Horticulture Hints

Fall 2005

LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

Landscape Gardening and Ornamentals

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 that 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 are those that grow from 15 to 25 feet tall, medium-sized trees from 30 to 55 feet tall and large trees are those that grow 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.

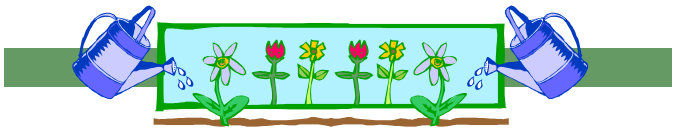
Plant Native Shrubs This Fall

Many of us think about planting shrubs in the spring, but fall is the best time to plant shrubs in Louisiana. There are advantages to planting woody ornamentals in the fall. First, it allows the plant to establish a root system in the new soil long before shoot growth is initiated the next spring. Root activity takes place in relatively cool soil, even though the top (shoot) is not actively growing. Usually, less supplementary water will be required in late fall and early winter than in late spring or summer.

Some excellent native shrubs are available for Louisiana. Consider adding one of these species to your home landscape.

Evergreen, Semi-evergreen:

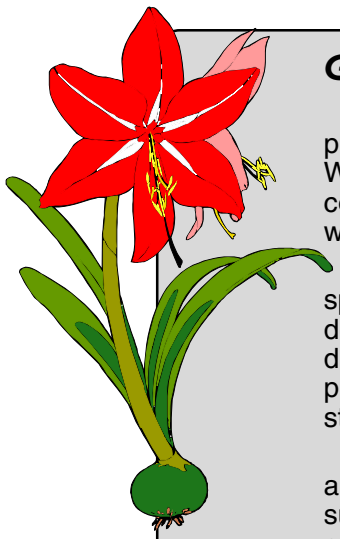
Species	Size	Light Requirement
Coast Leucothoe (*Leucothoe axillaris)*	3-6’	Partial shade, shade
Dwarf palmetto (*Sabal minor*)	~2-8’	Partial shade, shade
Dwarf yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*, ‘Nana’)	2-4’+	Sun, partial shade
Florida Anise (*Illicium floridanum*)	8-12’	Partial shade, shade
Fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*)	2-6’+	Partial shade, shade
Groundsel Bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*)	~12’	Sun, partial shade
Inkberry/Gallberry (*Ilex glabra*)	7-10’	Sun, partial shade



Deciduous:

Species	Size	Light Requirement
French Mulberry/Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)	3-8’	Sun, Partial shade
Native azaleas (*Rhododendrons*)		
Honeysuckle azaleas (pink) (*R. canescens*)	8-16’	Sun, partial shade
Native viburnums		
Arrowwood (*V. dentatum*)	6-15’	Sun, partial shade
Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)	6-8’+	Shade, partial shade
Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*)	3-10’	Sun, shade
Strawberrybush/Wahoo (*Euonymus americanus*)	4-8’	Partial shade, shade
Virginia willow (*Itea virginica*)	3-4’	Partial shade, shade
Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)	6-10’	Sun, partial shade

This information was provided by Betty Miley, Master Gardener from East Baton Rouge Parish.



Growing Amaryllis

Dormant amaryllis bulbs are readily available in the fall, and, with proper care, they can become a long-lasting part of your landscape. We are fortunate to be able to grow these bulbs in garden beds. In colder regions, amaryllis must be grown in containers because they would freeze in winter if planted in the ground.

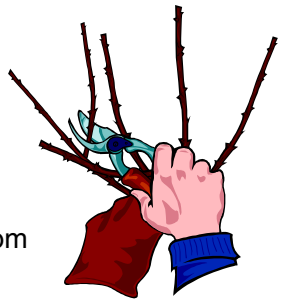
Dormant bulbs that you purchase now, however, must be handled specially this winter. When they are dried off and forced into dormancy for shipping purposes, the bulbs are triggered to bloom during the winter rather than the spring. If you plant bulbs you purchase now outside into the garden, they will send up their flower stalks this winter when they are likely to be damaged by cold.

Amaryllis bulbs purchased now should be planted into pots using a well-drained potting soil; leave the neck of the bulb above the soil surface, or buy them preplanted. The pot should be large enough for a 1-inch clearance between the pot rim and the bulb. Clay or plastic pots may be used, but since an amaryllis in bloom can be somewhat top heavy, clay pots provide a little more stability.

Place the pot in a sunny window, and keep the soil evenly moist. When the flower stalk begins to emerge, rotate the pot 1/2 turn every few days so the stalk will grow straight. If you provide your amaryllis with too little light, the flower stalk will grow excessively tall and may even fall over. Flowering generally occurs in December or early January from bulbs planted in fall. After the flowers have faded, cut the stalk at the point where it emerges from the bulb, but do not cut any foliage. Keep the plant inside, and continue to provide plenty of light or the leaves will be weak and floppy.

In April, it's time to plant the bulbs into the garden. Choose a well-drained bed that gets between four to six hours of sun. Amaryllis planted in the garden next spring will get into their natural cycle and bloom in April the following years.

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. I even know a few gardeners who 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 pruners.

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.

Many climbing roses, ramblers and old garden roses that bloom only once in spring and early summer should not be pruned now. They 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.



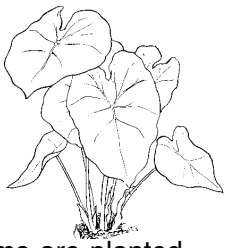
Time to Divide Louisiana Irises

Louisiana irises are at their most dormant stage in the late summer, making September and early October the ideal time to divide them. To divide your irises, dig up a clump using a shovel or turning fork. Be careful not to damage the rhizomes. Break or cut off the young rhizomes — which have green growth at their tips — from the large, old rhizomes. Discard the old rhizomes and replant the young rhizomes.

Before replanting, take the opportunity to improve the bed by digging a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost or other organic matter into the bed along with an application of 15-5-10 fertilizer. Plant the rhizomes horizontally about 8 to 12 inches apart, with the fan of foliage facing the direction you want the plant to grow; carefully cover all of the roots. The top of the rhizome should show above the soil surface. Mulch the bed about 3 inches deep and water thoroughly.

This is also a good time to divide other perennials that start active growth in the fall and grow over the winter, such as Easter lilies, calla lilies and acanthus.

Time to Dig and Store Caladiums



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 have luck simply leaving the caladium tubers in the ground. Keep the area mulched this winter to protect the tubers, but since the ground in Louisiana does not freeze, they often survive and come up next year.

If the bed tends to stay wet over the winter, the tubers will rot and would be best dug and stored. Caladiums should be dug when a number of leaves turn yellow and the foliage begins to look "tired" and falls over. Do not wait for all of the foliage to turn yellow or brown. 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 the soil and lay them out in a dry location sheltered from rain (in a garage, under a carport). Allow the foliage to dry for about two weeks until it is tan and papery. At that time the foliage will easily separate from the tubers, leaving a cleanly healed scar. When they are dry, they are ready for storing over the winter.

Place the 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." Make sure you keep the tubers in a location where temperatures will stay above 70 degrees F. With proper care, however, the tubers you planted this year can provide a beautiful display again next year.

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, 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 stock, dwarf snapdragon, ornamental kale and cabbage and annual phlox.
- ***Cool-season bedding plants 8 to 15 inches tall:***Medium-sized snapdragons, dwarf toadflax*, 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*.
  *These plants resent transplanting and are generally best direct seeded where they will grow.

Perennials

Many perennials can be dug and transplanted over the next couple of months. This provides the opportunity to correct problems you noticed this summer with plants in the wrong location. Do not move or divide perennials that are in bloom now or will be later on this fall. Most perennials can be dug and divided over the next couple of months as well. This is especially important for fast-growing or rampant perennials to keep them under control.

Moving Houseplants Summered Outside Indoors



Container-grown tropical plants are commonly placed outside for the summer where they provide a beautiful addition to decks, patios and porches. But, these plants will not withstand freezing temperatures and must be brought back inside for the winter.

About four weeks before you intend to bring them inside, move outdoor tropicals in containers to well-shaded locations outside. Acclimating them to lower light conditions helps them adjust to the reduced light available in most homes.

Houseplants that spent the summer outside should be groomed so they will look their best, and you will be less likely to bring pests inside with the plants.

- Clean the outside of containers using a brush and a mild solution of dishwashing liquid and water. Add a little bleach to the solution to kill algae growing on the pot. Do not get this solution in the soil.
- Hose down the plants, and wipe the foliage clean with a soft damp cloth to remove dust and debris.
- Remove all dead or yellow foliage, old flower stalks and dead or injured branches and stems.
- If you discover insect infestations, spray the plants with the appropriate insecticides to control the problem before you bring plants indoors.

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 multi-seasonal 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 bald cypress (a Louisiana Select tree), nuttall oak, shumard oak, cherrybark oak, Bradford pear, Chinese pistachio, ginkgo, Japanese maple, sweet gum, sumac and hickories.
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.



Dan Gill, Allen Owings and Anthony Witcher

Strawberries in the Home Garden



Strawberries are planted in October in northern Louisiana and November in southern Louisiana for fruiting the following spring.

Varieties

Camarosa, Chandler and Strawberry Festival are good strawberry varieties for Louisiana. They have good fruit size and yield.

Soil and Site Selection

A good strawberry site should be:

– A well-drained area where water does not stand after heavy rains.

– In full sunlight away from shade and tree roots.

– A site near a source of water for irrigation.

– In an area with no history of disease and nematode problems.

– In soils high in organic matter, for example, where cover crops or green manure crops have been recently grown and turned under.

Preplant Fertilizer

Apply 8 pounds of a complete fertilizer such as 13-13-13 or 8-24-24 per 100 feet or row in September to avoid fertilizer burn. Wait for a 1- or 2-inch rain or irrigate after fertilization before laying plastic mulch. Black plastic mulch is widely used for strawberries. It controls weeds, warms the soil and keeps the berries clean. Pine straw or other natural mulches have been used, too.

Transplanting

When the plants are received, unpack and plant immediately or heel them in. Plants can be killed or seriously damaged by several hours of high temperatures. Make sure roots are moist at all times. Set plants at crown level with soil surface. Plants set at an incorrect depth may lack vigor or die. The plant crown is the thick, fleshy part from which leaves and roots originate. Water immediately after transplanting, and continue watering daily until rains soak the soil.

Spacing

Strawberry plants may be placed single or double in the row. On single-planted rows, space plants 10 to 13 inches apart in the center of the row. On double-planted rows, space them 13 to 16 inches apart, alternating along the row with 12-inch spacing between parallel rows. Double-set rows usually yield more berries, but single-set rows yield more fruit per plant.

Care in Winter and Early Spring

The fertilizer applied during the soil preparation and before transplanting is not sufficient to produce highest yields during the latter part of the growing season. Granular fertilizers may be applied by punching small holes through the plastic between plants. Apply about 1 teaspoon of 6-12-6 or 13-13-13 between each plant. Keep granular fertilizer at least 6 inches from individual plants. Granular fertilizer can be applied in January and again in early February.

Irrigate strawberry plants frequently in the absence of rains. Strawberry plants have shallow roots, and it is important that the proper moisture level be maintained in the top 2 inches of soil. Water every two to three days if needed.

Pomegranate

The pomegranate, *Punica granatum*, is an ornamental shrub with an attractive edible fruit. It has been grown as a fruiting shrub or small tree in many Louisiana gardens. Pomegranates are tolerant of a humid climate, although they have been grown in the semi-arid climate of the Mediterranean and Middle East regions since ancient times.

The natural growth pattern of a pomegranate is a dense deciduous shrub 8 to 15 feet tall. The plants are sometimes pruned to single trunk trees 15 to 20 feet tall. The tree form does require frequent pruning of suckers from around the main trunk to maintain its form. Pomegranates can withstand temperatures near 0 degrees F when they are dormant. They are very sensitive to early freezes in the fall before the plants go dormant or to late freezes in the spring when buds begin to swell. In areas where early or late freezes are a problem, pomegranates are best grown as a shrub.

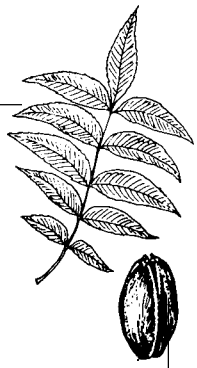
Pomegranates tolerate most growing conditions except for wet soils. The best growing conditions for pomegranates are sunny locations with a well-drained moist heavy loam soil. Plants can grow in partial shade, sand or clay soils, drought conditions and a broad soil pH range.

Pomegranates have showy flowers, an inch or two in diameter, in the spring. Most flowers are a dark orange to red. Flowers also can be white, yellow or pink. They may have a single set of petals or multiple sets of petals that give them a carnation appearance.

Pomegranates are self-pollinating. Two types of flowers are frequently present. One type has a pistil and pollen and is capable of producing fruit. These flowers normally have a U-shaped base. The second type produces only pollen and will not set fruit. This type of flower usually has a V-shaped base. Humid conditions during blooming can prevent fruit set. Severe fruit drop is common on young plants three to five years old.

The fruit is 2 to 5 inches in diameter. It has a leathery rind that is usually yellow and overlaid with pink or red. The interior of the fruit is filled with seeds that are surrounded with white, pink or red juicy pulp. The juicy pulp is the edible part of the fruit, which ripens in September and October. Wonderful and Sweet are the two varieties of fruiting pomegranates most likely to be available. The fruit is so unique and attractive that more pomegranates probably end up as decorations than are eaten.

A number of ornamental pomegranates, like Nana, are available. It is a dwarf variety 2- to 4-feet tall that has individual orange-red flowers. Other ornamental varieties are more difficult to locate. These varieties vary in flower color and plant size. The small plant size, attractive flowers and unique fruits make the pomegranate an excellent landscape plant.



Improving Pecan Quality

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

Several things can cause poor quality pecans. Excessive numbers of nuts on trees, lack of rainfall, inadequate fertility, scab disease, sooty mold, shuckworm damage and scorch mites are some of the more common causes. The high cost of eliminating these problems makes treating trees unfeasible for a person with a few pecan trees.

Providing water is one thing homeowners can do to help their trees produce well-filled pecans without a lot of expense.

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 needed to develop a kernel in the nut. Research has shown that the percentage of kernels in the pecan can be improved from 46 percent with 1/2 inch rain to 58 percent with 2 inches of rain the first two weeks of September.

An inch of water added to the root zone of a pecan tree once a week in early September can substitute for inadequate rainfall. Add water weekly. 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 is to water for 4 or 5 hours.

Harvesting and Storing Pecans

Harvest pecans as soon as they fall from the tree (pecan quality deteriorates rapidly if nuts remain on the ground for extended periods). Dry to remove excess moisture. Drying can usually be accomplished by storing the pecans in a shallow layer in a warm, dry area for about two weeks. Adding fans and heat can speed drying. Pecans with high moisture content (higher than 6 percent) do not store well. An easy 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.

An additional reason to harvest pecans as soon as they fall is to reduce excessive loss to squirrels and other critters.

Pecans often produce large crops of nuts and then may skip a year or more before producing another good crop. 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 lead to darkening of kernels and rancidity of the oils, thus destroying the natural flavor and aroma of the nuts.

Pecans should be stored under refrigerated conditions. Lowering storage temperatures can extend storage life of pecans. The average shelf life for pecans at several storage temperatures is shown.

Storage	Average Shelf Life	
Temperature	Unshelled	Shelled
70 degrees F	6 months	3- 4 months
45 degrees F	9 months	6 months
32 degrees F	18 months	12 months
20 degrees F	30 months	18 months
0 degrees F	6-8 years	6-8 years

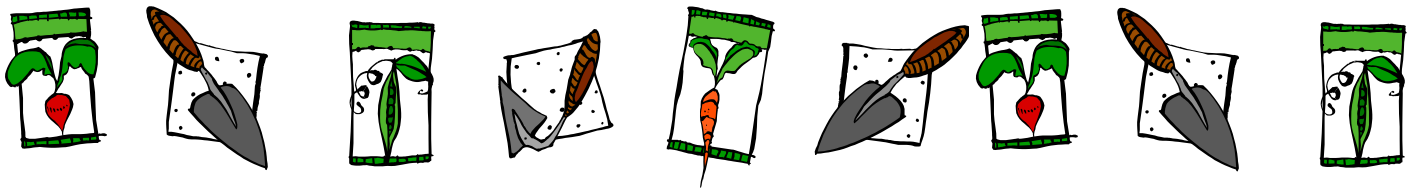
Unshelled pecans can be stored longer than shelled nuts. The unbroken shell protects the kernel from bruising and offers some protection against oxidation and rancidity.

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. Pecans that have not been dried properly should not be stored in plastic bags.

Miscellaneous Tips

1. If not already done, prune old canes out of blackberries and burn them. Clean out grasses and weeds.
2. Spray all fruit plants as needed to control insects and diseases. Also, keep them free of weeds and grasses that compete for water and nutrients.
3. Check peach trees for white peach scale. If an infestation is present, spray two times at 10- to 14-day intervals beginning after trees are dormant. Use dormant oil.
4. Take soil samples around fruit plantings, particularly blueberries. The soil pH around blueberries may become abnormally low. If so, a moderate rate of lime may be needed. Ask your LSU AgCenter agent to interpret your soil test and for equivalent lime rates to use.
5. October is not too early to order fruit and pecan trees. The popular varieties are sold out by December.
6. Pecan nut quality is greatly affected by soil moisture levels in September. If rainfall is not ample, supply trees with a slow (2 to 3 gallons per hour) rate of water for 8 to 15 hours, depending on tree size. Remember, large pecan trees may need 200 to 300 gallons of water daily.

John Pyzner



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, 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, 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 late October. Keep the soil moist to help germination. Because seed coats are hard, it may take two weeks for onion seed to germinate to a stand. Onions can be transplanted in mid December through January. Sow directly in the row where they are to mature in October to early November.

Several drills 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 clean.

Short day varieties to plant are Red Creole C5 (red, pungent and stores well), Red Burgundy, Candy (golden), Texas Grano 1015Y (sweet yellow), Grano 502 (yellow), Granex 33 (sweet yellow), Superstar (white), and Crystal Wax (white), Sweet Vadalia.

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 two- to three-week intervals increase plant size and bulb size. (Same schedule for bulbing shallots. Choose Prisma or Matador.)

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/divisions/marketing/marketbulletin/on-line-issues.asp) 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 three to four weeks after transplanting and again two to three weeks later. Head varieties are Parris Island Cos, Green Forest, Green Towers, Sierra and Nevada. Cover lettuce seed lightly for best germination. Plant loose heads also in October.

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 (A.A.S.), Packman, Emperor, Baccus, Premium Crop (A.A.S.), Arcadia, Decathalon, Patriot and Sussex.

Recommended early cauliflower hybrids are Snow Crown (A.A.S.), Majestic, Early Snowball and Wentworth. Candid Charm is a large-head, early hybrid that self wraps. Good open-pollinated varieties include White Rock and Self Blanch (fall only). Also try super Snowball and White Passion.

Cabbage

Recommended varieties for fall and winter production are Pacifica, Dynamo, Red Rookie, Super Red 80, Quisto, Stonehead and Rio Verde, Solid Blue 780, Blue Vantage, Cheers, Emblem, Vantage Point and Savoy types. A&C #5+ is the hardiest.

Chinese Cabbage

An excellent crop for fall gardens. Chinese cabbage 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. Two to 4 ounces of seed will plant a 100-foot row. Seventy 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 1/2 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: Hybrid No. 7, Bloomsdale Long Standing, Melody and Tyee.

Pumpkins and Winter Squash

Harvest these after they have developed the appropriate color for the variety and a hard rind. 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), they 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 F and 85 percent to 90 percent humidity for a week. Cured potatoes will keep longer. After curing, hold potatoes at about 60 degrees F with a high humidity. Maximum sweetness is at six to seven 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-America selections do well. Local seed growers are encouraged to handle new varieties but rarely do. Order before Christmas. Plant seed by early February.

Jimmy Boudreaux, Tom Koske

Turfgrasses

Hints for fall lawn care

After mid August, postpone any permanent turfgrass establishment from seed until spring. Solid sod or plug, overseed with ryegrass in mid fall to check erosion.

For a green lawn all year, 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 or three weeks after planting the seed, apply 8 to 12 pounds of a starter type of fertilizer to each 1,000 square feet of area. Sow about 10 pounds (at least 5) 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 1/2 inch shorter than usual before seeding. In winter use 3 pounds of ammonium nitrate per 1,000 square feet or a turf fertilizer blend equivalent. Use only as needed monthly 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 pound or 2 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 winter kill. 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 agent's office. It should be a composite of soil plugs taken from several areas 4 inches deep and mixed together.

Brown patch disease can come and go all winter if weather is mild. A treatment of fungicide labeled for brown patch or large patch will check its spread. This is important for good spring green-up.

Thomas J. Koske



Please contact your parish agent for additional information.

Agents: enter contact information here

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Horticulture Hints

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LSU AgCenter Research & Extension

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



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