Horticulture Hints







Fall 2009

LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

Checklist for Fall

1. Begin preparing beds for fall.
2. Take soil samples from landscape beds and submit to your parish LSU AgCenter Extension Service office for analysis. Cost is $7 per sample.
3. If room is available in your landscape, plant a few native trees this fall.
4. Consider incorporating some multiseasonal flowering azaleas into your landscape. Fall is a great time to plant!
5. Garden mums make a great addition for fall color. Check at your local retail garden center for availability.
6. Trees that provide good fall color in Louisiana include baldcypress (a Louisiana Select tree), Nuttall oak, Shumard oak, cherrybark oak, Bradford pear, Chinese pistachio, ginkgo, Japanese maple, sweet gum, sumac and hickory.
7. Watch azalea plantings for early fall infestation of lace bugs. Control with Orthene, horticultural oil sprays and other recommended insecticides.
8. Build a compost pile out of leaves, grass clippings and remains from your vegetable garden.
9. Root-prune wisteria that has failed to bloom. This encourages flowering next spring. Cut through the roots with a spade in a circle about 30-40 inches from the main trunk.
10. Caladiums generally begin to decline in late September or October, and then it's time to decide what you want to do with them. If the bed where the caladiums are planted will stay relatively undisturbed and drains well, you may leave the caladium tubers in the ground. If the bed tends to stay wet over the winter, the tubers will rot and would be best dug and stored.

Fall Bedding Plants

Nurseries and garden centers offer a wide selection of cool-season transplants and seeds. Transplants are well-established, blooming plants that provide color in your garden right away. Some cool-season bedding plants, such as alyssum, Johnny-jump-up, bluebonnets, calendula, annual phlox and nasturtium, are easy to grow from seed and may be planted directly into beds. A few, including sweet peas, larkspur and the poppies (Shirley, Iceland, California and peony-flowered), resent transplanting and are typically direct-seeded where they will grow. Whether you use transplants or direct seed, planting should be done from mid October through early December.

Before you plant either seeds or transplants, decide where you want to grow them and prepare the soil. Prepare beds well, because this makes a tremendous difference in the performance of the plants. Cool-season bedding plants will bloom best in well-drained locations that receive six hours or more of sun. Generally, the more sun they receive, the more they will bloom and grow. Pansy, viola, forget-me-not, nicotiana, primrose, cyclamen and alyssum are probably the best choices for shadier areas, but even they will not perform well in heavy shade and do best where they get at least a few hours of morning sun (primrose and cyclamen will bloom with the least amount of sun).

Plant heights should also be considered when selecting and placing bedding plants into the landscape. Low-growing flowers, which include sweet alyssum, lobelia,* pansy, Johnny-jump-up, viola, primrose,* cyclamen,* petunia* and dwarf stock, generally grow to about 4 to 8 inches and should be planted in the front of beds. Medium-height plants, which reach 8 to 15 inches, include dwarf snapdragons, dwarf toadflax,* candytuft, calendula,* annual phlox, bluebonnet, dianthus, sweet William, ornamental kale and cabbage, nicotiana* and California poppy. Tall bedding plants, which grow 15 inches or taller, include Iceland poppy, Shirley poppy, peony-flowered poppy,* toadflax,* stock, snapdragons, statice, larkspur, delphinium, hollyhock and sweet peas.*

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

Prune Roses

In Louisiana, our everblooming roses produce two really great seasons of bloom. The first outstanding season is in spring and early summer from April to early June. Another outstanding rose blooming period occurs in October and November when mild weather is ideal for quality flowers. Though we pruned our rose bushes in early spring, they have been in active growth since then and many look overgrown, leggy and less attractive now, particularly the popular hybrid teas and grandifloras. A second, less severe pruning is recommended in late August or early September to get rose bushes in shape for the fall blooming season.

First, remove all the dead growth. Make your cuts well into the healthy part of the canes just above a leaf or dormant bud, or remove the

dead cane entirely back to its point of origin. You may need loppers for this job.

Next, weak, spindly canes the diameter of a pencil or less should be removed, particularly those growing in the interior of the plant. This is most important for hybrid tea and grandiflora roses. Many old garden roses, such as the Chinas, and landscape roses have a naturally shrubby, twiggy growth habit. You should not remove twiggy growth in these types of roses unless you want to thin out the interiors. In the case of grafted roses, prune any sprouts originating from below the large, knobby graft union. Do not, however, remove any strong new shoots growing from the graft union.

For hybrid teas and grandifloras, the major part of the pruning involves shortening the remaining vigorous canes. Cut the canes back to about 30 inches from the ground. Ideally, try to make each cut just above a bud that faces outward, away from the inside of the bush. This pruning needs to be done, even if there are flowers on the bush now.

Everblooming old garden roses, shrub roses, landscape roses and other groups may be pruned now, but the pruning required is generally less severe and is done mostly to shape the bush or to control the size of more vigorous cultivars. Use your best judgment when it comes to pruning those roses. Some gardeners prune their bushier roses with hedge trimmers. This is a particularly effective technique if you have planted a long hedge of roses that would take a long time to prune with hand shears.

Clean up and dispose of all leaves and prunings from the area, and fertilize the roses to encourage vigorous new growth. Use your favorite rose fertilizer according to label directions, or use general-purpose fertilizer appropriate for your area.

You should not do major pruning to many types of climbing roses, ramblers and old garden roses that bloom only once in spring and early summer. These roses will produce their flowers next year on the growth they made this summer. Cutting them back now or anytime before they bloom next year will reduce the number of flowers. Late spring through early summer is the best time to do major pruning to these roses.

Selecting Trees

No other plants can create the major problems that poorly selected or improperly placed trees will. The most common mistakes include planting too many trees, planting trees that grow too large for their site, planting trees not well-adapted to Louisiana and planting trees too close to the house.

Remember, the trees you plant will grow much larger than the saplings you bring home from the nursery. It is tempting to plant more trees than you really need and, years later, realize you made a terrible mistake.

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:

1. Select a tree that will mature at the appropriate size. This cannot be stressed too much. Generally, small trees grow from 15 to 25 feet tall, medium-sized trees from 30 to 55 feet tall and large trees 60 feet or taller.
2. Think about the purpose of the tree and why you feel it is needed. This will help you determine what characteristics the tree should have, such as its shape, size and rate of growth, and ornamental features such as flowers, attractive berries, brightly colored fall foliage or unusual bark.
3. 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.
4. Choose trees that are well-adapted to our growing conditions. They must be able to tolerate long, hot summers and mild winters.
5. Check the location of overhead power lines. If you must plant under them, use small, low-growing trees. Also consider underground water lines and septic tanks as well as walks, drives and paved surfaces that may be damaged by the roots of large trees. Locate large trees at least 15 feet away from your house and paved surfaces.



Great Plants for Fall Flowers

Some of the most outstanding shrubs for bloom in the fall are sasanquas and various roses. Sasanquas (*Camellia sasanqua*) are one of those indispensable shrubs for Louisiana. Dwarf types stay under 3 feet while standard varieties will slowly grow to 10 to 12 feet tall and can be trained as a clipped hedge, large shrub or tree shape. The 2- to 3-inch fragrant flowers are produced in abundance and come in shades of light red, rose, pink and white depending on the variety you choose. In late fall and early winter, camellias (*Camellia japonica*) will begin to bloom and continue through the winter.

Everblooming roses will produce outstanding flowers from October through early December and longer if the winter is mild. They provide outstanding color and fragrance to the fall garden.

Although generally not known for their fall blooming, azaleas that bloom during seasons other than spring are becoming more available and popular. Particularly notable are some of the Robin Hill azaleas such as 'Watchet,' the popular Glen Dale variety 'Fashion' and the Encore azaleas.

In addition to the popular chrysanthemum, herbaceous perennials such as the toad lily (*Tricyrtis formosana*), red ruellia (*Ruellia graecizans*), Mexican tarragon (*Tagetes lucida*) and cigar plant (*Cuphea micropetala*) also contribute to the late year floral display. And gingers that belong to the genus *Hedychium*, such as the butterfly ginger and Kahili ginger, bloom abundantly until the first really cold weather occurs.

Lots of herbaceous perennial wildflowers are in bloom along roadsides in fall, and two that make excellent additions to the garden include wild ageratum (*Eupatorium coelestinum*) and goldenrod (*Solidago* species). Wild ageratum produces powder puff clusters of lavender-blue flowers on plants about 24 inches tall. Goldenrod is a well-known fall bloomer that often gets blamed for causing hay fever. It doesn't, but it does produce spikes of intense yellow flowers that enliven the garden.

Although they bloom through the summer, salvias always seem to look especially good in the fall. Two species, Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) and forsythia sage (*Salvia madrensis*) are outstanding. Mexican bush sage produces spikes of furry purple or white flowers on 3- to 5-foot tall plants. Forsythia sage is an unusual yellow blooming salvia that makes large spikes of mellow yellow on a 5-foot plant with dark green, quilted leaves.



Growing Wildflowers

Enjoying the beauty of wildflowers often leads gardeners to wonder if they could create the same effect in their own landscape. The answer is yes. In some landscapes, natural looking areas of wildflowers would be very appropriate. The wild, untamed look of these plants is entirely appropriate in casual, informal style landscape designs.

Although the look you are trying to achieve may be spontaneous and natural, growing wildflowers does require planning. Look carefully at the growing conditions in the area that you want to plant with wildflowers. You must use the wildflowers that will thrive under those conditions if you expect success. Note especially how much sun the area receives, the texture of the soil and if the area tends to be damp or dry. There's a wildflower for virtually any environment.

The easiest type of wildflower garden to establish is the open field type grown from seed. Fall planting of seeds tends to produce the best results and should be done in late October through November. Spring planting may also be done in late February.

Select a sunny area to be planted and eliminate existing vegetation such as aggressive grasses by hand removal or use the herbicide glyphosate. Wildflower seeds will not germinate well in an area with established, thick vegetation. Turn the soil with a shovel or tiller and rake smooth. Generally, no fertilizer or soil amendments should be added to the soil during preparation.

For a small planting, mix the wildflower seeds with sand or sandy soil and broadcast evenly over the area by hand. Lawn seed spreaders work well for larger areas. Make sure you use seeds or seed mixes of species that do well in our area. If possible, provide good seed contact with the soil by pressing the seed into the soil with a board or roller.

The seeds should be watered occasionally, especially if the weather is dry. Generally, wildflower seed mixes contain mostly annual and perennial species that bloom the first year from seed, so you can expect a glorious display next spring/early summer. Allow the wildflowers to complete their life cycle and drop seed before the area is mowed down.

Dan Gill
Horticulturist

Fruits and Nuts

Pecans

Improving Pecan Quality

One problem that sometimes happens in pecan trees is that the nuts do not fill out properly. Many of the nuts may be lightweight with very little kernel inside. This can be a very severe problem on pecan varieties with large nuts such as 'Mahan' and 'Mohawk.'

Several factors can cause poor quality pecans. Large crop loads, lack of rainfall, inadequate fertility, scab disease, sooty mold, shuckworm damage and scorch mites are some of the more common causes of low-quality pecans. The high cost of eliminating many of these problems makes treating trees unfeasible for a person with a few pecan trees.

Adequate water is a key factor that can improve the quality of the pecan crop. If the soil is dry, the tree cannot obtain nutrients from the soil needed to develop a kernel in the nut. Research has shown that the percent kernel in the pecan can be improved from 46 percent with one-half inch of rain to 58 percent with 2 inches of rain the first two weeks of September.

Providing water is one thing a homeowner can do to help trees produce well-filled pecans without a lot of expense. An inch of water added to the root zone of a pecan tree once a week in early September can substitute for inadequate rainfall. Water should be added once a week. Do not water a little each day. A soaker hose or sprinkler works well. A rain gauge or small container placed on the ground near the pecan tree will indicate when the sprinkler has applied enough water. A general recommendation for a soaker hose on a large tree is to water for four or five hours.

All of the nutrients used to fill the pecan kernel must travel through the vascular tissue of the shuck to the tip of the nut and then into the kernel. Pecan kernels start filling from the tip. Anything that damages the shuck can reduce transportation of nutrients into the pecan kernel which can result in shriveled or poorly filled kernels.

Hickory shuckworm is an insect that can reduce the nut quality of pecans by burrowing in the green shuck surrounding the nut. Burrowing damages vascular tissue that carries nutrients that fill the kernel of the nut. Signs of shuckworm damage are tunnels in shucks surrounding the pecans or tunnels in dried shucks on the ground. The shuck will sometimes stick to the nut and winding dark streaks may be present on the shell of the pecan.

Control of shuckworms by spraying is not economical for the homeowner since a lot of pecans can be bought for what it would cost to spray a large pecan tree.

Shuckworms overwinter in the old shucks as small brown pupae. Removing the overwintering shuckworms can reduce the number of shuckworm moths the following spring. The second generation shuckworm is often a major cause of nut drop in late June and early July. Nut curculio and lack of nutlet pollination can also contribute to this drop. Removing fallen nuts during this period can reduce the number of third generation shuckworm that are burrowing in pecan shucks in August and September.

Removing the overwintering shuckworms in shucks and the small nutlets fallen during the June drop can reduce shuckworm damage without a lot of expense. This works best in reducing damage on pecan trees that are isolated from other pecans and hickories. Although shuckworm moths generally do not fly far, removing shucks and fallen nuts will not eliminate the problem since some moths can fly in from neighboring trees.

Harvesting and Storing Pecans

Pecans should be harvested as soon as they fall from the tree (pecan quality deteriorates rapidly if nuts remain on the ground for an extended period) and dried to remove excess moisture. An additional reason to harvest pecans as soon as they fall is to reduce excessive loss to squirrels and other critters.

Drying usually can be accomplished by spreading the pecans in a shallow layer in a warm, dry area for approximately two weeks. Adding fans and heat can speed drying. Pecans with high moisture content (higher than 6 percent) do not store well. A method to determine if pecans are dry enough for storage is to shell a representative sample of the pecans and check the kernels. Bend the kernels until they break. If the kernels break with a sharp snap, they are usually dry enough for storage. Additional drying is needed if kernels do not break with a sharp snap. Proper storage can enable individuals to enjoy their pecans until they have another good crop.

Proper storage techniques must be used to maintain good nut quality. Poor storage conditions often leads to darkening of kernels and rancidity of the oils, thus destroying the natural flavor and aroma of the nuts.

Pecans should be stored under refrigeration. Lowering storage temperatures can extend storage life. The average shelf life for pecans at several storage temperatures is shown in the table.

Storage	**Average Shelf Life**	
Temp °F	*Unshelled*	*Shelled*
70	6 months	3- 4 months
45	9 months	6 months
32	18 months	12 months
20	30 months	18 months
Zero	6-8 years	6-8 years

Unshelled pecans can be stored for a longer period than shelled nuts. The unbroken shell protects the kernel from bruising and offers some protection against oxidation and rancidity. The disadvantage of unshelled pecans is that they take up more space than shelled pecans and cannot be used immediately from storage.

If pecans are refrigerated or frozen, they should be placed in airtight containers. Pecan meats readily absorb odors from other foods, resulting in off-flavors. If pecans are to be stored at room temperature for an extended period, they should be held in containers that are adequately ventilated. Avoid storing improperly dried pecans in plastic bags.

John Pyzner
Pecan Extension Specialist

Pomegranates

Origin and History

Pomegranates are native to southeastern Europe and Asia and were grown in ancient Egypt, Babylon, India and Iran. The pomegranate is associated with the most ancient civilization in the Middle East. Judging by some of the earliest records, the pomegranate is native to Persia and the surrounding area. It was also cultivated in ancient Greece and referred to by Greek writers several hundred years B.C., even before the advent of the almond, peach or apricot. The character of the fruit made it particularly agreeable to the inhabitants of hot, arid regions, and so it spread east to India and China and west to countries encircling the Mediterranean. It flourished particularly well in Spain, and the city of Granada owes its name to the high-quality pomegranates grown in that area. Its current scientific name, *Punica granatum*, was derived from the name "pomuni granatum" (seeded apple) given to the fruit in the Middle Ages.

Climate

Pomegranates can be grown in tropical-to-warm climates. The best quality pomegranate fruits, however, are produced in regions with cool winters and hot, dry summers. They are sensitive to frost in the fall and spring and do not mature well in cool climates. Pomegranates are more cold hardy (receive less damage) than citrus and vary in cold tolerance, but in some cases they will tolerate temperatures in the teens.

Description

The tree is very long-lived. The plants are normally a dense, bushy, deciduous shrub, 6-12 feet tall. The plant has slender, somewhat thorny branches. It may be trained as a small tree reaching 20 ft. in height. Pomegranate is an attractive ornamental. The flowers are particularly attractive with most being a flaming orange-red. The fruit is brownish-yellow to purplish-red berries 2-5 inches in diameter with a smooth, leathery skin. Numerous seeds are each surrounded by a pink to purplish-red, juicy, subacid pulp (arils), which is the edible portion. The pulp is somewhat astringent. Pomegranates mature from August to November.

Varieties

Wonderful is grown commercially in California and is the most readily available choice from nursery sources. Purple Seed, Spanish Ruby, Granada, Ruby Red, Foothill Early, Spanish Sweet, Sweet, Ambrosia, Eversweet, Kashmir, Utah Sweet, Pink Satin, Red Silk, Sharp Velvet, White, Favorite and Angel Red are popular dooryard varieties.

Planting and Spacing

Plant trees in early spring (February-March), avoiding late frost. Soil should be loosely worked and not too wet. When using as a hedge, space plants 6-9 feet apart. Suckers will fill spaces and produce a compact hedge. Spacings of 15-18 feet between plants and rows are used for orchards, and similar spacings should be maintained for dooryard trees.

Fertilization

Young trees should receive about 2-2.5 lb of 8-8-8 (or similar) fertilizer in November and March. Mature trees require 4.5-6.5 lb of a similar fertilizer at the same intervals. Excessive or late applications tend to delay fruit maturity and reduce color and quality.

Training and Pruning

Trees tend toward a bushy habit with many suckers arising from the root and crown area. Tree-type plants can be produced by allowing only one trunk to develop. Additional suckers should be removed frequently around main trunk(s). Prune to produce stocky, compact framework in the first two years of growth. Cut trees back to 2-2.5 feet at planting and develop three to five symmetrically spaced scaffold limbs by pinching back new shoots, the lowest at least 8-10 inches from the ground. Shorten branches to three-fifths of their length during the winter following planting. Remove interfering branches and sprouts, leaving two or three shoots per scaffold branch. Light, annual pruning of established trees encourages production of good quality fruit. Remove dead or damaged wood during late winter months. Remove sprouts and suckers as they appear.

Fruiting

Pomegranate trees are self-fruitful and can pollinate themselves. Severe fruit drop during the plant's juvenile period (3-5 years) is not uncommon. Fruit drop is aggravated by practices favoring vegetative growth such as overfertilization and excess irrigation. Avoid putting young trees under stressful conditions. Fruit drop is less severe on mature trees than on younger trees.

The fruit is widely used for decorative purposes, but is also eaten fresh. The kernels can be used as a garnish for desserts and salads. Juice is extracted by squeezing kernels. The juice is used many ways in a variety of foods and beverages. Grenadine is made by mixing equal parts of pomegranate juice and sugar. This syrup is widely used as a flavoring in mixed drinks, as a topping for ice cream and desserts, or as a sweetener for grapefruit halves. Pomegranate juice is also used to make wine, or as a refreshing punch base. Occasionally, the juice is used in making gelatin desserts, icing for cakes and pudding sauces.

David Himelrick
Horticulturist



Vegetable Gardening

Vegetables to Plant September...

Beets, broccoli (transplants or seeds through September), Brussels sprouts (transplants or seeds), cabbage (transplants or seeds), Chinese cabbage (transplants or seeds), cauliflower (transplants or seeds), collards (transplants or seeds), endive, carrots, English peas, snow peas, garlic (late September), kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onions (seeds, late September), parsley, snap beans (early September), radishes, rutabaga, shallots, spinach, Swiss chard, turnips and kale.

October...

Cabbage, broccoli (transplants), mustard,* turnips, collards, kale, parsley, shallots, radishes, beets, spinach,* leaf lettuce, Chinese cabbage,* celery, onions, Swiss chard, garlic, carrots and endive.*

November...

Beets,* shallots, garlic,* Swiss chard, spinach, kale, radish, mustard, carrots and turnips.

*Plant first part of the month.



Crop Highlights

Onions (bulbing) — Onion seed may be planted for transplants from mid-September until mid-October. Keep the soil moist because seed coats are hard. It may take two weeks for onion seed to germinate to a stand. Onions can be transplanted to the garden mid-December through January. You also may sow directly in the row where they are to mature in October.

Several drills of seed may be planted on one row. Leave 6 to 8 inches between drills. Pay special attention to weed control in direct-seeded onions. Control winter weeds before the onset of wet soils and cool weather. Consider planting onion plants in black plastic mulch. The mulch controls weeds, enhances growth and keeps the onion bulbs cleaner.

Short-day varieties to plant:

- Red: Red Creole C5, Red Burgundy
- White: Super Star Hybrid (AAS), Candy (golden), Georgia Boy
- Yellow: Granex 33, Texas Grano 1015Y, Nirvana, Savannah Sweet, Sweet Melody, Grano 502, Century

Fertilize plants sparingly before planting. This will prevent excessive growth, which enhances premature seed stalk development or bolting. From 2 to 3 pounds of 0-20-20, 7-21-21 or 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row are sufficient. Sidedress onions just before bulbing next spring. Several nitrogen sidedressings at 2- to 3-week intervals increase plant size and bulb size. (Follow same schedule for bulbing shallots. Choose Prisma.)

Green Shallots — Shallot sets can be planted any time in fall or winter. Replant several as you harvest by separating plants and retransplanting. They'll continue to divide and make several more plants. By doing this, you can have shallots through spring. The largest shallot bulbs for sets are made by transplanting in mid-November to December.

Garlic — Separate garlic bulbs into individual cloves before planting in October. Several varieties, like Silverskin, are available, but sets may be difficult to find. Tahiti, or elephant garlic, is the largest and mildest. The Italian and Creole varieties are smaller and stronger. Check the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Market Bulletin and the Internet (http://www.ldaf.state.la.us/portal/News/MarketBulletinCurrent/tabid/165/Default.aspx) for possible sources of sets.

Plant cloves about 1 inch deep and 4 to 6 inches apart in the row. 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 is up and again next February and March just before bulb swell.

Lettuce & Endive — September is the best month to plant lettuce. Head and semi-head lettuce should be planted so that it is harvested before a hard frost. Sidedress about 3 to 4 weeks after transplanting and again 2 to 3 weeks later.

Good varieties are

- Semi-head: Green Forest, Green Towers, Tall Guzmaine, Ermosa, Nancy, Esmerelda, Buttercrunch (AAS), Oak Leaf, Parris Island Cos
- Leaf: Simpson Elite, Red Fire, Red Salad Bowl, Nevada, Sierra, Red Sails (AAS), Sunset (AAS), Salad Bowl, Tango
- Head: Great Lakes, Ithaca, Mavrick, Summertime, Mighty Joe

Cover lettuce seed only lightly for best germination. For Endive or Escarole, choose Rufflo, Salad King or Full Heart.

Greens — Keep the soil moist. Avoid planting greens too thick. A 3- to 4-inch spacing between plants is recommended. For weed control, Treflan can be incorporated before planting. Double drills may be planted on one row, allowing 10 to 12 inches between drills.

Broccoli and Cauliflower — Direct-seed or transplant through September. Space cauliflower about 12 to 18 inches apart and broccoli 6 to 12 inches apart. Both shallow-rooted crops respond to fairly high rates of fertilizer, 4 to 6 pounds of 8-8-8 or 3 to 4 pounds of 8-24-24 per 100 feet of row. Sidedress with about a pint of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row about two to four weeks after transplanting. Two to three added sidedressings at two-week intervals will increase yield.

Broccoli varieties recommended include Green Comet (AAS), Packman, Windsor, Triathlon, Green Belt, Diplomat, Patron, Gypsy, Premium Crop (AAS), Arcadia and Everest.

Recommended early cauliflower hybrids are Snow Crown (AAS), Majestic, Freedom, Symphony, Cumberland, Wentworth and Incline. Candid Charm is a large-head, early hybrid that self-wraps. Good open-pollinated varieties include White Rock and Self Blanch (fall only).

Cabbage — Recommended varieties for fall and winter production are Platinum Dynasty, Bravo, Stonehead, Rio Verde, Silver Dynasty, Thunderhead, Emblem, Solid Blue 780 and 790, Blue Vantage, Cheers, Vantage Point, Red Dynasty, Blue Dynasty, Blue Thunder, Savoy King and Savoy Ace. A&C #5+ is the hardiest.

Chinese Cabbage — Chinese cabbage is an excellent crop for fall gardens. It may be used like lettuce. Seed may be planted in September. Solid heads form 55 to 60 days after seeding.

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

Plant peas about 1 to 2 inches apart in the row. From 2 to 4 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. From 70 to 80 days are required from planting until harvest. Staking or trellising peas, even the bush types, will help to increase the chance of success.

Spinach — For best growth, spinach requires a fertile, well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 7.0. Apply 4 to 5 pounds of a complete fertilizer per 100 feet of row about two weeks before planting. Sidedress with 1 pound of ammonium nitrate per 100 feet of row about one month after seeding. This will keep it growing quickly, making it tender and improving quality. An additional sidedressing after harvest will improve yields on second cuttings.

Plant seeds about one-half 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 varieties are Bloomsdale Long Standing, Melody, Tyee, Hybrid 7, Unipak 151, Greyhound, Smooth-Ballet, Tiger Cat and Mig.

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

Sweet Potatoes — Dig sweet potatoes before a frost occurs. Cure potatoes after digging by storing at 85 degrees to 90 degrees and 85 percent to 90 percent humidity for a week. Cured potatoes will keep longer. After curing, hold potatoes at about 60 degrees in high humidity. Maximum sweetness is 6 to 7 weeks after harvest. Don't refrigerate. Dust potatoes kept for seed with 5 percent Imidan for weevil control.

Tomatoes — November is a good time to look through seed catalogs. All-American selections like Celebrity do well. Local growers are encouraged to handle new varieties but rarely do. Order before Christmas. Plant seed in January.

Carrots — Direct-seed carrots from September on. Form high, well-drained rows 20 inches apart. Thin to about 2 inches apart. Choose Danvers 126, Thumbelina and Purple Haze (AAS). Sandy soils use Apache, Choctaw, Big Sur, Maverick, Navaho.

Beets — Plant beets fall through winter. Choose from Centurion, Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace, Ruby Queen, Scarlet Supreme, Chariot and Solo.

Collards — For good collards plant Blue Max, Champion, Morris, Flash, HeaviCrop, Top Bunch Top Pick or Vates.

Thomas J. Koske
Vegetable Specialist

Turfgrasses

Fall Lawn Care

After early August, postpone any permanent turfgrass establishment from seed until spring. Solid sod or plug in the fall. You may overseed with temporary ryegrass in mid-fall if needed to check erosion.

For a green lawn all winter, you'll have to sow ryegrass seed late September through early October (north Louisiana) or mid-October through early November (south Louisiana). Choose a perennial rye for a finer lawn that can withstand cold weather better. Most varieties or blends work well.

Two weeks after planting the seed, apply 8 to 12 pounds of a starter-type of fertilizer to each 1,000 square feet. Sow about 10 pounds (at least 5 pounds) of seed per 1,000 square feet of lawn, and drag or rake into sod. On coarse St. Augustine, sow the 10 pounds for better coverage. For best results, first mow existing lawns one-half inch shorter than usual before seeding. In winter, use 3 pounds of ammonium nitrate (1 pound) per 1,000 square feet or a turf fertilizer blend equivalent. Use only as needed (about twice) to maintain desired growth and color.

If you will not be overseeding, be careful with fall fertilizing of warm-season grasses. In September or October, they may need a little extra potassium (about 1 or 2 pounds of muriate potash per 1,000 square feet) and little or no nitrogen at all.

Stimulating fall growth of our warm-season turf with nitrogen leads to extra disease and winterkill. If you need extra color on fall turf, apply foliar iron spray. Phosphorus is not needed at this time if you are not overseeding. Keep mowing and watering your lawn as needed in the fall. If lime was called for on your fall soil test results, apply it in mid- to late fall or winter.

If you haven't tested your soil in the past several years, do it now. To test your soil, bring in 1 pint of soil to your county extension agent's office. It should be a composite of soil plugs taken from several areas 4 inches deep and mixed together. The cost is $7.

Brown patch disease can come and go all winter if weather is mild. A treatment of fungicide labeled for brown patch will check its spread. This is important for good spring green-up. REMEMBER: What's dead in December will still be dead in April.

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Horticulture Hints



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Parish agents, please adapt these suggestions to your area before disseminating.

Tom Koske, Horticulture Specialist

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