exercise patience, as it will take some weeks for growth to show.



## FROM THE GARDENER’S BOOKSHELF

*Gardening in Louisiana* (Cool Springs Press, 2006, revised edition), by Dan Gill, is an excellent resource for things that need to be done in your garden on a month-by-month basis. This book is available at most local bookstores. It is an expanded checklist full of timely information that relates specifically to Louisiana’s unique growing conditions. Clearly presented and well organized, the information will help give you information on:

- Basic garden design, plant selection, watering, fertilization and pest control
- When and how to prune
- How to create colorful, successful gardens
- Plant categories including annuals, bulbs, herbs, vegetables, lawns, perennials, roses, shrubs, trees, vines, ground covers, ornamental grasses, and water and bog gardens
- Twelve monthly calendars make it easy to find the proper gardening advice.

## THE VERSATILE LANDSCAPE

by Betty Miley, Louisiana Master Gardener

Vitruvius, the great architect of ancient Rome, wrote that every structure should combine beauty and practicality. If we apply that philosophy to our homes and gardens, we no longer put useful plants in one area and beautiful items in another. We don't hide useful vegetable gardens in the back yard and display beautiful plants in the front yard. Instead, we find ways to blend the two objectives.

Some people try to accomplish this goal by using edible plants in the traditional home landscape. Enterprising gardeners who want fresh vegetables, for example, can tuck short-lived plants--such as lettuce, radishes, cabbage, and dill--among their ornamental shrubs and flowering perennials in the front yard. Edible plants often make decorative accents: cherry tomatoes in hanging baskets, rosemary and other herbs in ornamental containers, colorful Swiss chard among flowering annuals.

Small fruit-producing trees and shrubs also qualify as useful ornamentals, when chosen specifically for hardiness and for soil pH and moisture. Numerous varieties of plum and blueberry, for instance, enhance front yards with beautiful foliage and delicious fruit. They make attractive flowers in the spring and add picturesque appeal all year long. Visitors to my own yard are impressed with the beauty of our native elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), which makes large white flower clusters in the middle of summer. It also produces bounteous crops of small black berries for pies, jellies, and wines. Many frugivorous (fruit-eating) birds enjoy the berries as well. When the leaves fall in autumn, elderberry's bare trunk and branches transform into a charming natural sculpture.

Another garden/landscape idea comes to us from tropical climates. Soils in hot, humid climates often cannot tolerate as much disturbance (tillage) as those of temperate zones. For hundreds of years, tropical farmers all over the world developed edible forest gardening as a sustainable plant culture that requires low maintenance. Many of the plants in this long-term garden plan grow well in shady conditions of mature forests. Home gardeners who want to try this design can find ample literature explaining how to choose and place plants where they can receive enough sunlight to make flowers and set fruit.

Southern growers who want a versatile landscape can use many features of edible landscaping and forest gardening. With our long growing season and abundant sunshine, we should be able to produce some mighty fine-looking landscapes good enough to eat.

If you are interested in this topic, you may want to look at this internet site:

"Plant an Edible Forest Garden," by Harvey Ussery

(<http://www.motherearthnews.com/Organic-Gardening/2007-08-01/Plant-Edible-Forest-Garden-Permaculture.aspx>). Several books explore the subject in greater detail:

Edible Forest Gardens (2 volume set). 2005. by Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier. Chelsea Green Pub. Co., White River Junction, VT.

Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape. 1996. by Robert A de J Hart. Chelsea Green Pub. Co., White River Junction, VT.

Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture. 2001. by Toby Hemenway. Chelsea Green Pub. Co., White River Junction, VT.

Permaculture: A Designer's Manual. 1988. by Bill Mollison. Tagari Publications, Tyalgum, Australia.



## Edible Forest Gardening in Louisiana

is a long-term landscape design that mimics natural forests.

**Its goal is a sustainable landscape that is almost self-maintaining and self-fertilizing. It emphasizes native plants over exotics.**

**Over time, the area will see a rise in biodiversity and increased levels of organic matter in the soil (no tilling or disturbance of soil microorganisms).**

**Note: Many other food plants, annuals especially, are usually planted where they will receive greater sunlight, irrigation, and disruption of the soil at root level: the 3 sisters (corn, squash beans), tomatoes, melons, okra**

| Tall Trees   | Medium Trees  | Small Trees/Shrubs  | Vines on arbor, trellis, or sprawling on ground   | Herbaceous mostly perennials  | Underground/Root Layer  |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| firewood:<br>oaks,<br><br>hickory/pecan,<br>other<br>hardwoods                               | fruit:<br>black<br>cherry,<br><br>persimmon,<br>pawpaw                        | fruit: blueberry,<br>chokecherry/<br>chokeberry,<br>crabapple,<br>citrus, fig,<br>pear, plum,<br>elderberry,<br>mayhaw,<br>serviceberry | fruit/vegetables:<br>cucumber, kiwi<br>muscadine grape,<br>hops,<br><br>passionflower/maypop    | fruit/vegetables:<br>asparagus,<br>chives,<br>strawberry,<br>chard,<br>nasturtium,<br>clover,<br>comfrey,<br>poke | vegetables;<br>garlic chives,<br>onion, peanut,<br>potato,<br>radish,<br>Jerusalem<br>artichoke,<br>groundnut,<br>camas |
| nuts/fruit:<br>black walnut,<br>pecan,<br>red mulberry                                       | seasoning:<br>red bay,<br>white bay   | crafts:<br>bamboo (cane)  | crafts:<br>grapevines for<br>wreaths  | nectar for bees,<br>& other<br>pollinators  | pest repellent<br>(onion, garlic)   |
| leaves provide<br>shade in<br>summer and<br>mulch in<br>autumn:<br>oak leaves,<br>pine straw | soil<br>enrichment/<br>nitrogen-<br>fixing:<br>black<br>locust,<br>wax myrtle | animal enrichment:<br>food and habitat<br>for birds and<br>other desirable<br>wildlife  | animal enrichment:<br>nectar and food for<br>butterflies, birds,<br>other beneficial<br>insects | soil enrichment/<br>compost<br>material<br>(clover,<br>comfrey)   | soil<br>enrichment/<br>nitrogen<br>fixing:<br>groundnut,<br>peanut  |



## TIPS AND TIDBITS

How do we know if a plant is a lily or an amaryllis? Easy enough when it blooms. The ovary, where the seeds grow, is within the flower of the lily. In the amaryllis the ovary, therefore the seed set, is below the petals.

Citrus seeds need to be kept moist to assure germination. To save a seed, tuck it inside a section of the fruit for a few hours if the section is kept moist, then plant the section and all. The sugar and moisture provided by the wedge of the fruit will assist it in its safe journey from seed to seedling. Remember, however, that the seed may not produce fruit true to the parent tree. Cross pollination can bring in some real surprises, including happy ones.

## USE CARE WITH PRE-EMERGENTS FOR WEED CONTROL

*by Vivian Adair Neeby, Louisiana Master Gardener*

Be careful using pre-emergents for weed control. Pre-emergents, those chemicals worked into the soil to prevent weed seed from sprouting, have at least two problems.

While they can be useful for controlling weeds from seed, the chemicals in a pre-emergent will stop the reseeding of *desired ornamentals*. If pre-emergents are used in a bed of desirable plants, the next season you will have to collect seed and start them in pots or purchase new ones.

The second problem is less well known. Pre-emergents worked in the soil in beds under or near woody plants (trees, shrubs) will assuredly cause the roots to not function properly. The lack of healthy functioning of the woody plant roots means lack of healthy functioning for the plant.

Remembering that healthy roots are as important as any other part of the plants, gardeners will want to avoid using pre-emergents in those places. For garden plots that are more than 10 ft. from the drip line of trees, or that do not have woody shrubs in them and for plants that are not expected to reseed, the pre-emergents can save a lot of weeding time. (Think in terms of parks, golf courses, and expansive lawns.)

For weed control, it is usually better to depend on a good cover of pine needles and early removal of the weeds that do take root. Pine needles are preferred to pine bark for weed retardation. (And pine mulch provides superior water retention as well as excellent humus for the soil seasonally.)



## MOON FACTS

*by Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener*

- **The Full Cold Moon; or the Full Long Nights Moon - December** During this month the winter cold fastens its grip, and nights are at their longest and darkest. It is also sometimes called the Moon before Yule. The term Long Night Moon is a doubly appropriate name because the midwinter night is indeed long, and because the Moon is above the horizon for a long time. The midwinter full Moon has a high trajectory across the sky because it is opposite a low Sun.
- **Full Wolf Moon - January** Amid the cold and deep snows of midwinter, the wolf packs howled hungrily outside Indian villages. Thus, the name for January's full Moon. Sometimes it was also referred to as the Old Moon, or the Moon After Yule. Some called it the Full Snow Moon, but most tribes applied that name to the next Moon.
- **Full Snow Moon - February** Since the heaviest snow usually falls during this month, native tribes of the north and east most often called February's full Moon the Full Snow Moon. Some tribes also referred to this Moon as the Full Hunger Moon, since harsh weather conditions in their areas made hunting very difficult.

*Sources: United States Naval Observatory (aa.usno.navy.mil) and Wikipedia (wikipedia.com)*

# CHIVES: AN HERB PROFILE FOR THE HOME GARDENER

by Arlene Kestner Ph.D., Louisiana Master Gardener



Chives are bulbous perennial herbs of the genus *Allium* in the *Lilliaceae*, or Lily family. These winter hardy plants are grown for their onion or garlic-flavored leaves and their edible flower heads. The leaves of all chive-like plants grow upright. Onion chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) have tubular leaves, while those of garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*) are flattened. Onion chives bear abundant rose-colored flower heads in early May. The white flower heads of garlic chives usually appear in late August.

## Cultivation.

Onion chives, also known as common chives and garlic chives are easy to grow from seed, though it will take at least a year before the plant is large enough to harvest. It is best to start with a purchased plant as the chives increase in size each year by bulb division. To keep vigorous growth, divide clumps of chives every 2-3 years.

Plant chives in a sunny garden spot with well-drained soil. As with other onion-type vegetables, chives will benefit from a side dressing of organic fertilizer. Once the chives have bloomed, remove the spent flowers. This is especially necessary with garlic chives, as their very fertile seeds will self-sow aggressively. When harvesting chives be sure to cut the outside leaves first rather than shearing the entire plant. If you wish to harvest large quantities of chives, allow an inch of leaves to remain at the base of the plant. The clump of chives will regenerate in 2-4 weeks with new tender leaf growth.

## Uses.

Chive leaves are snipped and used primarily fresh, stirred into uncooked foods such as soft cheeses and salads. Chives should be added to cooked foods during the last few minutes of cooking. Overheating the herb will destroy the flavor. Onion chives blend well with seafood, eggs, potatoes, lettuce salads, creamy salad dressings, cheese spreads, soups and sauces. Garlic chives are a welcome addition to hardy soups, omelets and homemade salsas. The mild garlic-onion flavor will enrich your favorite shrimp or crawfish etouffee recipe. Add 2-3 tablespoons of finely snipped garlic chives to etouffee toward the end of the cooking cycle.

## CULINARY HERB BUTTER

1 stick unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons onion chives, snipped  
1/2 tablespoon lemon juice  
Zest from half a lemon

Allow butter to soften at room temperature. In a small bowl, combine herbs into softened butter. Add lemon juice and zest. Refrigerate for several hours so flavors can blend. Serve on breads and rolls and cooked vegetables including winter garden harvests of carrots, cauliflower or broccoli. A dollop of the culinary herb butter will provide a great flavor enhancement to steaks and grilled fish or seafood.

Recipe © Arlene Kestner

“Gardening, reading about gardening, and writing about gardening are all one; no one can garden alone.”  
*Elizabeth Lawrence, The Little Bulbs (1957)*

## **GO *THERE*, to a BATON ROUGE WINTER GARDEN**

*by Vivian Adair Neeby, Louisiana Master Gardener*

**Go there . . . in the colder weather.**

**See the green.  
Arum, Trillium, Iris.**

**Go there . . . to the rose bush.**

**See the buds.  
Next year's branch and bloom.**

**Go there . . . to the food garden.**

**See the greens.  
Food for table now.**

**Go there . . . to the trees.**

**See the promise.  
Flowers, fruit, buds, nuts.**

**Go there . . . to the ornamentals.**

**See the bloom.  
Camellias, red to white.**

**Go there . . . to the fragrant shrub.**

**See and smell.  
Sweet olive, fragrant camellias.**

**Go there . . .to what now is**

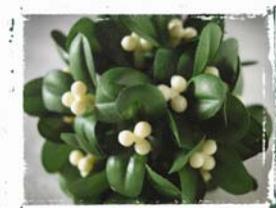
**See, remember.  
What was, what will be.**

## **UNDER THE MISTLETOE**

*by Linda Day Phillips, Louisiana Master Gardener*

A pretty red ribbon holds a mistletoe branch from a doorway and sets the stage for kissing during the holiday season.

Mistletoe (*Phoradendrum* sp.) is a pest that gets most of its nourishment from the tree on which it grows. Usually it is not deadly to the host, but often causes bulges and warping in a branch where it has taken root. If enough mistletoe infests a weakened tree, the tree may be stressed to death.



Most arborists encourage people to remove it as soon as they find it on their trees. If the limbs can be pruned without destroying the tree structure, then they should be pruned back to their point of origin. If this is not possible, cut the mistletoe off at its base. The goal is to not let it seed.

Unless you remove the limb at least a foot below the point the mistletoe is attached, the mistletoe will grow back from its roots (called haustoria). On larger established trees, it is better to focus on managing it.

The best way to prevent mistletoe from growing in the first place, is to plant mistletoe resistant trees. (crepe myrtle, persimmon, sweet gum, sycamore, cedars and conifers, are a few).

The most appropriate month for working on control is December. Harvesting mistletoe at Christmas is, of course, and excellent use of plant material.

# WINTER IN THE GARDEN!



## THE HOME GARDENER

An East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners Program Publication



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### Baton Rouge Botanic Garden at Independence Park

7950 Independence Boulevard  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806  
225-928-2270

The Baton Rouge Botanic Garden volunteers work at 7950 Independence Boulevard on Monday afternoon from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. and every third Saturday from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m., weather permitting. The work is maintenance of the flower beds and propagation of plants to sell at the two plants sales held in the garden to raise money. Contact Claire Fontenot at [clafon@eatel.net](mailto:clafon@eatel.net) or 225-753-1100, for more information.

The Botanic Garden Volunteers recycle garden pots. The pots may be dropped off in the fenced area to the left of the parking lot near the storage shed. The pots are used to grow plants for the garden and for the plant sales. Proceeds of the plant sales go to the Garden.

### Ione Burden Conference Center

4560 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808  
225-763-3999  
[www.agcenter.lsu.edu](http://www.agcenter.lsu.edu)

### Native Plant Society

For a complete Louisiana calendar of upcoming events and membership information visit their website at: [www.lnps.org](http://www.lnps.org)

### The Herb Society of America's Baton Rouge Unit

Meetings are held at the Baton Rouge Garden Center located at 7950 Independence Boulevard, Baton Rouge LA. All meetings start at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday from January through June and September and October. For more information contact Rita Salman at 225-291-5684.

### The Herbarium of Louisiana State University

The Herbarium, located on the Baton Rouge campus of Louisiana State University, studies biodiversity—green plants, lichens and fungi—from the state of Louisiana and around the world.

The herbarium is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, exception University holidays. Be sure to call ahead to make sure someone is available to assist you. 225-578-8564 ([www.herbarium.lsu.edu](http://www.herbarium.lsu.edu))

### Hilltop Arboretum

11855 Highland Road  
Baton Rouge, LA 70810  
225-767-6916  
email: [hilltop@lsu.edu](mailto:hilltop@lsu.edu)  
[www.hilltop.lsu.edu](http://www.hilltop.lsu.edu)



"I heard a bird sing in the dark of December  
A magical thing and sweet to remember.  
We are nearer to Spring than we were in September."  
- Oliver Herford, I HEARD A BIRD SING