

Horticulture Hints



Fall
2016

Ornamentals Fall 2016

Louisiana Super Plants Are Tough, Beautiful

The Louisiana Super Plants program is an LSU AgCenter educational and marketing campaign that highlights tough and beautiful plants that perform well in Louisiana landscapes.

Louisiana Super Plants selections have a history of outstanding performance in Louisiana or have gone through several years of university evaluations and observations. Louisiana Super Plants are "university-tested and industry approved."

Go to LSUAgCenter.com/superplants for more information. Click on "Where to Find Super Plants" to find participating retail nurseries near you.

Louisiana Super Plants Selection for Fall 2016

Mrs. Schiller's Delight Walter's Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*, Mrs. Schiller's Delight)

- Hardy native shrub.
- Full to part sun, good drainage.
- Compact; about 3 feet tall and wide.
- Can be sheared to shape.
- Best planted in fall or early spring to establish during cooler weather.
- Excellent alternative to dwarf yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria* dwarf cultivars).
- White spring flowers are rich in nectar and are attractive to butterflies and bees.
- Small, evergreen leaves.
- Reliable performance over many years throughout Louisiana.



Cool-season Flowers

Cool-season bedding plants can be planted now to make your landscape an exciting and colorful place this fall, winter and especially next spring. Careful bed preparation and thoughtful planning when selecting the plants to grow will help make sure you are pleased with the results of your efforts.

The bedding plants we plant this time of year prefer cool-to-mild days and chilly-to-cold nights. Most of these plants are hardy down to at least 20 degrees F or lower, and gardeners in both south and north Louisiana have a nice selection to choose from.

Cool-season bedding plants 4 to 8 inches tall:

Sweet alyssum, lobelia*, pansy, Johnny-jump-up, viola, primrose*, cyclamen*, petunia*, dwarf snapdragon, ornamental kale and cabbage and annual phlox.

Cool-season bedding plants 8 to 15 inches tall:

Medium-size snapdragons, dwarf toadflax*, dwarf stock, candytuft, calendula*, bluebonnet, dianthus, sweet William, dwarf nicotiana* and California poppy.

Cool-season bedding plants taller than 15 inches:

Iceland poppy, peony-flowered poppy, toadflax*, tall snapdragons, stock, statice, larkspur, delphinium, hollyhock, sweet peas (vine) and nicotiana*.

**These plants are more reliably hardy in south Louisiana.*

Cool-season bedding plants easily direct-seeded:

Alyssum, Johnny-jump-up, bluebonnet, calendula, annual phlox, nasturtium, sweet peas, larkspur, poppies.

Sweet peas, larkspur and poppies resent transplanting and are generally best direct-seeded where they will grow.

Cool-season Color Schemes

When you decide it's time to pull out the warm-season bedding plants and replant your flower beds and containers, lots of wonderful cool-season bedding plants are available at area nurseries.

The role these plants play in our landscapes is to provide color. What colors to plant or how you combine them is mostly a matter of taste. But, you should at least think about your color scheme and what you are trying to accomplish with color. Here are some quick tips to get you started.

- Combine cool colors together or warm colors together for reliably harmonious results. The colors within each group naturally combine well and look good together.

Cool colors include reds with a blue tint, burgundy, rose, pink, magenta, purple, violet, lavender, blue, navy and any variations of those colors.

Warm colors include reds with an orange tint, orange, gold, yellow, rust, peach and any variations on these colors.

White combines equally well with either group, and true-blue flowers also look good with just about any other color.

- Use color where you want to focus attention. Never use color to beautify an unattractive feature in your landscape such as a fire hydrant, storage shed or trash can area. You will simply make sure everyone notices it.

- Use color where you can enjoy it. Don't forget to include plantings of colorful cool-season bedding plants in beds, containers and hanging baskets around the patio and other outdoor living areas. Fragrant

plants such as alyssum, stock and nicotiana are especially nice.

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

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

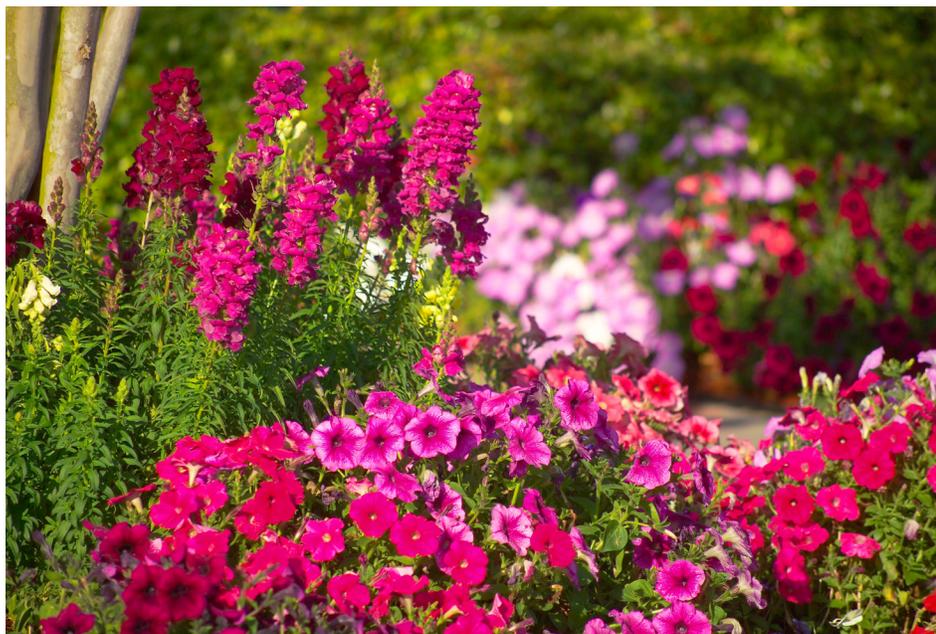
Creating an attractive, colorful look is easier than ever. But do a little thinking and planning before you go to the nursery, and you will generally be more pleased with the results.



Selecting Trees for the Landscape

Fall is the prime time to plant hardy trees and shrubs in the landscape. As the weather cools down, think about whether you need to add trees to your landscape.

Trees are a vital part of most landscapes and can provide shade, privacy, windbreaks, fruit or nuts and flowers and increase real estate value. Select and place them carefully because trees are a part of your landscape that will be around for a long time, and mistakes are not easily corrected later on when the trees are large.



There is no one perfect tree for Louisiana. All trees have advantages and disadvantages, depending on the planting location and desired characteristics. Here are some points you need to consider:

- Think about the desired **mature** size. Planting a tree that will grow too large for its location is one of the most common mistakes people make (along with planting too many trees). A patio might benefit from a small 15- to 25-foot-tall tree planted nearby, but be completely overwhelmed by a large tree. Generally, small trees are 15 to 25 feet tall, medium-size trees are from 30 to 55 feet tall, and large trees are 60 feet or taller. Larger trees, such as live oaks, sycamores and pecans, generally grow too large for the average urban or suburban lot.

- Think about the purpose of the tree and why it is needed. This will help you determine what characteristics the tree should have, such as its shape, size and rate of growth. Ornamental features should also be considered such as flowers, attractive berries, brightly colored fall foliage or unusual bark.

- Decide if you want a tree that retains its foliage year-round (evergreen) or loses its leaves in the winter (deciduous). Deciduous trees are particularly useful where you want shade in the summer and sun in the winter. Small to medium evergreen trees are useful as sound barriers or privacy screens.

- Choose trees that are well-adapted to our local growing conditions. They must be able to tolerate long, hot summers and mild winters, which makes a variety of northern species you might see in catalogs unsuitable for our area. Trees that are not completely hardy are not good choices either.

- Don't forget to check the location of overhead power lines, and if you must plant under them, use small, low-growing trees. Also, consider walks, drives and other paved surfaces that may be damaged by the roots of large trees. Locate large trees at least 15 feet away from paved surfaces and your house.



Digging and Storing Caladiums

Caladiums begin to look tired in late September or early October, so it's time to decide what you want to do with them. You may leave the tubers in the ground to re-sprout there next year, or dig them up, store the tubers and plant them again next year.

If the bed where the caladiums are planted will stay relatively undisturbed, you may simply leave the caladium tubers in the ground. But, the tubers often rot in cold, wet soil over the winter and may not return. Digging and storing the tubers is the best way to ensure they survive the winter.

If you decide to dig your caladiums, do so when most of the foliage looks "tired" and begins to fall over. Do not wait for all of the foliage to disappear, or you won't know where to dig. Use a shovel or a garden fork to lift the tubers, being careful not to damage them. Leave the foliage attached to the tubers, shake and brush off most of the soil and lay them out in a dry location sheltered from rain (in a garage, under a carport or in a store room).

Allow the foliage to dry until it is tan and papery in appearance. At that time, the foliage will easily separate from the tubers, leaving a cleanly healed scar. Now they are ready for storing over the winter.

Throw out any tubers that appear to be rotted or have soft spots. Tubers that you may have accidentally damaged when digging them can be saved if they have healed well and feel solid.

Gardeners sometimes have a hard time deciding which end is up when planting caladium tubers. If you like, use a felt-tipped pen to mark the top while it is easy to see where the leaves were removed, saving yourself confusion next spring.

Place the healthy tubers in an old nylon stocking, a mesh bag (such as an onion sack), a paper bag or cardboard box. The idea is that the container should be able to "breathe." Do not store the tubers in a plastic bag or airtight container because doing so may lead to rotting. Make sure you keep the tubers indoors where temperatures will stay at about 70 degrees F or above.



Garden Mums Are Colorful in Fall

Garden chrysanthemums are hardy, herbaceous perennials that generally bloom from October to December in Louisiana. They are short, bushy plants – about 12 to 18 inches tall – that literally cover themselves with clusters of small 1- to 1½-inch flowers in virtually every color except blue.

When purchasing garden mums, select plants with mostly closed buds and healthy foliage. Plants already in full bloom will not be attractive as long. Chrysanthemums can be quite brittle, especially the larger plants in gallon containers, so handle them carefully as you bring them home. Garden mums may be planted in containers or in beds with existing shrubs.

Depending on how far along the blooming process was when the plants were purchased and the temperature (the flowers don't last as long when it is still hot), the flowers generally last about two or three weeks. Some gardeners use mums as temporary color in the landscape, and when the flowers fade, the plants are removed and replaced with cool-season bedding plants. Chrysanthemums will, however, bloom in the fall garden for many years.

After they finish flowering, garden mums should be cut back far enough to remove all of the faded flowers (about one-quarter their height). If the winter stays very mild, some mums will re-bloom.

Drift Roses

Drift roses are a great new series of low-growing landscape roses that have been named Louisiana Super Plants selections. Fall is a great time to plant roses – they establish wonderfully in the cooler weather and provide outstanding color to the fall garden.

The Drift roses were bred and selected to provide all of the resilience, disease resistance and frequent flowering of larger landscape roses on much lower-growing bushes. Drift roses fill a special niche in the landscape rose market. They will fit beautifully into smaller landscape spaces, provide the perfect size shrub for foundation plantings and look great in containers.

They only grow 2 to 3 feet tall with a generous spread of 4 feet or more. The low, spreading habit, colorful flowers and long blooming season of Drift roses make them so useful in the landscape. These ground-hugging, ever-blooming shrubs are perfect as a border or bedding plant. They make a stunning low hedge or may be used to edge a bed of taller shrubs.

The Drift rose series includes a wide variety of colors. All the colors in the Drift series of roses have been designated Louisiana Super Plant selections, including Drift Pink, Drift Coral, Drift Red, Drift Peach, Drift Apricot, Drift Sweet (pink double blooms) and the new Drift Popcorn (whitish yellow). Some of the Drift roses produce double flowers, and some produce single flowers. All of them produce their flowers in large clusters that can virtually cover the bushes when they are in full bloom. Flower flushes occur from late spring through fall.

The cooler weather of fall makes it a joy to get out and plant roses. Be sure to plant Drift roses in a well-prepared landscape bed enriched with generous amounts of organic matter, such as compost. Good drainage produces best results, so avoid low, wet areas or plant in raised beds. Space individual plants a minimum of 3 feet apart.

Drift roses are tough and easy to grow. Appealing to today's busy gardener, these low-maintenance roses are highly disease resistant. They require no spraying. Blackspot disease has been very minimal on plants grown in Louisiana.



Checklist for September, October, November



1. Begin preparing beds for fall planting.
2. Take soil samples from landscape beds and submit to the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing Laboratory for analysis. Check with your parish LSU AgCenter Extension office for more information.
3. Fall is a great time to plant hardy trees, shrubs, ground covers and vine.
4. Plant spring-flowering bulbs in your gardens from late October through early December. Exceptions are tulips and hyacinths, which must be refrigerated and planted in late December or early January.
5. Garden mums make a great addition for fall color. Check at your local retail garden center for availability.
6. Watch azalea plantings for early fall infestations of lace bugs. Control with acephate, horticultural oil sprays (bifenthrin, cyfluthrin or permethrin) and other recommended insecticides.
7. Build a compost pile out of leaves, grass clippings and remains from your vegetable garden.
8. September is a good time to divide and transplant Louisiana irises, if you need to. Fertilize your irises in October.
9. Many of the summer-blooming perennials are finished or finishing up their floral display for the year. Cut back the flower stalks and old faded flowers to keep the plants looking attractive.
10. October weather can be dry. Water plantings as needed. Pay special attention to any newly planted areas. It generally is best to water direct-seeded beds of flowers or vegetables lightly every day to make sure the seeds do not dry out.
11. Prune everblooming roses by early September.
12. Fall is an excellent time to plant many herbs in the garden. A few herb plants provide a lot of harvest, so don't plant more than you can use. Herbs to plant now include parsley, sage, thyme, dill, cilantro, rosemary, oregano, borage, fennel, nasturtium, French tarragon, chives, mint and catnip.
13. Trees that provide good to excellent fall color in Louisiana include bald cypress, nuttall oak, Shumard oak, cherry bark oak, flowering pear, Chinese pistachio, ginkgo, Japanese maple, sweet gum, sumac, red maple, Southern sugar maple and hickory.



Dan Gill
Consumer Horticulture Specialist

Vegetable Gardening

The holidays are approaching, and to-do lists and shopping lists never seem to end. Take a break from the chaos, and spend a little time in the garden. Doing so may actually ease your state of mind and put less stress on your pocketbook.

Wait, what did you say? Gardening may help me save money during the holiday season? No, not tons, but having a lovely garden improves the look of your yard, so there is no need to go overboard on Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations if the yard is in tip-top shape. Moreover, there is plenty to harvest at this time.

Incorporate your garden veggies into your Thanksgiving menu. Vegetable crops such as beets, turnips, greens, lettuce, some fall tomatoes (if weather stays warm, and you provide a little protection), pumpkins, squash, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and more can be harvested right now!



Vegetables to Plant

Even though the weather is starting to cool, there is plenty of time to plant crops. See the lists in the months below to know what to plant.

September

- Plant beets, broccoli, Brussels sprout, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, cauliflower and cabbage transplants or seeds throughout September.
- Plant parsley, snap beans seed in early September.
- Plant endive, carrot, English pea, snow pea, garlic, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard and onion seed in late September.
- Plant radish, rutabaga, shallot (sets), spinach, Swiss chard, turnip and kale seed all month long

October

- Plant cabbage, broccoli transplants throughout October.
- Plant mustard, turnips, collards, kale, parsley, shallots, radishes, beets, spinach, leaf lettuce, Chinese cabbage, celery, onion, Swiss chard, garlic, carrot and endive seed during early October.

November

- Plant beet, Swiss chard and spinach seed or transplants in early November.
- Plant shallot and garlic bulbs during early November.
- Kale, radishes, mustard, carrots and turnips can be seeded in early November.

Crop Highlights

Onions (bulbing)

Onion seed may be sown into containers for transplanting during December. Start seeds mid-September until mid-October. Keep the soil moist, because seed coats are hard. It may take up to two weeks for onion seeds to germinate. Onion transplants should be the width of a small pencil or smaller when planted to avoid bolting. Seeds can be sown directly into the garden space, where they will mature in late May to early June.

In Louisiana, we plant **short-day varieties**, so try these:

Red: Red Creole C5, Pinot Rouge or Red Burgundy.

White: Super Star Hybrid (All-America Selections), Candy (golden), White Bermuda or Georgia Boy.

Yellow: Granex 33, Texas Grano 1015Y, Nirvana, Savannah Sweet or Sweet Melody.

Fertilize plants sparingly prior to planting in the ground. This will prevent excessive growth, premature seed stalk development and bolting. About 2 to 3 pounds of 20-20-20 or 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row is sufficient. Side-dress onions during the spring just before they bulb. Then sidedress two additional times at two- to three-week intervals. (Follow the same schedule for bulbing shallots.)

Green Shallots

Plant shallot sets any time during the fall or winter. Re-plant a portion of the bulbs each time you harvest. By doing this, you will continue to produce shallots throughout the spring. The largest shallot bulbs for sets are produced when transplanting from mid-November to December.

Garlic

Garlic bulbs are separated into individual toes and planted throughout late September and all of October. Tahiti and elephant garlic are the largest and mildest of the recommended garlic varieties. The Italian and Creole varieties are smaller and stronger. Louisianans can grow any soft neck varieties.



Check the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Market Bulletin's website for possible sources of sets, or visit your local hardware store.

Plant the toes 1 inch deep and 4 to 6 inches apart. Several drills may be planted on one row. Allow 6 to 8 inches between drills. Fertilize before planting with 4 to 5 pounds of 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row. Sidedress with nitrogen after garlic has sprouted and again in February and March just before the bulbs swell.



Lettuce

September and October are the best months to plant lettuce. All lettuce types (head, butterhead, Romaine and leaf) should be planted so they are harvested before a hard frost. Date from seed to maturity varies widely by cultivar. Space lettuce plants 12 inches apart in the row. They may be double-drilled. Three to four weeks after transplanting, sidedress lettuce and repeat sidedressing again two to three weeks after the first application.

Recommended **lettuce varieties** include:

Semihead: Green Forest, Buttercrunch (All-America Selections), Oak Leaf or Parris.

Leaf: Simpson Elite, Red Fire, Red Salad Bowl, Nevada or Sierra.

Head: Great Lakes, Ithaca or Maverick.

Romaine: Green Towers, Bambi (dwarf romaine) and Cimarron.

Lettuce seeds should be lightly covered for best germination, but some varieties require sunlight, so read the seed packet! If sunlight is required for germination, simply press the seeds into the soil rather than covering.

For endive or escarole, choose Ruffle, Salad King or Full Heart.

Greens

Direct-seed greens throughout the fall. As the seeds emerge, thin them to 3-4 inches between plants. A trick to avoiding thick plantings is to shake the seeds out of a recycled herb/spice container into the soil. For optimum germination, keep the soil moist. To control weeds, incorporate Treflan into the soil prior to planting. Double drills may be planted on one row, allowing 10 to 12 inches between drills.

Recommended **greens** include:

Collards: Blue Max, Champion, Top Bunch or Top Pick.

Mustards: Green Wave, Red Giant, Golden Fills, Tendergreen and Florida Broadleaf.

Broccoli and Cauliflower

Transplant both broccoli and cauliflower during September and October in south Louisiana. Space cauliflower 12 to 18 inches apart and broccoli 9 to 18 inches apart. Space broccoli on 12 inch centers and double drill them on the row. Cauliflower is very large, so double-drilling is not recommend.

Both crops respond to fairly high rates of fertilizer. Apply 4 to 6 pounds of 8-8-8 or 3 to 4 pounds of 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row as a pre-plant fertilizer. Sidedress cauliflower and broccoli with 4 cups of calcium nitrate per 100 feet of row about two to four weeks after transplanting. Sidedress again at two-week intervals two to three more times. This will increase yield.

Recommended **broccoli varieties** include Packman, Green Magic, Castle Dome, Everest, Windsor, Diplomat, Patron and Gypsy. Recommended **early cauliflower hybrids** are Snow Crown (All-America Selections), Majestic, Freedom, Cumberland, Candid Charm and White Rock.



Cabbage

Recommended varieties for fall and winter **cabbage** are Bravo, Rio Verde, Silver Dynasty, Thunderhead, Emblem, OS Cross, Blue Vantage, Cheers and Vantage Point.

Chinese Cabbage

Chinese cabbage is an excellent crop for fall gardens because the heads are pretty as well as tasty. Seeds are planted in September. Solid heads form 55 to 60 days after seeding.

English Peas and Snow Peas

Plant English peas, snow peas and other edible pods during September. The key to success is to plant the peas early enough so they bloom before frost and late enough so they aren't blooming when temperatures are too high.

Space peas 1 to 2 inches apart. About 2 to 4 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. Between 70 and 80 days are required from planting until harvest. Staking or trellising peas, even the bush types, will help increase useful yields.



Spinach

Spinach requires a cool, fertile and well-drained soil with a pH of 6 to 7. Wait until temperatures cool for best germination, or germinate seed in the refrigerator prior to sowing. Moisten seeds, and place them in the refrigerator for 24 hours, then sow.

Apply 4 to 5 pounds of a complete fertilizer such as 13-13-13 per 100 feet of row about two weeks before planting. Two pounds of calcium nitrate per 100 feet of row is needed for sidedressing approximately one month after seeding. Doing so will keep spinach growing quickly, making it tender and improving quality. An additional sidedressing after harvest will improve yields on second cuttings.

Plant seeds about ½ inch deep, and thin plants to 1 to 3 inches apart in the row. Since seeds are slow to germinate, be sure to keep soil moist. Double drills may be planted on one row. Allow 8 to 12 inches between drills.

Suggested **spinach** varieties are Melody, Ballet and Tiger Cat.



Pumpkins and Winter Squash

Harvest pumpkins and winter squash after they have developed a hard rind and are the appropriate color for their varieties. If the rind cannot be easily penetrated by the thumbnail, the fruit is mature. Leave about 3 inches of stem attached to the fruit. If stored in a cool, dry place (off the ground and floor, if possible), these cucurbits will keep well for several months.

Watch out for worms. If they eat all of the foliage, pumpkins will be sunburned (just like with watermelons). Bt and Sevin are great insecticides for use with pumpkins. But try to spray at dusk to minimize injury to pollinators.

Carrots

Start direct-seeding carrots during September and continue to plant throughout the fall season. Form high, well-drained rows. Thin seedlings to about 2 inches apart.

Choose Danvers 126, Thumbelina and Purple Haze (All-America Selections). For sandy soils, use Apache, Choctaw, Big Sur, Maverick or Navaho. If you have heavy clay soils, simply cover the seeds with a loose potting mix. Clay soils tend to form a crust and prevent the seeds from emerging.

Beets

Direct-seed beets from fall through winter. Choose Ruby Queen, Scarlet Supreme, Chariot or Solo.

*Kathryn Fontenot, Ph.D.
Extension Vegetable Specialist*



LouEASYana GARDENING

CareFree Carrots

The LSU AgCenter extends its best wishes for all those affected by the recent flooding. Many people in south Louisiana lost homes, vehicles and personal items instantly. Others were affected by a slow flood that took (and as I write this), is still taking, weeks to recede. For those affected by the sudden and very devastating flood, you have plenty to do to get your living arrangements back in order. For those still experiencing the waters, it will be quite a while before you can easily get back into your home and yard.

It is very easy to lose yourself in paperwork, insurance agent meetings and living with family and friends. Please take a moment or two for yourself. I am betting if you are reading this article, gardening might be something you enjoy. So let's grow a mini garden in a pot.

If your yard is still saturated, you do not need to wait for it to dry. If you are living with others, a single pot will not take up too much space. September and October and again mid-January through mid-February are ideal times to plant carrots.

Carrots prefer well-drained loose soil. So forget about the in-ground garden right now. Find a container; any container will suffice as long as it is at least 10 inches deep and has plenty of drainage holes.

Fill your container with a loose potting mix purchased at the local plant nursery or hardware store. Planting carrots in a loose soil ensures they will grow nice and straight. Go ahead and purchase one that comes "pre-charged" or has fertilizer already mixed in it.

Fill the container with soil, and add water until you see it leaching from the drainage holes. Next, simply sprinkle carrot seed onto the soil and either press in the seed with your hand or lightly rake the seed into the soil with your fingertips. Carrots only need to be planted 1/8 inch deep. Burying them too deep will prevent a good stand. Lightly water seeds in one more time.

Check the pot every other day, and keep moist until you start to see the carrots emerge. They will look very thin and delicate. Any seedlings that emerge with broad leaves or that are thick or succulent should be pulled. They are weeds.

Carrots have a thinner appearance than most annual grasses. Once the carrots reach 2-4 inches tall, start thinning the seedlings to 1-2 inches between plants. Keep your container watered, and in about 70 days you'll have delicious, sweet carrots to share with friends, family and neighbors.



Fall Lawns in Louisiana

Should You Fertilize Lawn in Fall?

Louisiana usually stays warm well into the fall, and lawns continue to grow until nighttime temperatures dip into the 50s. So be sure to mow and water your lawn, as needed, to keep it healthy.

More than likely, however, it is time to put up your fertilizer spreader. Fertilizing warm-season grasses during the fall with high nitrogen (summer-type) fertilizers or winterizing fertilizers containing nitrogen are not recommended for Deep South lawns.

Stimulating fall growth of St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass and zoysiagrass with nitrogen leads to increased brown patch disease and winter kill. Bermudagrass may be fertilized into September, but don't make any more applications of nitrogen-containing fertilizers after late August on St. Augustinegrass, centipedegrass or zoysiagrass.

If you would like to extend the green color in home lawns this fall, apply foliar iron spray or spreadable iron granules. This will give you a nice flush of green color without increased growth.

The only other fertilizer that could be applied during the fall is muriate of potash. Muriate of potash (0-0-60) is the true winterizing fertilizer, and it may be applied in September or October to provide increased disease resistance and cold tolerance. Most garden centers and feed stores have some form of potash. Get a soil test before applying potash to your soil, however, since there is no advantage to applying excessive amounts.



Speaking of Soil Tests...

Fall is the best time of the year to get your soil tested by the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing Lab.

Soil testing really is the first step to a beautiful lawn next spring and is the best way to determine exactly what your lawn needs to become thick and healthy. If you haven't tested your soil in the past several years, do it now.

To test your soil, submit a pint of soil to the LSU AgCenter Extension Service office in your parish. The pint should be a composite of soil samples collected from several different areas in the lawn. You only need to go about 4 inches deep. Also, to simplify the soil sampling and submission process, pre-addressed submission boxes with sampling instructions are available at several garden centers throughout the state.

The sample results will be sent to your home mailbox and/or emailed after about two weeks. An LSU AgCenter extension agent can help you interpret the results from the soil sample. Sample results may indicate lime is needed to increase soil pH. If so, fall/winter is a good time to apply lime, since it takes several months to activate in the soil. Elemental sulfur may be recommended to reduce soil pH in alkaline soils.

*Ron Strahan
Weed Scientist/Turfgrass Specialist*

Fruit



Pawpaws

Pawpaws are a member of the tropical Annonaceae (custard apple) plant family, and the pawpaw fruit is the largest edible fruit indigenous to North America. It was grown and eaten by Native Americans and early European settlers. The fruit never managed to catch retailers' attention, however, partly due to its short shelf life.

Pawpaw trees produce greenish-blackish fruit, usually three to six inches long. The flesh is pale to bright yellow and contains a network of glossy, dark brown seeds. A pawpaw's flavor is sunny, electric and downright tropical: a riot of mango-banana-citrus that's incongruous with its temperate, deciduous forest origins. It also has a subtle kick of a yeasty, floral after-taste a bit like unfiltered wheat beer.

Site and Soil Requirements:

Native pawpaw trees are found growing in deep shade near rivers and creeks. Pawpaw trees grow best in bottomland soils with good drainage. Soil pH is in the range of 5.5 to 6.0. Pawpaw trees are sensitive to soil pH higher than 7.0. Although pawpaw trees will tolerate shade, fruit production is limited with increasing shade. For best fruit production, trees should be planted in an area that receives full sun for at least six hours a day during the growing season.

Irrigation Requirements:

Irrigation is important in tree establishment and obtaining a large tree for fruiting. Also, additional water

applied as the fruit begins to ripen will dramatically increase fruit size.

Plant Spacing and Mature Canopy:

Size: Trees are generally spaced at least 8 to 12 feet apart in rows 15 or more feet apart. A mature tree will have a spread of 6 to 8 feet. Space is needed between trees to maintain the orchard and allow for air movement. Crowding trees close together reduces air movement and reduces sunlight to fruit buds.

Years to Bearing: Three to four.

Potential Yield: Five to 40 pounds per tree.

Planting Stock: Best stock is a dormant, three-year-old, container-grown plant that stands about 3 to 4 feet tall. Plants less than 3 feet tall are sensitive to direct sunlight and usually struggle to survive when planted in the open field. A shade structure may be needed until plants are 3 to 4 feet tall.

Varieties: A limited number of pawpaw varieties are offered at local nurseries. Local pawpaw seedlings are frequently offered for sale and can make a productive tree. Plant more than one variety for cross-pollination.

Establishment: Site selection and establishment should begin several months prior to planting. Surface drainage can be accomplished by constructing furrows and ditches to remove the water from the area.

Fertilization: Preplant fertilization is important in establishing a strong productive tree. In sandy soils with low native nutrient levels, two to three pounds of a fertilizer with high potassium levels should be incorporated into the planting site two to three months prior to planting.

Pruning and Training: Pawpaw trees are usually trained to a modified central leader system. The first year, remove all lateral growth from ground level to up to 18 to 24 inches. Arrange the lateral limbs around one central stem. Prune around the central leader in such a way as to leave a lateral limb every 6 to 8 inches. The limbs should be arranged in a spiral formation. The first growing season is important in establishing the framework of the tree. Several light prunings may be necessary the first growing season to establish the

tree's framework. In the second and subsequent years, only a light pruning each winter is needed to allow sunlight to the interior of tree.



This wild fruit is worth tracking down. (Photographs: Samara Linnell)

If you're lucky, America's best-kept-secret fruit might be growing on a tree close to your backyard or perhaps a parish or two away. Finding a native pawpaw takes effort, but it's rejuvenating. What begins under a leafy canopy ends in your kitchen, with untold culinary possibilities.

The pawpaw fruit is a homely, unassuming thing on the outside; it's impossible to unwittingly pass a tree laden with half a dozen of them. But let's say you notice the pawpaws and reach for a ripe one. The best way to enjoy a pawpaw is right there. Rip the skin away, slurp the pulp and spit out the seeds. It's a gooey, sensuous, primal experience. You have now eaten from the tree of earthly knowledge, and guess what? It tastes really good.

Pawpaws grow from the Great Lakes down to portions of the Gulf Coast. In 1541, explorer Hernando de Soto recorded Native Americans growing and eating pawpaws in the Mississippi River Valley. Members of the Lewis and Clark expedition ate pawpaws for pleasure, but one time for subsistence. John James Audubon depicted yellow-billed cuckoos on a pawpaw branch.

Our American ancestors enjoyed pawpaws for centuries, spreading them westward to Kansas. And even though they had to clear pawpaw trees to make farmland, they savored pawpaw fruit – often the only fresh fruit available. But the more industrialized our country became, the less relevant pawpaws became.

Mid-Atlantic and Midwest states make up the pawpaw hot zone.

Towns named Paw Paw are found in Michigan, West Virginia, Kentucky and Oklahoma. Pawpaws acquired some folksy nicknames in these states: Hoosier banana, Indian banana, custard apple, Quaker delight. Besides nicknames, pawpaws have suffered from mistaken identity; for example, pawpaw means papaya in other parts of the world.

But currently there's a groundswell for a pawpaw renaissance. The small but enthusiastic pawpaw community encompasses both professional and amateur growers, and it culminates at gatherings like the Ohio Pawpaw Festival, a laid-back event held annually since 1998, where family hula-hooping workshops and presentations on pawpaw propagation balance out a robust beer garden and music stage. Festival-goers queue up for free samples of pawpaw ice cream, a sweet and tasty introduction to the enticing possibilities of pawpaw cuisine.

Unfortunately, easily-bruised pawpaws have a short shelf life and don't currently fit in the business model of big agriculture. A scattered network of academics and horticulturalists are researching ways to change that. Perhaps, someday, a growing and marketing strategy could make pawpaws an enticing new product in the produce aisle – the next POM Wonderful, so to speak.



How to Get Your Hands on Pawpaws

To obtain pawpaws, your options are grow, buy or forage. Pawpaw trees are great for landscaping, and grafted trees may bear fruit in two years, but they can be tricky. Growers of pawpaws don't tend to be run-of-the-mill people. They're analytical, curious and a bit eccentric, but happy to share their experiences.

Let's assume you can't wait for fruit to grow. It's not cheap, but you can have fresh pawpaws shipped to you in season and frozen pawpaw pulp year-round. The specialty foods company Earthy Delights says that requests for pawpaws have gone up every year since NPR first aired a story about them in 2011. You can also go directly to the source and contact Albany, Ohio's Integration Acres, "the world's largest pawpaw processor." Founded in 1996, it uses both its own pawpaws and ones from other growers and gatherers in the region, selling both frozen pulp and mixed-fruit "Pawpaw Pops."

If you want to forage for pawpaws in the woods, the key is to pick almost-ripe ones, the ones whose stems break off with no resistance from the branch. They'll have a little give under the skin, like a perfect peach. Pawpaw fruit doesn't ripen all at once; the ideal pawpaw spot is one you can return to easily and often.

How to Drink Pawpaws

When fresh fruit fails, seek beer. Pawpaw-flavored craft beer is a dynamic little pocket of the pawpaw world, and it's perhaps one of the most accessible ways to introduce pawpaws to the public. It has a floral and yeasty taste. Unfortunately, it's only regional and seasonal. So far, there's not a practical harvesting and national distribution system.



Cooking With Pawpaws

If you strike pawpaw gold – either in the woods or at a farmers market – you need to have an action plan. Ripe pawpaws last for only two or three days at room temperature. They do well in the refrigerator

for about a week if fully ripe, three weeks if a little under ripe. (Firm pawpaws don't ripen well off the tree.) Tree-ripened pawpaws are best; soft, overripe ones tend to have off notes.



Unlike mangoes, the custardy flesh inside a pawpaw is entirely too soft to be diced. Once you separate it from the seeds and skin, it's already a handy purée. To extract it, halve the pawpaws with a knife and squish them with your bare hands through a colander set over a large bowl (an even better alternative is a conical strainer with a wooden pestle). The pulp freezes well in a plastic zipper bag for up to six months. It oxidizes quickly, so when storing pawpaw pulp in the refrigerator, stir in a little lemon juice, and keep the air out by pressing plastic wrap directly on the surface. The pulp is best used within a day.

The pawpaw's most distinct flavor compounds are volatile, so it's best to use it in recipes that don't expose it to heat: think frozen and icebox desserts, smoothies or salsas. Make your favorite banana pudding, except layer in pawpaw pulp instead of banana slices. You can use a trusty mango sorbet or frozen yogurt recipe and swap pawpaws for the mango. Pawpaws sing with dairy products, so incorporating them with a panna cotta or just spooning some over a good plain yogurt always pleases.

One big exception to the no-heat rule is baking. Thanks to copious amounts of flour and sugar, pawpaw functions well in homey cakes, cookies and quick breads, where its flavors are subtle. Pawpaw jam, for example, (available online from Integration Acres, which cuts the pawpaw with berries) is divine on a cracker with goat cheese.

The pawpaw's appeal isn't just its flavor. These lost-and-found fruits are both abundant and rare, and this puts those of us with heartfelt stakes in the Pawpaw Conspiracy in the strange place of wanting to get lots of people excited about a semi-secret, wild food.

According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), since the early 1900s, around 75 percent of the world's plant genetic diversity has been lost. The erosion of diversity of cultivated and wild crops has also been accompanied by a decline in the nutritional quality of Native American diets and a growing epidemic of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Traditional food ways, culinary skills, ecological farming practices and entire cultures are also at risk.

American Persimmon

Diospyros virginiana

Although the Asian persimmon is more commonly found in North American grocery stores, a variety of this sweet, pulpy fruit grows in the U.S. as well. Wild persimmons are a distinctively American fruit. American Indians mixed persimmon pulp, cornmeal and ground acorns to make breads and thick soups. African-Americans used persimmons to make sweet pudding, candy and cakes. Early settlers and pioneers valued the wild persimmon because its fruits are easily available and literally fall into your hands if you shake a ripe tree. They used the seeds of the fruits to roast and make a beverage similar to coffee.

The persimmon, the Latin name of which translates to food of the gods, is high in vitamins A and C, fiber and antioxidants and is low in calories and fats. The anglicized word "persimmon" derives from Algonquin dialects used by Delaware and Cree nations – putchamin,



pasiminan or pessamin – all which mean dried fruit, since the nutritious dried persimmon was a valuable winter food source.

American persimmons can be found at nurseries that grow heirloom varieties or in the burgeoning edible landscaping projects found in various parts of North America. Similarly, in Appalachia, the dried seeds are brewed to make beer.

The greatest abundance of trees are found along the Mississippi River Valley, but the native persimmon's range extends from Connecticut to the Gulf Coast and westward to Kansas. The fruits are a burnt orange color and often develop a bluish haze after the first frost. Dried persimmons have a sweet, chewy consistency similar to dates, and overripe fruit can be made into fruit leather.

Wild persimmons have a unique, succulent flesh that can be used for both savory and sweet dishes. The most common persimmon recipe is pudding, which exists in hundreds of variations and is sometimes served on seasonal menus in the Midwest. Persimmons make sumptuous desserts, including breads, cookies, pies, cakes, ice cream, candies and sauces.

Individual persimmon trees are often found in urban areas on college campuses, library grounds and in public parks. Persimmon groves are in danger since their wood is highly prized for textile shuttles, pool cues and golf clubs. Fortunately, nurseries that focus on heirloom gardening and the edible landscaping movement for urban sustainability increasingly stock native persimmon trees, which are also desirable as a landscape shelter and food source for backyard birds.

*David Himetrick
Fruit Crops Specialist*



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Corn/Hay Maze Festival Oct. 1 . 10 a.m.-5 p.m.



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C concessions available. . Admission - \$10 (separate from Harvest Days admission)
Free for children 3 and younger.

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The fun continues in October. Wind through the maze, climb hay mountain, try the giant sling shots, zip on the kid's zip-line, visit the farm animals, take a hayride and more.

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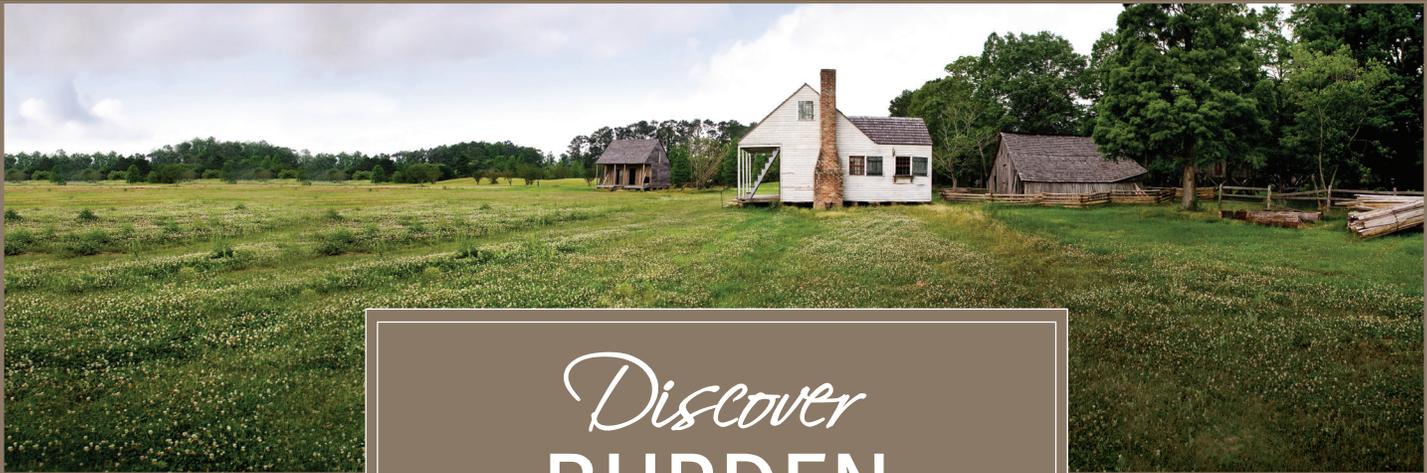
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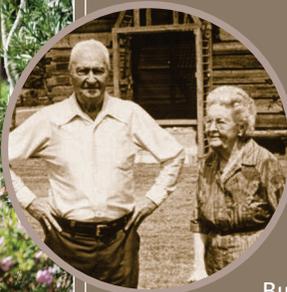
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Horticulture Hints



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