

# Horticulture Hints



Spring 2009



## Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer Program

Gardening is the No. 1 pastime in United States. Learn new gardening skills and enjoy volunteering in your community by becoming a Louisiana Master Gardener.

The Louisiana Master Gardener program is a volunteer project of the LSU AgCenter. Classes are conducted in 22 parishes across the state. Each class covers one or two topics, and the series usually takes two to three months to complete. The state fee is \$55, and individual parish programs may charge an additional class activity fee.

All Master Gardener volunteers are asked to perform a minimum number of required volunteer hours and continuing education hours each year to maintain their certification. For more information, contact your parish LSU AgCenter extension office or go to our Web site at [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com).

Louisiana Master Gardener extension volunteers have accomplished much in their communities. Here are some examples:

- The La-Terre chapter planted 700 live oak trees with Acorns of Hope Coastal Reforestation program plus distributed 3,300 tree seedlings along with Terrebonne Tree Board and Apache Oil for Arbor Day.
- Master Gardeners of the River Region LMG organization (St. Charles, St. John and St. James parishes), conducted 36 educational programs during 2008 that provided 6,400 regional clientele with training, pertinent information and recommendations on various gardening interests and related topics. In addition, River Region Master Gardeners continue to inspire youth to become involved in vegetable

gardening through tours and vegetable gardening demonstrations they conduct annually for school students, teachers and parents attending the St. Charles Parish Heritage Day Festival.

- The Avoyelles/Rapides Master Gardeners have developed and cared for historical vegetable and ornamental plantings at Kent House State Park.
- The Webster Parish Piney Hills Master Gardeners premiered their summer "Trails and Trellis" public gardening tours and seminar in May of 2008. The Webster Parish Piney Hills Master Gardener volunteers had a great deal of fun not only providing a 1940s style gardening experience, but also an educational one at the 2008 State Fair of Louisiana.
- The Washington Parish Master Gardener program has an ongoing vegetable gardening program in four schools and one Head Start center with hands-on application of gardening techniques.
- Northeast Louisiana Master Gardener Association participated in the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual AgExpo in West Monroe, teaching 900 regional fourth-grade youth nutritional values of fruits and vegetables from gardens and orchards and manned "Ask a Master Gardener" table during general sessions, answering gardening and horticulture questions from the general public. Over 10,000 residents attended the two-day activity.
- Northeast Louisiana Master Gardener Association is sponsoring a series of landscaping classes including topics such as Choosing Your Landscape Style, Nature Never Created a Houseplant, Bulb Gardening, Renovating Established Landscapes and Year-round Color. Each class is presented three times, morning,

afternoon and evening to accommodate all regional clientele.

The North Central Louisiana Master Gardeners have propagated LSU Purple and LSU Gold figs as a teaching tool to make the public aware of these excellent varieties of figs, which should be tried in the home orchard. This group has also set up excellent demonstrations on ornamental grasses for the public to view at the Calhoun Research Station. The North Central Louisiana Master Gardeners have served as a great resource for the establishment of the new Ruston Farmers Market.

Learning and sharing your gardening knowledge as a Louisiana Master Gardener in your community is a worthwhile experience for you, the volunteer and the people you help.

*Bobby Fletcher Jr.*  
Assistant Director  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service



## Consider Trees When Purchasing or Building Homes

When you are thinking about purchasing a house, home inspections can ensure that costly repairs are not needed once you take possession of the house. In most instances, however, home buyers seldom look at the condition of the existing trees on the property. Hiring a licensed arborist to inspect the trees can save potential homeowners hundreds or even thousands of dollars in tree-related expenses. If there are trees that are going to require extensive work or even removal, the price of the property can be negotiated to take such expenses into account; or, at least you will be more aware of what tree issues you may have to deal with in the future.

This topic is also critical if you are thinking about building a new home on a lot with existing trees. During construction, valuable trees can be damaged by physical injury to the trunk and crown by construction equipment, soil compaction from heavy equipment, filling over the roots with soil and roots can be cut when trenching is done to put in utility lines. Damaged trees often die within one to five years of construction, or may survive in a weakened, less attractive state for many years. Hire a professional arborist in the early planning stages. Many of the trees on the property may be saved if the proper steps are taken. Allow the arborist to meet with you and your building contractor and make preserving trees a high priority. The arborist can assess the trees on the property and help determine which should be removed during construction and which are structurally sound and healthy and should be protected and preserved during construction. It's too late to do anything when the trees around your newly constructed home begin to do poorly or die.

## Controlling Fire Ants

Imported fire ants inflict painful stings and create unsightly mounds in our landscapes, and most of us would be happier if they weren't around. A variety of products and methods are available to control fire ants effectively. Unfortunately, no treatment will eradicate them from a yard permanently. The product chosen is often determined by the situation and the preferences of the individual doing the treatment. When using a pesticide, always read the label very carefully before



you purchase it to make sure you understand and are comfortable with how to use it, and to make sure it is appropriate for the situation.

### **BAITS**

Fire ant baits consist of a pesticide combined with a material fire ants will consume as food. Use fresh bait and apply it when the ground and grass are dry and no rain is expected for the next 24 hours. Apply baits when the worker ants are actively searching for food.

### **DUSTS**

Some products, such as those containing acephate, are applied as a dry dust. Ants walking through the treated soil get the dust on their bodies and transport the insecticide into the mound. Within a few days the entire colony should be killed. To use a dust, distribute the recommended amount evenly over the undisturbed mound.

### **MOUND DRENCHES**

Other insecticides used to control fire ants are mixed with water and applied to the mound as a drench. These liquid mound drenches kill ants underground, but must be applied in sufficient volume to penetrate the entire nest. Generally, about 1 gallon of diluted mixture is poured gently over the top of each mound.

### **GRANULES**

Granular products offer another method of getting insecticide into fire ant mounds. To treat a single mound, measure the recommended amount and sprinkle it on top of and around the mound following label directions.

### **ORGANIC CONTROLS**

A few active ingredients used in fire ant control products, such as boric acid, pyrethrin, pyrethrum, rotenone, citrus oil extract and diatomaceous earth, are organic pesticides. Diatomaceous earth, a natural silica-based dust, will kill some ants, but it rarely eliminates ant colonies when used alone. Avoid breathing in the dust-like particles.

### **HOME REMEDIES**

Be advised there are some home remedies that don't work well. Spreading grits on a fire ant mound will only feed them. Laying orange or grapefruit peel on a fire ant mound will only make them move to another spot. Shoveling one mound on top of another in an attempt to force the ants to kill each other is not effective. Do not use gasoline or other petroleum products for fire ant control. While many of these

products will kill fire ants, they are extremely flammable and will kill grass and other plants.

For more information on fire ants, go to [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com) and click on the Fire Ants button under Features.

## Dealing with Spring Weeds

It is very important to focus on weed control this time of year in shrub and flowerbeds. Cool-season weeds are in active growth as the days get longer and warmer, and they will begin to flower and set seeds. Left unchecked, the prolific seed production this spring will lead to even more problems next spring, so efforts made over the next couple of months are especially critical. Ideally, all of your beds should be mulched with about 2 to 3 inches of a mulching material, such as chopped leaves, pine straw, pine bark or other suitable materials. Mulches help considerably but are not totally weed proof. If weeds do manage to make it through the mulch, dig them out promptly making sure you get any bulbs or roots in the ground that might resprout. You may also carefully apply a herbicide, such as glyphosate (Killzall, Eraser, Roundup and other brands) just to the weeds to kill them. Use shields or plastic bags to cover ornamentals in the bed to prevent the spray from contacting their foliage.

The use of a weed preventer, such as Preen or Amaze, will not be helpful in dealing with growing weeds. After you have weeded the bed, however, you can apply a weed-preventing herbicide to keep weeds from coming back. These products also could be applied to beds right after planting shrubs, ground covers or flowers to prevent weeds (do not apply to seeded beds, however). Follow the label directions carefully and use these products only around plants that the label indicates are tolerant of the herbicide. As you begin to see these cool-season weeds come into bloom, don't put this job off any longer. Weeding is not the most fun or glamorous part of gardening, but a garden simply cannot exist unless you keep up with it.



### Louisiana Irises

Blooming from late March to early May, the Louisiana iris is a floral ambassador that has carried our state's name all over the world. Louisiana iris is the name used worldwide for a

unique group of native Louisiana iris species and their hybrids. Their extraordinary beauty and reliability in the garden have made them increasingly popular, but they still deserve more recognition and use here in their home territory.

Though a number of iris species are native to Louisiana, only five species, *Iris brevicaulis*, *Iris fulva*, *Iris giganticaerulea*, *Iris hexagona* and *Iris nelsonii* are known as "The Louisianans." Only in south Louisiana do all five species occur together. These five species are closely related and will interbreed with each other but with no other species. The crossing, or interbreeding, of these species has resulted in the modern hybrid cultivars we grow today. Their large attractive flowers cover a broad range of colors, including many shades of blue, purple, red, yellow, pink, gold, brown, lavender, burgundy and white.

The best time to plant Louisiana irises is in August and September when they are dormant, but you can buy and plant them in spring while they are in bloom with good success as well. When purchased and planted in spring, however, Louisiana irises need to be handled carefully to avoid damaging the foliage and flower buds, and you may need to stake the plants after planting to hold them upright after planting (established Louisiana irises do not need staking).

Louisiana irises should be grown with as much direct sun as possible. Although they will tolerate shade for part of the day, at least about six hours of direct sun are needed for good blooming. You can plant Louisiana irises in beds by themselves, combined with other perennials or even in aquatic gardens.

When preparing a spot to plant them in a typical bed, incorporate a generous 3-inch layer of compost, rotted manure or peat moss and some all-purpose fertilizer into the soil. These irises grow best in a soil high in fertility and organic matter.

Aquatic culture is one of the easiest and most natural ways to grow Louisiana irises and the foliage tends to stay more attractive in the summer. Simply place a potted iris into your decorative pond or aquatic garden so that the rim of the pot is a few inches below the water's surface. Louisiana irises also grow well and look great planted in the ground on the edges of large ponds.

The large seedpods that form after flowering should be removed as soon as you notice them to keep the plants more attractive and vigorous. Next fall, in October or November, fertilize the irises as they begin their winter growing season.

### Summer Bedding Plants

As soon as the danger of frost has passed in your area, you can begin to plant warm-season bedding plants. In south



Louisiana this generally begins in late March or early

April and in north Louisiana around April or early May.

A group of plants we use as summer bedding plants are actually tender perennials, not true annuals. These plants have more stamina than true annuals and this is important given our very long summer growing season, from April/May to October. These plants have the ability to look good in October from a spring or early summer planting and are highly recommended for Louisiana gardens. On occasion, these plants may survive a mild winter and provide a second summer of color.

Warm-season bedding plants for sun to part sun: abelmoschus, ageratum, alternanthera\*, amaranthus, balsam, blue daze\*, celosia, cleome, coleus (sun-tolerant types), coreopsis, cosmos, Dahlberg daisy, dusty miller\*, gaillardia, gomphrena, iresine\*, lantana\*, lisianthus, marigold, melampodium, narrow-leaf zinnia, ornamental pepper\*, periwinkle\*, pentas\*, portulaca, purslane\*, rudbeckia, ruellia\*, salvia\*, scaevola\*, sunflower, tithonia, torenia, perennial verbena, zinnia.

Warm-season bedding plants for part-shade to shade: balsam, begonia\*, browallia, caladium (perennial tuber), cleome, coleus\*, impatiens\*, pentas\*, salvia\*, torenia.

\*Tender perennials.



## Checklist for March, April, May



- Plant warm-season bedding plants beginning in mid-March (south Louisiana) or mid-April (north Louisiana). For best results, plant petunias by mid-March and wait to plant periwinkles (vinca) until late April.
- After spring bulbs that reliably rebloom each year have finished flowering, wait until the foliage turns yellow before cutting it off. Food is being manufactured and stored for next year's blooms.
- Mulch plants to reduce watering requirements, suppress weed growth and minimize soil temperature changes. Excellent mulches are pine straw, chopped leaves and pine bark. Mulch should be applied 2 inches thick for effective weed suppression.
- Divide and transplant older, large clumps of chrysanthemums in early March. Failure to divide plants can result in weak, spindly growth with few flowers.
- Coleus is a great annual bedding plant for Louisiana's landscapes. Try some of the newer sun-loving varieties.
- Fertilize shrubs in the spring using a general purpose fertilizer. Carefully follow the label directions.
- Watch for insect problems this spring. Lace bugs on azaleas and aphids or whiteflies on gardenias are common. Also examine camellias, sasanquas and hollies for scale insects on the lower foliage. Control with acephate, imidacloprid or horticultural oils sprays.
- To encourage more rapid re-blooming, pinch off old flowers on bedding plants after their first flower cycle is completed this spring.
- Roses may develop insect problems. Watch for aphids on tender new growth, thrips on flowers and cucumber beetles on foliage. Beetles may be a problem if a vegetable garden is nearby.
- Garden centers will have many crape myrtles in May and June. Plant these shrubs and trees (depending on the variety you select) for great flowering all summer. Most varieties also have exfoliating, colored bark.

*Dan Gill, Allen Owings  
Horticulturist*

## Turfgrass Care

Lawns now show spring regrowth. Be careful not to push the season by forcing early growth with lots of fertilizer. If put on too early, fertilizer will feed winter weeds. If put on too heavily, it will create a lush, weak growth sensitive to brown patch. Let the grass awaken gradually and show definite activity. Mow once or twice before first fertilizing. If you wish to dethatch or power rake this year, wait until late spring when the turf is vigorously growing. Large dead areas are probably die-outs from winter kill or fall brown patch disease. Treat the yellow, actively diseased areas with fungicides like PCNB, iprodione, Bayleton, mancozeb, captan, thiophate, etc.

## Choose Correct Mower Settings

Cutting heights are important for healthy grass. Choose the higher cut for grass in shade. Sharpen that mower blade before the season and at midseason, too. Replace old oil with new and stale gas with fresh before you start your mower this spring.

Cut grass to these inch heights: common Bermuda, 1½; hybrid Bermuda, 1; zoysia, 1-1½; centipede/carpet, 1½ (2 shade); tall fescue (north La.), 2 (spring), 3½ (summer); St. Augustine, 2½-3 (3 shade).

## April Fertilizing

During April or May, all grasses should be in full swing. Start feeding your lawn. Turf fertilizers with high first number, low second number and medium last number are preferred unless a soil test shows otherwise.

You may start with a complete fertilizer like 13-13-13 if you know your soil phosphorus is low. If you have Bermuda grass, use 7-8 pounds per 1,000 sq ft. On zoysia or St. Augustine, use 6-7 pounds per 1,000 sq ft. On centipede or carpetgrasses, use 4 pounds per 1,000 sq ft. After this application, use just a nitrogen fertilizer at a rate of one-half to 1 pound of pure nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft every five to six weeks until midsummer; then go back to the complete fertilizer.

Note that on zoysia and centipede lawns, apply N fertilizer only one more time in midseason. Use only one-half pound of nitrogen per 1,000 sq ft for this. Carpetgrass needs very little fertilizer; once in spring is enough.

*Tom Koske  
Horticulturist*

## Lawn Weed Control

Herbicides can be effective tools for reducing weeds in your yard, but the best weed control is a thick healthy lawn. Your parish LSU AgCenter extension agent can advise you on fertilizer and other cultural practices that will improve the overall health of your lawn.

Weed preventer or preemergence herbicides may be applied in late winter and early spring safely to all

established southern lawns. These products are usually granular and should be applied with drop or broadcast type spreaders and watered in soon after application. Preemergence herbicides are effective in reducing the emergence of several annual grasses like crab grass and goosegrass that infest lawns throughout the state. In other words, these herbicides work before you even see the weeds infesting your lawn. Some consumer type preemergence herbicides available to homeowners are Green Light Crabgrass Preventer, Scott's Halts and Hi-Yield Crabgrass Control.

Postemergence herbicides are used to kill weeds that have emerged. Apply postemergence herbicides either before or several weeks after first green-up, but not during first green-up. Winter broadleaf weeds are usually prevalent in the spring. These broadleaf weeds often can be controlled by using selective liquid postemergence "trimec-type" herbicides that contain formulations with three weed killing ingredients, 2,4-D, dicamba and mecoprop. These herbicides are widely available and can be used on most southern grasses. Be extra careful, however, using them on St. Augustine when the weather gets warmer. Some trade name examples of trimec-type broadleaf herbicides are Bayer Advanced Southern Broadleaf, Ortho Weed B Gon, Spectracide Weed Stop, Trimec and Ferti-lome Weed Free Zone. Most herbicide labels will stress the use of these products on younger weeds at temperatures below 85 degrees. Even when used as directed, a temporary discoloration of the lawn may occur following the use of these herbicides. Some products will recommend a second follow-up spraying two or three weeks after the first application. When applying liquid herbicides in spot treatments, take care to wet the weed foliage only; don't saturate the soil, and follow the manufacturer's recommendation for the amount of water and spray material to cover a given area. Follow mowing practices before and after the herbicide application as recommended in the product label. In most cases, mow herbicide-treated lawns several times without a bag before collecting clippings for compost or mulch (consult herbicide label). Avoid

herbicide drift and keep spray away from gardens. Tomatoes, okra and peppers are very sensitive to herbicides that contain 2,4-D. Clean sprayers thoroughly with an ammonia solution if sprayer is used for applying insecticides or fungicides on good plants. It is best to buy a sprayer specifically dedicated for weed killers to avoid accidental injury to desirable plants.

Granular weed and feed products like Scott's Bonus S may be used when the first fertilizer application is recommended in your area of the state. This usually corresponds to a window of application

from late March to mid-April for Louisiana. These products should be watered in soon after application.

Selective control of summer grassy weeds like crab grass and dallisgrass can be achieved with MSMA in Bermuda or zoysia lawns during late spring and summer. St. Augustine and centipede, however, will not tolerate weed killers with MSMA. Use sethoxydim (several trade names) for summer grass control in centipede. There is no selective control of summer grasses in St. Augustine.

*Ron Strahan  
Weed Scientist*

## Fruit and Nuts



### Mayhaws

Families used to go on outings to collect mayhaws and create stockpiles of the jelly to last throughout the year, but the tradition has declined with the increasing urbanization of the South and the destruction of the mayhaw's native wetland habitat. The fruit has also been cultivated to grow outside of wetlands and this has increased the source of the jelly.

Mayhaws are a group of species in the genus *Crataegus*. They are closely related to apple and pear, and have been used as exotic dwarfing rootstocks for both. The name "Mayhaw" is a conjugation of the month of ripening (May) and the common name for *Crataegus* species. (Hawthorn). A few selections have been made, like the relatively large-fruited Texas Superberry or the even-ripening Lodi. Mayhaws are said to make the world's greatest jelly, although some folks feel it's about average. Mayhaws are rarely eaten fresh – more often processed into jelly, butter, syrups or wine. They are fairly high in potassium and calcium, vitamin C and beta carotene.

#### **Origin, history of cultivation.**

Mayhaws are native to the swamps and lowlands of the Gulf Coast states in the United States. They have been collected from wild trees by deep-southerners since antebellum times and are rarely cultivated in orchards still today.

#### **Folklore, medicinal and nonfood uses.**

Native Americans used unripe mayhaw fruit for bladder ailments; these fruit also have hypotensive (lowers blood pressure) and antiarrhythmic activity (counters irregular heartbeat). Seeds of hawthorns are sometimes boiled or roasted and made into a coffee-like beverage. *Crataegus oxycantha* leaves have been

substituted for tobacco and smoked, causing a mild stimulant effect.

#### **Description**

The mayhaw is a medium-size spreading tree, reaching up to 30 feet. Overall appearance is very similar to a flowering crabapple tree. The flowers are whitish-pink and are borne in profusion along 1-year wood and on short spurs. The floral structure is the same as apple. The fruit is a small and applelike (one-half-1 inch). The fruit has a bright red skin, borne in "clusters" much like crabapples. (Actually, they're borne on closely spaced spurs, giving this appearance). Fruits ripen in May.

#### **General Culture**

Mayhaws do best in well-drained, sandy soils with a pH of 6-7, but hawthorns seem to tolerate flooding well in nature. They have a winter chilling requirement of 250-500 hours. The trees tolerate -10 to -15 degrees F when dormant, but bloom early (early to mid-February) and would be frost-prone outside of the Deep South.

*David Himelrick, Horticulturist*

#### **Fertilizing Pecan Trees**

Proper fertilization is an important culture practice for proper growth and nut production. Annual fertilization is the most practical and effective tool available to the homeowner for improving pecan production. Fertilizers, however, cannot compensate for poor conditions such as lack of moisture, inadequate disease or insect control, undesirable soil and sites or poor varieties.

Standard fertilization of lawns near and beneath pecan trees may supply much of the fertilization requirements of both trees and lawn. An additional fertilizer application may be needed to supply fertilizer requirements especially in years with large nut crops.

Fertilizer should be applied by broadcasting over the root zone of the pecan tree. Fertilizing trees by placing fertilizer in holes beneath trees give little additional benefit. Exercise care when applying fertilizer. Excess fertilizer in narrow bands or clumps could injure lawn grasses or tree roots. Uneven application can also cause dark and light green streaks in the lawn.

The fertility needs of pecan trees can vary. Young pecan trees transplanted in deep, loamy, fertile soil may not need fertilizer additions immediately. But trees transplanted in nonfertile, poorer soils may require several applications of fertilizer beginning in June the year of transplanting. Do not place fertilizer within 1 foot of tree trunks.

Guidelines for fertilizing pecan trees based on trunk diameter. Apply 3 pounds of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) or an equivalent amount of another complete

fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter measured about 1 foot above the soil line in February or early March. Later during the growing season (May or early June), add an additional 2 pounds of (8-8-8) per inch of trunk diameter on trees that have a large nut crop.

Example: A tree 10 inches in diameter should receive 30 pounds of 8-8-8 or 18.5 pounds of 13-13-13 when applying 3 pounds of fertilizer per inch of trunk diameter.

When zinc deficiencies occur on acid soils, apply 36 percent zinc sulfate to the soil at a rate of one-half pound per inch of trunk diameter up to a maximum of 10 pounds per mature tree every third year. On alkaline soil with a pH of 7.0 and up, zinc must be sprayed on the leaves at 14-day intervals April through June. Use 2 to 3 pounds per 100 gallons of water or 2 to 3 teaspoons per gallon of water. Three sprays should be sufficient on older trees, 3 to 5 on younger trees.

*John Pyzner*  
*LSU Pecan Extension Specialist*

## Vegetable Gardening

### Vegetables to Plant in March

Plant snap beans, Swiss chard, radish, lettuce, collards, mustards, turnips, cabbage, broccoli and sweet corn. Transplant tomatoes, peppers and eggplants. Plant cantaloupes, squash, cucumbers and watermelons well after danger of frost is over. Black plastic will help early growth.

### ... and in April

Plant snap beans, butter beans, radish, collards, cucumbers, eggplants, cantaloupes, okra, Southern peas (field peas), peanuts, pumpkins, winter squash, summer squash, sweet corn, sweet potatoes (late April), tomatoes (transplants), peppers (transplants) and watermelons.

### ... and in May

Most spring vegetables can be planted in May, since the soil has warmed and danger of frost has passed. Plant sweet potatoes (transplants), heat-tolerant tomatoes, okra, Southern peas, pumpkins, peanuts, sweet corn, watermelons, cucumbers, butter beans, squash, cantaloupe, collards and eggplants (transplants). Fruit set in the following vegetables is sensitive to high temperatures, so plant them the first part of May for best results: snap beans, butter beans, sweet corn, tomatoes (except heat-tolerant varieties) and peppers (transplants).

### Crop Highlights

**Sweet corn.** Plant early to help reduce problems from the corn earworm. The earliest planting should be made seven days before the average last frost date for your area. Plant every two to three weeks to provide a continuous supply of sweet corn. Remember to plant the same variety in a block of at least three rows side-by-side at each planting. This will help to ensure good pollination and well-filled ears.

When planting sweet corn, drop two or three seeds every 8-12 inches in the row, and cover to about ½-1 inch deep. After the seeds germinate and the plants are 3-4 inches tall, thin to one plant per hill. Sidedress a 100-foot row with ¾-1½ pounds of ammonium nitrate when the plants are about 12 inches high and again when the plants are 24-36 inches high. One pint of fertilizer is about 1 lb.

Dust or spray silks with Sevin about every two to three days after silks first appear and until silks begin to dry. This treatment will help reduce corn earworm damage.

Harvest sweet corn early in the morning while it is still cool. Chill or cook immediately after harvesting. Sweet corn that is ready to harvest should have a well-filled ear. Kernels should be bright and plump, and their juice should be milky. New high-sugar varieties have more room for error in harvesting because they are sweeter and stay sweet longer. Recommended regular early maturing variety is Seneca Horizon. Midseason varieties are Funks G90, Gold Queen or Merit. Late-season regular varieties are Silver Queen (white), Iochief, NK199 or Golden Cross Bantam. Three ounces of seed will plant 100 feet of row.

You must try the improved super sweet (Sh<sub>2</sub>) and enhanced (EH) (se) varieties of sweet corn. They are much sweeter than regular sweet corn and hold their sweetness longer. The super sweets need to be isolated from field corn or regular sweet corn; they lose some of their sweetness when pollinated by these other types of corn. The super sweets don't germinate well in cool soils, so wait until soil has warmed considerably before planting. If you love to eat fresh corn on the cob, try these improved super sweets.

Many new high-sugar modern varieties are now commonly available. The best include (Early) Platinum Lady, White Out, Xtra-Tender 372, Temptation, Sweet Ice, Bodacious, Sweet Riser, Dazzle, Lancelot and Precious Gem; (midseason) Argent, Devotion, GSS966, Passion, BSS982 or 977, Snowbelle, Summer Sweet (7630Y, 7210, 8102), Honey Select, Crisp N Sweet 711, Incredible, Prime Plus, Big Time, Sweet Chorus, Sweet Rhythm; (late or long season) Even Sweeter, Pegasus, Tahoe, Silver King.

**Snap beans.** Plant bush varieties about every two weeks, beginning about the time of the average last frost date for your area. This will provide a continuous harvest for an extended period. Good bush snaps for

Louisiana are Ambra, Bronco, Contender, Pod Squad, Valentino, Dusky, Festina, Hialea, Magnum, Storm, Strike, Provider and Bush Blue Lake 274. An All-America Selection is Derby. Try Roma II for a good-eating, flat Italian pod bean. For a purple pod bush snap, try Royal Burgundy in

early spring. Those who prefer the yellow wax beans should choose Golden Rod Wax, Goldmine or Golden Improved.

One-half pound of seed will be more than enough to plant a 100-foot row. Plant seed about 1-2 inches apart in the row.

High temperatures at bloom cause many of the flowers to fall off. Generally, they don't produce well when planted in late May. For best quality, harvest pods before the developing seeds cause the pod to bulge. Beans can be held for up to seven days at 40-45 degrees and 90-95 percent humidity.

Pole snap bean varieties produce larger yields, since they produce for a longer period than bush varieties. Space seed about 6-12 inches apart. About 2-3 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. For pole snaps, the All-America Selection winner is Kentucky

Blue. The Blue Lake KY Wonder 191, Dade, Rattle Snake and McCaslan have done well in Louisiana. For those who want a bean that sets well in the heat, try the vigorous Yardlong Asparagus Bean, and harvest pods when about 18 inches high.



**Tomatoes.** Begin transplanting plants in mid-March in south Louisiana or at the end of March in North Louisiana after the danger of frost is over. Be prepared to cover early transplanted

tomatoes in case of a frost. Start spraying tomatoes after fruit set every seven to 10 days with a fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) and an insecticide (Sevin or Malathion).

Plant tomatoes in a well-drained site that receives plenty of direct sunlight, preferably all day, but at least seven to eight hours. When tomatoes receive too little sunlight, few blossoms are formed, and many that do form fall off before setting any fruit. Space tomato plants 18-24 inches apart. When transplanting, pour about 1 cup of a starter solution in the hole. Make your own by mixing ½ cup of a complete fertilizer (8-8-8) in 2 ½ gallons of warm water and stir. Commercial soluble fertilizers also are available. This will encourage a strong root system and faster growth.

Tomato vines may be determinate or indeterminate. Indeterminate types are long and spreading and continue to grow. Prune to maintain one vigorous stem.

Indeterminate varieties that grow well in Louisiana include Better Boy and Big Beef (large), Champion, Fantastic, Terrific, Sun Gold, First Lady, Husky Gold (dwarf) AAS, Jet Star (low acid), Monte Carlo, Pink Girl (pink); cherry - Sweet Million, Sweet Chelsea, Jolly, Small Fry, Juliet, Elf, Elfin, Navidad, Cupid, Mountain Belle and St. Nick.



Determinants have very productive vines that grow to heights of 4 feet. Stems terminate in a flower cluster. Determinants should be pruned only once or twice up to the first cluster.

Recommended determinate types for Louisiana include Celebrity (an AAS winner, best taste), Carolina Gold, Fla. 47 or 91, Mountain Spring, Cherry Grande (cherry), Floralina, Mountain Fresh and Mountain

Crest. Also try Sun Master, Sunleaper, Summer Flavor 6000, Mountain Spring and Phoenix.

Note: The spotted wilt virus has nearly eliminated tomato production in some areas. If you had this trouble, plant Bella Rosa, Mountain Glory, Amelia, Crista, Quincy, BHN 640, Muriel or Talageda variety. These are resistant types.

**Bell peppers and eggplants.** Delay transplanting of okra, bell peppers and eggplants until the weather has warmed considerably. These vegetables are sensitive to cold soils and weather. Once stunted by cool weather, they recover slowly. A garden site with full sun is required to be successful with bell peppers. Any shade will greatly reduce fruit set. Space peppers about 12-18 inches and eggplants about 18-24 inches.

Recommended nonhybrid varieties of bell peppers for Louisiana are Capistrano, Jupiter and Purple Beauty.

Recommended hybrids are Revolution, Heritage and the large King Arthur. Valencia, Paladin, Plato, Super Heavy Weight, Blushing Beauty and the piquant Mexibell hybrids are AAS winners. For a yellow bell, try Orobelle, Summer Gold, Valencia, or Summer Sweet 8610. For a mature red bell, try Camelot (X3R) or Aristotle.

Aruba, Carmen, Giant Marconi, Gypsy, Cubanella, Ivory, Banana Supreme, Biscayne and Aconcagua are not bell-shaped but are sweet. Producing yellow and red bell peppers is difficult in our humid conditions. Note: Spotted Wilt virus has hindered bell pepper production in many areas. The varieties Stilleto, Patriot and Excursion II are resistant to TSWV. Try these varieties if you had trouble producing bell peppers.

Recommended hybrid eggplant varieties are Fairy Tale, Night Shadow, Blackbell, Calliope, Classic, Epic, Dusky, Santana, Rossita or oriental Ichiban. The green eggplant varieties produce well in Louisiana and are less bitter than the purple varieties in hot, dry weather. Seed and plants are not always available, however. The Louisiana Market Bulletin is a fairly good source for green eggplant seed and other hard-to-find vegetable seeds and plants. Good older eggplants are Fla. Hi Bush and Black Beauty.

**Cucurbits.** All squash, cucumber and melon members of the cucurbit family can be planted in May, but yields may be lower than normal with the late plantings. Plant these outside well after the danger of frost is over. For transplants, start in pots two to three weeks before transplanting.

Recommended cucumber varieties for slicing are Taledega, Dasher II, Fanfare AAS, Diva AAS, General Lee, Speedway, Poinsett 76, Slice More, Thunder, Indy, Intimidator, Sweet Slice and Sweet Success.

For pickling, try Calypso, Faucipak and Jackson.

Recommended summer squash crooknecks are Prelude II, Dixie, Gentry, Goldie, Supersett, Destiny III and Medallion.

Recommended yellow straightneck are Goldbar, Liberator III, Enterprise, Cougar, Multipik, Patriot II, Superpik, Fortune and Lemondrop.

Recommended zucchini varieties are Declaration II, Justice, Independence II, Tigress, Lynx, Spineless Beauty, Senator, Gold Rush (AAS), Payroll, Revenue and Dividend.

Recommended scallop or patty pan varieties are Peter Pan and Sunburst.

Recommended hardshell (winter) squash varieties are Waltham, Butternut, Butternut Supreme, Early Butternut, Ultra Butternut, Tay Belle Acorn, Cream of Crop Acorn (AAS), Table Queen, Table King (AAS), Imperial Delight, El Dorado, Estrella, Celebration Acorn, Table Ace, Vegetable spaghetti, Tivoli Spaghetti (AAS), Golden Hubbard, Bush Delicata, Sweet Mama Buttercup.

Viruses are a big problem in squash production. Try some of the new virus-resistant varieties: Prelude II, Destiny (yellow crookneck), Liberator and Conqueror (yellow straight neck), Declaration, Payroll, Judgment III, Revenue and Independence (zucchini).



Recommended cantaloupe varieties are Odyssey, Eclipse, Aphrodite, Athena, Primo, Magnum 45, Super 45, Mission, Vienna, Ambrosia, Earlidew or Honey Max.

Recommended watermelon varieties are Crimson Sweet (OP), Jubilee II (OP), Fiesta, La Sweet (OP), Jamboree, Jubilation, Patriot, Regency, Royal Star, Royal Jubilee, Royal Sweet, Sangria, Stars 'N Stripes, Starbrite, Summer Flavor 800, 710 or 500. Seedless: Revolution, Summer Sweet 5244, TriX Carousel or 313, Cooperstown, Millionaire, Crimson Trio, Laurel, Nova. Ice Box Type: Sugar Baby, Mickeylee. Yellow: Gold Strike, Tendersweet, Desert King, Butter Cup.

Apply 2-3 pounds of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row before planting. Sidedress with  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 pound of ammonium nitrate or  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 pounds of a complete fertilizer (13-13-13) per 100 feet of row when vines begin to run. Remove all but three to four well-shaped fruits from each plant when they reach 4-5 inches in diameter.

Pumpkins are much like winter squash, but the flesh is often coarser and stronger. For a small size, choose Oz, Spookie, Small Sugar, Trickster, Baby Bear or Prankster.



Recommended medium-size pumpkins are Frosty, Casper (white), Lumina, Neon, Howdy Doody, Autumn Gold (AAS winner), Cotton Candy and Ghost Rider.

Recommended large or Jack-o'-Lantern types are Howden, Howden Biggie, Appalachian, Spirit (AAS), Gold Rush, Big Autumn, Big Max, Gold Medal, Aspen, ProGold 510, Gold Bullion, Sorcerer and Big Moon. For an extra-large pumpkin, try Atlantic Giant, Full Moon or Prize Winner.

For Halloween pumpkins, plant seed in early July. Cushaws are large, long-neck pumpkins that have a meaty, finer-textured flesh. Miniature pumpkins have been bred for ornamental use. Varieties include Munchkin, Jack-B-Little, Wee-B-Little, Lil Ironsides and the white Baby Boo.

**Cucurbit hints:** Don't be concerned if the first several squash fruit fall off the plant before they reach an edible stage. The first flowers to form in early spring squash are the female flowers (with the miniature fruit). Male flowers do not form at this time, however, so no pollination takes place. In a few days, though, the male flowers appear, and normal fruit set begins. In summer, the process reverses with the male flowers usually developing first and the females later.

Cucumber yields may be doubled by growing plants on a trellis. To get cucumber vines to climb a trellis or fence, you may need to tie them to the trellis in the beginning. Once they catch hold, they will continue to climb.

Use pesticides on cucurbits late in the afternoon so as not to reduce the bee population. Sidedress cucumbers, squash, watermelons and cantaloupes with  $\frac{3}{4}$  pint ammonium nitrate per 100-foot row as vines begin to run. Weekly applications of a general purpose fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) and insecticide (Sevin or

Thiodan) starting at first bloom will protect the foliage and improve yield.

Plastic mulch will reduce fruit rot and enhance the production of cantaloupes and the other cucurbits.

**Lima beans (butter beans).** Lima beans require warmer soil (70 degrees) than snap beans to germinate, so wait until soil warms (usually in early to mid-April) before planting. Bush varieties to plant are Henderson's Bush, Fordhook 242, Thorogreen, Bridgeton, Nemagreen, Dixie Butterpea or Baby Fordhook.



Plant every two weeks through mid-May to extend the harvest. One-half pound of seed will plant a 100-foot row. Plant at the rate of three or four seeds per foot of row.

Recommended pole lima beans are King of the Garden, Carolina Sieva, Willow Leaf, Fla. Butter, Christmas and Florida Speckled. Plant seeds 6-12 inches apart. One-quarter pound of seed will plant a 100-foot row.

**Sweet potatoes.** Bed seed potatoes during April and into May. Transplants should be ready to cut in four to five weeks. Sweet potato slips (transplants) can be set out in late April if soil is warm enough (70 degrees or higher). Cut plants from plant bed about 1 inch above soil line and transplant. Purchase weevil-free plants.

Cutting rather than pulling helps reduce sweet potato weevils and many disease problems. Cuttings develop feeder roots within a day or two if the soil is warm and moist. Holding the cut slips in the shade for two to three days before transplanting will help increase survival. Use a low nitrogen fertilizer such as 6-24-24 or 8-24-24 at 2-3 pounds per 100-foot row.

Beauregard, developed by the LSU AgCenter, is the most popular variety. It is high-yielding, very attractive and tastes great. Bienville requires a sandy soil.



**Okra.** Soil needs to be warm (65-75 degrees) for okra seeds to germinate. Soak seed overnight in tap water to soften seed coat before planting.

Recommended varieties are Louisiana Green Velvet, Emerald, Annie Oakley (hybrid), Cowhorn, Cajun Delight-AAS,

Burgundy and Clemson Spineless. Each of these varieties except Louisiana Green Velvet is semidwarf.

**Peanuts.** Many home gardeners wish to plant a row or two of peanuts. Shell the peanuts, and plant about four seeds per foot of row. Plant peanuts in April and May.

Spanish peanuts have the smallest seeds. Runner types have intermediate-size seeds and Virginia types have the largest. Fertilize lightly with 1-2 lb of 8-24-24 or similar fertilizer per 100-foot row. Soil should be high in calcium.

**Onions, shallots, garlic.** Harvest mature onion bulbs, garlic and shallots early summer. When mature, the tops begin to turn yellow or brown and fall over. Pull them, trim tops and roots and lay the plants on top of the row or place in burlap sacks for a couple of days to let them dry if weather permits. Then store them in a cool, shaded and well-ventilated place. (Ideal storage for onions after drying is 45-50 degrees and 65-70 percent relative humidity.)

**Irish potatoes.** Begin digging 90-120 days after planting. Plant tops start turning yellow as tubers reach maturity. Allowing the potatoes to remain in the ground a few days after tops die or after tops are cut will help set or toughen the skin and reduce skinning, bruising and storage rot.



Spraying potatoes with a general purpose fungicide (Daconil or Maneb) at the end of April or early May will protect the foliage from early blight and improve yields.

To keep potatoes for several weeks, allow cuts and skinned places to heal over at high temperatures, then store in a cool, dark place with high humidity. Don't store where they will receive light, because they will turn green and develop an undesirable taste.

## Fertilization

General vegetable fertilizer recommendations pertain to complete fertilizers, such as 8-24-24. Add per 100-foot row on soils of low-to-medium fertility. Next year, perform a soil test. For soils of higher fertility, reduce the rate about 25-50 percent. One pint of liquid fertilizer is equal to about 1 lb of granular fertilizer.

Use the recommended amount of fertilizer for the plant listed:

1-3 pounds	beans, Southern peas, okra,* English peas, sweet potatoes.
3-4 pounds	beets,* cantaloupes,* watermelons,* carrots,* radishes, turnips,* lettuce,* onions,* garlic* shallots,* mustard,* spinach, hot peppers,* squash,* cucumbers.*
5-6 pounds	Cabbage,* broccoli,* Brussels sprouts,* sweet peppers,* collards,* cauliflower,* tomatoes,* Irish potatoes,* eggplant,* corn.*

\*Requires at least one sidedressing of about ¾ lb (about 1½ cups) of ammonium nitrate per 100-foot row or per 300 sq ft. Additional sidedressings will help obtain high yields (especially corn and tomatoes).

*Note:* An 8-24-24 or 7-21-21 is usually a better fertilizer than 8-8-8 for most vegetable crops because of the low ratio of nitrogen to phosphorus and potassium. One of these should be available in your area. If 8-24-24 and 7-21-21 are not available, don't hesitate to use 8-8-8, 13-13-13 or other complete fertilizer.

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