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Cover Photo
The gills of a *Chlorophyllum molybdites* mushroom.
Photo by Chris Dunaway

Know Your Natives: Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) A Native Southern Icon

Few plants are as closely associated with Louisiana as Spanish moss. Its silver-gray strands drape live oaks and bald cypress trees, adding movement, texture, and a strong sense of place to our landscapes. Despite its name, Spanish moss is neither Spanish nor a true moss. It is a native flowering plant with remarkable adaptations for life above the ground.

A Bromeliad, Not a Moss

Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) belongs to the bromeliad family, Bromeliaceae. That relationship makes it a botanical cousin of pineapples and ornamental bromeliads. It is an epiphyte, or air plant, meaning it grows on another plant for physical support without taking food or water from the host tree. It is not a parasite and does not penetrate living tree tissues.

Spanish moss obtains what it needs from sunlight, rainfall, atmospheric moisture and small amounts of mineral material carried in the air or washed over the plant. Gray trichomes covering the leaves help trap water, which is then absorbed by the plant.

Botanical Description

- **Growth habit:** A perennial, rootless or nearly rootless epiphyte that forms long, pendant chains and hanging curtains.
- **Stems and leaves:** Slender, flexible stems bear narrow, curved leaves. Dense surface scales, called trichomes, give the plant its silvery-gray appearance.
- **Color:** Dry plants appear gray or silver. After rain, hydrated tissues become noticeably greener.
- **Flowers:** Small, inconspicuous flowers develop among the strands, so many gardeners never notice that Spanish moss is a flowering plant. It typically flowers in the spring and early summer (usually around April, May, and June).
- **Reproduction:** The plant reproduces by seed and vegetatively when fragments break away and lodge on a new support.



City Park live oaks adorned with Spanish moss. Photo by Chris Dunaway

How Spanish Moss Absorbs Water

Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) is covered with tiny surface scales called trichomes. These scales help the plant capture water and nutrients from rain, humidity, dust, and organic particles in the air. When dry, the scales reflect light, giving Spanish moss its familiar silvery-gray color.

After rain or periods of high humidity, water moves into the spaces around the trichomes and spreads across the plant surface. As the plant hydrates, it often appears greener because the leaf tissue beneath the scales becomes more visible. Once hydrated, the scales help slow water loss, allowing the plant to dry gradually rather than too quickly.



Spanish moss flowers.
Courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Alan Cressler.

Native Range and Common Habitat

Spanish moss is native to the coastal southeastern United States and occurs throughout Louisiana, although abundance varies by location. Warm temperatures, humidity, rainfall, light and air movement favor its growth. It is especially characteristic of bayous, swamps, river corridors, coastal forests and older urban neighborhoods.

In Louisiana it is strongly associated with southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) and bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), but it can grow on many other trees and on nonliving supports. The tree serves as a perch, not as a food source.

Does Spanish Moss Harm Trees?

Spanish moss does not cause tree decline by extracting nourishment from the tree. It often becomes more conspicuous on a thinning or declining tree because additional light reaches interior branches. In most landscape situations it is harmless and contributes aesthetic and ecological value.

A very heavy, wet accumulation may add weight to an already weak limb or shade some foliage, so unusually dense growth can be reduced mechanically if needed. Homeowners should evaluate the tree itself for root injury, poor drainage, soil compaction, storm damage, disease or other causes of canopy decline rather than blame the moss.



Dry Spanish moss dry (left) showing the dehydrated flat trichomes and wet (right) Spanish moss showing how trichomes help to disperse the water across the plant surface. Photo by Dr. Joe Willis

How to Transfer Spanish Moss to Another Tree

Spanish moss naturally spreads when living fragments catch on branches. Gardeners can imitate that process by using healthy material and placing it where conditions are suitable.

- **Collect responsibly.** Use healthy, living gray-green strands from a property where you have permission to collect.
- **Choose a suitable tree.** Select a tree with bright filtered light, good air movement, and branches that can catch and support the strands.
- **Drape the strands.** Place several small portions over branch crotches or rough horizontal limbs. Spread the material loosely rather than packing it into a dense clump.
- **Secure only if necessary.** If wind dislodges the moss, loosely hold it in place with soft cotton string or biodegradable twine. Do not use wire or tight ties.
- **Support establishment.** During an unusually dry period, mist or wet the transferred moss occasionally, then allow it to dry with good air circulation. Rainwater or filtered water is best. Avoid frequent use of hard tap water because mineral buildup can interfere with water absorption over time.
- **Observe before adding more.** Living strands remain flexible and become greener after rain. Browning, brittleness or black, soft tissue indicates stress or decay.

Spanish Moss and Ball Moss: Close Relatives

Ball moss (*Tillandsia recurvata*) is a close relative of Spanish moss. Both are flowering epiphytes in the genus *Tillandsia* and the bromeliad family, Bromeliaceae. Neither is a true moss or a parasite, and both use trees and other structures only for support. Spanish moss is recognized by long, loose, silvery-gray strands that hang in curtains or garlands. Ball moss instead forms compact, rounded gray-green tufts on branches and twigs. Ball moss produces lavender flowers on projecting stalks, while the small flowers of Spanish moss are easily overlooked. Their contrasting growth forms provide the quickest way to tell the two native air plants apart.

Wildlife and Landscape Value

Spanish moss adds distinctive texture to Louisiana landscapes and provides cover, roosting sites and nesting material for wildlife. Its presence on a healthy tree is usually a feature to appreciate rather than a problem to correct.

Pests, Diseases and Other Problems

Spanish moss has relatively few insect or disease problems. Outdoor plants growing in suitable conditions are usually self-sustaining. The most common problems are environmental, especially prolonged dryness or poor air circulation in dense, wet clumps.

Cultivated or sheltered plants may occasionally harbor scale insects or mealybugs. Brittle, brown strands usually indicate dryness, while dark, soft, or foul-smelling tissue suggests rot from staying wet too long. Improve air circulation, separate dense clumps, and remove decayed tissue as needed. Arthropods may shelter in fallen moss, but that does not always mean they are feeding on the plant. Wear gloves when handling moss collected from the ground.

A Louisiana Native Worth Keeping

Spanish moss is a native bromeliad superbly adapted to the warm, humid Gulf South. It does not need soil, does not parasitize its host and generally requires no intervention. Whether hanging over a bayou or softening the branches of a neighborhood live oak, Spanish moss is a living part of Louisiana's natural and cultural landscape.

~ Dr. Joe W Willis

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October Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety
Beets	Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace F1, Ruby Queen
Broccoli	Arcadia, Diplomat, Gypsy, Packman, Premium Crop, Windsor, Greenbelt
Brussel's Sprouts	Jade Cross E, Long Island Improved, Royal Marvel
Cabbage	Blue Vantage, Platinum Dynasty, Stonehead, Cheers, Blue Dynasty, Emblem, Rio Verde
Chinese Cabbage	None Given
Carrots	Danvers 128, Purple Haze, Thumbelina, Apache, Enterprise, Maverick, Sugar Snax 54
Cauliflower	Candid Charm, Cumberland, Freedom, Incline, Majestic, Show Crown, Wentworth
Collards	Champions, Flash, Georgia Southern, Top Bunch, Vates
Kale	None Given
English Peas	Mr. Big, Novella II, Oregon Sugar Pod II, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar Snap
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner
Lettuce	Esmeralda, New Red Fire F1, Nevada, Tall Guzmaine Elite
Mustard Greens	Florida Broadleaf, Greenwave, Red Giant, Southern Giant Curled, Savannah, Tendergreen
Potatoes, Irish	Dark Red Norland, Red LaSoda, Red Pontiac, Kennebec, Yukon Gold
Pumpins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Gooligan, Sorcerer, Sprint, Silver Moon
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross
Shallots	None Given
Swiss Chard	None Given
Turnip Greens	Alamo, All Top, Purple, Top White Globe, Seven Top, Southern Green, Top Star, Tokyo Cross

Splitting Citrus Fruits

One of the biggest issues related to irregular soil moisture, and periods of extreme drought followed by a good long rain is splitting fruit in citrus. Navel oranges are the most susceptible, followed by tangelos, mandarins, and other types of oranges. All citrus is vulnerable to splitting, however. It typically happens in late summer and into autumn, beginning at the blossom end of the fruit and moving upwards, breaking the rind open. Younger trees are more prone to fruit splitting than older, established trees, however with severe drought stress, even older trees can produce split fruit. The split can be quite shallow, or deep and wide, exposing the fruit segments inside.



Split satsuma fruit

Fruit split occurs when water and sugars are transported upwards into the fruit rapidly from the root storage system. The rind is unable to grow and expand quickly enough to contain the added volume. The rind bursts open under this pressure, much like over filling a water balloon. Fruit flies and other insects like to then feed inside the exposed fruit, leading to rot. Some split fruit will be dropped by the trees "cutting their losses", while other split fruits might hang on until fully ripe and mature. Regardless, split fruit is messy and decreases the edible portion of the fruit yield potential.

Extreme fluctuations in temperature, humidity, soil moisture and rainfall, and fertility can cause this splitting to happen. We've checked most of those boxes during the 2026 growing season unfortunately. Combinations of these extreme fluctuations, such as temperature and rainfall can combine and compound, making the issue worse. While some cultivars with thinner rinds are more likely to split, even thicker-rinded varieties can split open in these types of extremes.

Managing the trees throughout the growing season with careful attention paid to watering and fertilizer application timing can help, even in potted citrus and home orchards. Trees should always have access to nutrients in the soil during the fruit formation period. Ideally a soil test would help guide application rates, but for a good general fertilizer chart based on tree size and age, use the one on page 14 of the Louisiana Home Citrus Production guide available free online. Watering deeply, at least weekly during periods of no rain can also help to mitigate splitting. Leave a garden hose on a trickle at the base of the tree to help soak the root zone slowly. This can be costly if you aren't on a well. Even with this care, you will likely see some fruit splitting as rains return. It is best to remove split fruits from the tree and discard it so that no additional energy resources go into the damaged fruit.

~Anna Timmerman

Disease of the Month
Take-all Root Rot

Take-all Root Rot is not a new lawn disease, but a recent rise in reported cases has made it seem like one. The soil-borne fungus organism, *Gaeumannomyces graminis* var. *graminis*, has been causing issues in stress-out lawns throughout Louisiana. In many cases this disease gets misidentified as Large Patch (still commonly referred to as Brown Patch), causing issues due to improper disease management programs.



The pathogen spreads outwards from infected turf. Photo by Will Afton

Take-All Root Rot is a major disease affecting all types of warm-season turfgrass including centipedgrass, zoysiagrass, St. Augustinegrass, and bermudagrass, with severely stressed lawns being much more susceptible to infection over any specific type. The pathogen infects the roots of the plant The symptoms appear initially resemble drought stress like wilting of grass blades that eventually turn into irregularly shaped chlorotic patches. Chlorotic patches are defined as areas with an abnormal reduction of normal green coloration in plants. The lower, or older, leaves are the first to become chlorotic. As the disease progresses, stolons and rhizomes turn off-white to dark brown in color and some may exhibit isolated black lesions. Upon closer inspection of an infected stolon, black hyphae, long, branching, filamentous structures of fungal organisms, can be seen growing throughout the tissue. The pathogen infects the plant roots, so be observant of the plant root system. Those diseased roots can be dark in color, shorter than normal, and less dense when compared to healthy turfgrass roots.



The fungus attacks the root system causing discoloration and poor growth. Photo by Holly Thornton, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

Control of this disease is best obtained through prevention and reducing overall stress. Home gardeners should review their lawn care programs and evaluate the basic maintenance steps taken for granted. Take soil samples to monitor

soil fertility. Supply amendments and fertilizers to compensate medium, low, and very low concentrations reported on the soil test analysis sheet. Maintain a soil pH near the optimum range for you your specific turfgrass. Lime or sulphur may need to be applied to raise or lower pH when necessary. Manage soil compaction through aerification as needed. Supplement irrigation when weather runs dry for extended periods of time. Mow the lawn at the recommended cutting height. Mow often enough so that you remove about 1/3 of the plant every time you mow. All these recommendations are general culture maintenance steps in maintaining a healthy turf. Healthy plants help themselves, and in this case will do a good job at keeping Take-All Root Rot at bay.

Fungicides can also be included to an overall preventative management program. Look to apply at first sign of symptoms for best effect. There are several fungicides that have activity on this disease. Myclobutanil and propiconazole are found in Fertilome F-Stop and BioAdvanced Fungus Control for Lawns respectively. Read all label instructions prior to application for use rate, timing, and frequency directions. Some experts recommend aerifying prior applying a fungicide with this disease because it infects plant roots. Aerification will get the product into the root zone much quicker than laying it on top.

Because Take-all Root Rot is fundamentally a root disease affecting the plant's ability to absorb water and nutrients recovery is not a quick process. The plant needs time to regrow roots and that isn't something easily observed with the human eye. Be patient and feel confident in your management program. Modifying the local growing environment is a long-term strategy so don't expect immediate results.

Review symptoms and observations to help determine the culprit. Identifying and diagnosing this disease isn't easy. You may need to request help from your local Parish Extension Agent. You also have access to the. Visit www.lsuagcenter.com to learn how to submit a sample to LSU AgCenter Pant Diagnostic Clinic. Once you know that you are dealing with Take-all Root Rot, then you can take the steps need to remove it from the lawn.

~Will Afton



A lawn with large patches of take all root rot damage. Photo by Will Afton

Weed of the Month:
Old World Diamond-Flower (*Oldenlandia corymbosa*)

On a recent Master Gardener outing, my colleague spotted a suspicious weed. It looked a lot like Virginia buttonweed, but with smaller flowers that protruded from stalks. While my colleague and I were stumped, and PictureThis incorrectly identified it as bedstraw, one of our Master Gardeners readily proved their credentials by correctly identifying it as old world diamond-flower (Oldenlandia corymbosa).

Old world diamond-flower is a broadleaf summer annual with long, oval-shaped leaves arranged in an opposite pattern like Virginia buttonweed. Both weeds have a creeping growth habit, prefer wet soils, and produce small white flowers with four petals. However, old world diamond-flower is less common than Virginia buttonweed and is generally easier to control because it reproduces only by seed. In contrast, Virginia buttonweed spreads both by seed and vegetatively, making it a more persistent weed. As with all summer annual weeds, remove mature plants now to limit seed rain that will contribute to future weed pressure.



Old world diamond-flower. Courtesy of Southeasternflora.com and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Management

Old world diamond flower is reaching maturity in the fall. Because herbicides are most effective on young plants, opt for physical removal at this time of year. Fortunately, old world diamond-flower does not root along its stem, making it relatively easy, and satisfying, to hand-pull. If chemical control is warranted, consider a spring application of a postemergence herbicide containing atrazine, carfentrazone, 2,4-D or dicamba. As with any herbicide, take care to match an appropriate product to your turf and/or landscape plants, and apply at the recommended rate and time to minimize damage to desirable plants and maximize efficacy on weeds.

Using Plant Identification Apps

With the recent proliferation of plant identification apps, AI platforms, and their integration into smart devices, I am commonly asked, “which one is best?”. A recent publication by Michigan State University Weed Scientist, Erin Hill, helps answer this question. Hill and her students evaluated the accuracy of 17 commonly used plant identification apps and 3 AI platforms in 2025. PictureThis emerged as the top performer, correctly identifying plants to the species level 76% of the time and to the genus level an additional 11%. Accuracy varied by plant type, with flowering ornamentals mostly likely to be correctly identified and grasses the least. ChatGPT ranked second, correctly identifying plants to the species level 54% of the time. All others tested achieved species level identification 28-48% of the time.

So, which one is best? I use PictureThis to narrow down the identification possibilities of an unknown plant, but always cross check its suggestions against a reputable source (i.e. USDA PLANTS Database, LSU AgCenter, Master Gardeners). Emerging technologies are helpful tools to assist with plant ID, but to identify grass, or any other plant, you still need to touch it.

~Alyssa Tarrant



Old world diamond-flower is a broadleaf summer annual with long, oval leaves arranged in an opposite pattern and a creeping growth habit. Photo by Alyssa Tarrant.

Resources and additional reading

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Jack-O-Lanterns - History, Folklore, and Pumkins for LA Gardens



Few symbols are more closely associated with Halloween than the glowing jack-o'-lantern. From simple smiling faces to elaborate designs, illuminated pumpkins have become a familiar part of autumn celebrations across North America.

The tradition did not begin with pumpkins. In Ireland and Britain, people carved turnips and other root vegetables into lanterns. Irish immigrants later carried the custom to North America, where native pumpkins were larger and easier to carve and gradually became the preferred material.

From Marsh Light to Jack-O'-Lantern

The term jack-o'-lantern was used for mysterious lights seen over marshes and bogs, also known as will -o'-the-wisps. It was also associated with a night watchman or a person carrying a lantern. Over time, the term became associated with carved vegetable lanterns used during Halloween celebrations.

The custom of carving lanterns from vegetables originated in Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales. During Halloween, known historically as All Hallows' Eve, people hollowed out turnips and other root vegetables and carved frightening faces into them. A candle or ember placed inside created a glowing lantern intended to scare away wandering spirits.

When Irish immigrants arrived in North America during the nineteenth century, they found that pumpkins were abundant and much easier to carve. The pumpkin soon replaced turnips as the preferred material for creating jack-o'-lanterns and became a defining symbol of Halloween.

The Folklore of Stingy Jack

The most famous jack-o'-lantern folktale comes from Ireland and centers on a character known as Stingy Jack. Stingy Jack was a miserly, crafty drunkard who enjoyed tricking people. According to legend, Jack was a clever trickster who repeatedly fooled the Devil. One day he tricked the Devil into turning himself into a coin to pay for drinks at a tavern. Instead of spending the coin, Jack put it in his pocket next to a cross, preventing the Devil from changing back. Jack

agreed to release the Devil only after the Devil promised not to take his soul for a period of years. Later, Jack tricked the Devil a second time by



trapping him in an apple tree with crosses carved into the bark. In exchange for freedom, the Devil promised never to claim Jack's soul. When Jack eventually died, he discovered that his schemes had consequences. Heaven refused to admit him because he had lived a selfish and dishonest life. Hell also refused him because the Devil had promised not to take his soul. The Devil tossed Jack a burning coal to light his way. Jack placed the coal inside a hollowed-out turnip and was doomed to wander the earth forever.

People began referring to him as "Jack of the Lantern," which eventually became shortened to "jack-o'-lantern." Irish families carved frightening faces into turnips and placed them around homes and pathways to discourage visits from Jack's wandering spirit and other supernatural beings.

Because folklore changes as it is retold, details differ among versions.

What Makes a Good Carving Pumpkin?

Most traditional orange carving pumpkins are cultivars of *Cucurbita pepo*. A useful jack-o'-lantern pumpkin generally has:

- A rounded or slightly elongated shape with a broad carving face
- A bright, even rind color
- A sturdy, firmly attached stem used as a handle only after harvest
- A large internal cavity and thinner walls for easier carving
- A rind firm enough to hold a design without collapsing

Pumpkins sold for cooking are often smaller and denser, with thicker flesh and a smaller cavity. Decorative pumpkins may be flattened, deeply



ribbed, miniature, white, or otherwise selected mainly for display.

Common Jack-O'-Lantern and Decorative Pumpkin Varieties

- **Howden** (Large carving pumpkin, 15-25 lbs.): Classic round to slightly tall orange fruit with a strong carving profile.
- **Connecticut Field** (Large carving and display pumpkin, 15-25 lbs.): Traditional open-pollinated field pumpkin widely used for autumn display and carving.
- **Aspen** (Large carving pumpkin, 18-20 lbs.): Uniform orange fruit in a practical carving size.
- **Spirit** (Large carving pumpkin,10-15 lbs.): An orange Halloween type suitable for carving and display.
- **Sorcerer** (Large, semi-vining, 15-22 lbs.): Useful where a somewhat more compact vine is preferred.
- **Orange Smoothie** (Medium, bush-type, 5-9 lbs.): A smaller carving or pie pumpkin for gardens with limited space.
- **Small Sugar** (Medium culinary and carving, 5-7 lbs.): A traditional small pie pumpkin that can also be carved.
- **Lumina** (Large white decorative, 10-15 lbs.): White rind provides a distinctive surface for carving or painting.
- **Jack Be Little** (Miniature decorative, 4-8 oz.): Small orange fruit for tabletop arrangements and children's decorating.
- **Baby Bear** (Small decorative, 1.5-2.5 lbs.): Small orange pumpkin used for seasonal displays.
- **Atlantic Giant** (Giant exhibition, 50-200 lbs.): Primarily grown for size competitions and oversized displays.

Pumpkin Varieties Recommended for Louisiana

The LSU AgCenter groups pumpkins by mature fruit size and lists the following varieties for Louisiana gardeners. Variety availability changes, so gardeners should also compare days to harvest and vine habit before purchasing seed.

- Giant or exhibition types: Atlantic Giant, Prize Winner, and Big Max.
- Large pumpkins, approximately 10-30 pounds: Connecticut Field, Aspen, Big Autumn, Sorcerer, Aladdin, Cinderella, Appalachian, Spirit, Pro Gold 510, Gold Rush, Gold Standard, and the white-fruited Lumina.
- Medium pumpkins, approximately 5-10 pounds:

Small Sugar, Neon, and Orange Smoothie.
- Small and miniature decorative pumpkins: Baby Bear, Jack Be Little, Wee-B-Little, Hooligan, Gooligan, and Casperita.
- Space-saving selections: Orange Smoothie has a bushy, non-vining habit; Sorcerer is semi-vining.

Growing Pumpkins for Halloween in Louisiana

Pumpkins are warm-season vegetables that perform best when planted after soil temperatures reach 65°F. They need full sun, room for vines, fertile soil, and dependable moisture without prolonged saturation. In Southern Louisiana for a Halloween harvest, plant 6/15 – 7/10; otherwise, the planting window is 3/15 – 9/15. In Northern Louisiana for a Halloween harvest plant 6/15 – 7/10; otherwise, the planting window is 4/1 – 9/15. Days from planting to harvest is variety dependent ranging from 60 - 120.

Growing pumpkins in Louisiana requires varieties that tolerate high temperatures, high humidity, long growing seasons, frequent rainfall, and powdery mildew pressure.

Choose a full-sun location with well-drained soil. Allow 6-8 feet between traditional rows and provide open space for vines to run. For vining pumpkins, space hills about 5-6 feet apart. Plant several seeds per hill, then thin to one or two vigorous plants after germination. Use bush or semi-vining cultivars where garden space is limited.

Harvest and Handling

Harvest when fruit has developed its characteristic mature color and the rind is hard. Cut rather than pull fruit from the vine and leave several inches of stem attached. Do not carry pumpkins by the stem; stem injury can shorten display life. Keep uncarved pumpkins dry and out of direct afternoon sun until they are needed.

Making a Jack-O'-Lantern

Choose a mature, sound pumpkin with strong deep color and without soft spots, cracks, or active decay.

1) Look for 3-4” of solid stem still attached.
2) Wash the exterior and dry it thoroughly.
3) Cut an access opening and scoop out seeds and stringy pulp.
4) Draw the design on the pumpkin before carving, then use clean, sharp carving tools.
5) Apply petroleum jelly to cut surfaces to help prevent dehydration and slow down decaying organisms.
6) Use a battery-powered light for a bright display without an open flame.
7) Display the finished jack-o'-lantern in a cool, shaded location when possible and discard it when it becomes soft or moldy.

Properly handled jack-o'-lanterns may last several weeks before significant decay occurs.

Using the Whole Pumpkin

Seeds removed from a sound pumpkin can be cleaned and roasted. However, pumpkins grown specifically for carving may have less dense or less flavorful flesh than culinary cultivars. For pies, soups, and baking, choose a culinary type such as Small Sugar and follow standard food-safety practices. Do not eat a pumpkin that has been carved, displayed for an extended period, or shows mold or decay.

~ Dr. Joe W Willis

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Russelia 'St. Elmo's Fire'

The transition from sweltering summer landscapes towards gardening in cooler conditions is quite similar to graduation. For many gardeners, navigating these changes can be a pivotal point in their landscape's lives. There are many different types of gardeners with a wide range of challenges to overcome, and several of us gathered around the glow of the neon red *Russelia* 'St. Elmo's Fire' to discuss life and landscapes.

This hybrid *Russelia* sports tubular, bright red flowers along gracefully arching stems. The wispy, weeping nature lends it well as a "spiller" in containers, and if in-ground and subject to only a mild winter, may survive as a tender "sub-shrub". In practice, it may be wise to approach this as something to plant each spring, just to be safe. Hummingbirds hone in on the red flowers during their migratory flight path in fall, where they, too, seemed to find themselves buzzing around 'St. Elmo's Fire'.



St. Elmo's Fire *Russelia* has bright red flowers spring through fall, beckoning hummingbirds this time of year. Photo by Dr. Damon Abdi

One gardener reflected, "Growin' up, you don't see the writing on the wall", and how they were just "passin' by" and "mowing straight ahead, I knew it all". But the wistful acknowledgement that they made the mistake of cutting back the foliage so early in the fall season led to the realization of their pain. There was still time for late fall blooms and no reason to remove the foliage so early. The best advice we could give was to soldier on, only you can do what must be done. Don't get locked into the mentality to vigorously cut things back in the fall, you're just a prisoner and you're trying to break free!

The next gardener offered consolation, setting positive expectations for spring. "I can see a new horizon underneath that blazing sky", warning of warming weather invigorating regrowth of overwintered *Russelia,* or stimulating spring and summer flushes of newly installed plantings. 'St. Elmo's Fire' can reach up to around 5-6' tall and wide, with rush-like foliage reaching higher and higher in an airy, cascading form. A gentle breeze can make this your plant in motion, all you need is a pair of shears to occasionally clean it up. With adequate winter protection and minimal maintenance, light trimming in springtime (and periodic deadheading throughout the season) may be all that is actually needed; however, if growing *Russelia* in containers, it is easy enough to move it under cover during winter events (like we have had the last several years). But don't look too far in the past, look forward to next year and take you where your future's lying, with 'St. Elmo's Fire'.

'St. Elmo's Fire' will provide blooms from spring through fall; however, sometimes it is good to try new things, and the group of gardeners made one final visit elsewhere. This time, gathering around another *Russelia* ('Red Rocket'), they pondered life, love, and the fate of their gardens besides the whorled flower clusters of this cultivar, offering a change from the 'St. Elmo's Fire' they were used to for many years.

~Dr. Damon Abdi

Look at Me
False Parasol Mushrooms
(*Chlorophyllum molybdites*)

Don't judge, but I don't like to eat mushrooms. So finding a crop of them growing in the wild doesn't excite my pallet. But I appreciate that there are others who adore them and would, if they could, eat every mushroom that they find. So it is not surprising when I get a few calls after it rains from would-be mycophiles wanting to know if they can eat the firm suacer shaped mushrooms growing in their lawn. Considiering that one of the most common lawn mushrooms in our area is has been lovinly dubbed "The Vomiter", it is not recommended.



A line of Chlorophyllum molybdites growing in a lawn. Photo by Chris Dunaway

Chlorophyllum molybdites, commonly known as the green-spored parasol, green-gill parasol, false parasol, green-spored lepiota and as I already mentioned, the vomiter. In case you didn't get the hint from that last name, they are poisonous and can cause potentially serious vomiting and diarrhea if that wasn't enough. While this is surley uncomfortable, death from consumption is rare. Fortunately, the false parasol is not poisonous to touch and does not cause skin rashes or contact dermatitis and its gastrointestinal irritants cannot be absorbed through the skin.

Know that mushrooms are the fleshy, spore-bearing reproductive structures of a fungi. The fungi for these mushrooms live in the soil consuming dead organic material. They are especially prevelent in lawns with thatch buildup and burried decaying wood like tree roots. The fungi will produce mushrooms when environmental conditions are right for the spores to develop and grow. This is why we see them after a rainfall. These mushrooms will sometimes grow in a circle creating a fairy ring. The false parasols seen in the photo are growing in a straight line from depression in the front lawn. I have a strong suspicion that there was a tree growing where the depression is and the fungi is feeding on the decaying roots.

While these mushrooms can be surprising to find, the good news is that they do not harm the lawn. This is fortunate since there is little that can be done to eliminate them. One treatment option is to supply more nitrogen to stimulate the micro-organisms that are feeding on the dead plant material.

~Chris Dunaway

In the Kitchen with Austin

Roasted Pumpkin Pizza



This pizza is a seasonal twist on the classic. The flavors are complex and perfect for autu

Ingredients:

1 refregerated pizza dough
1 small pumpkin, peeled, seeded and cubed
2 Tbs. olive oil, plus more for drizzling
Salt and pepper
Thyme leaves
Gruyere cheese, grated
Balsamic glaze



Directions:

Preheat oven to 400˚F.

In a large bowl, toss pumpkin with olive oil, salt and pepper. Spread on parchment lined baking sheet. Roast for 15 – 20 minutes, until tender. Cool completely.

Form pizza dough to fit the shape of your baking pan. Drizzle with a little olive oil and prebake for 8 – 10 minutes. Top using pumpkin, thyme leaves, and gruyere cheese. Bake an additional 10 minutes until the cheese melts and the pizza crust browns. Slice and drizzle with balsamic glaze.

Enjoy!

October Checklist/Garden Tips

- Collect seeds from your warm annual flowers to plant next year. A few that have seeds relatively easy to harvest include cosmos, cleome, sunflower, abelmoschus, balsam, amaranthus, wheat celosia, marigold and zinnia. Do not save seed from hybrid cultivars.

- November through February is the ideal season for planting hardy trees, shrubs, ground covers and perennials into the landscape.

- October weather can be dry; water plantings as needed. Pay special attention to any newly planted areas. It is generally best to water direct seeded beds of flowers or vegetables lightly every day to make sure the seeds do not dry out.

- If you intend to dig and store your caladium tubers and haven't already done so, it's time to do it now. Don't wait for the foliage die down and disappear since that will make it harder to find the tubers. Dig the tubers carefully leaving the foliage attached. Spread out in a well ventilated area to dry. When the foliage is dry and brown, remove it from the tubers and store them in paper or net bags indoors.

October Checklist/Garden Tips

- Flowers to plant in October and November include seeds or transplants of calendula, carnation, sweet alyssum, Chinese forget-me-not, clarkia, cornflower, dianthus, foxglove, hollyhock, larkspur, lobelia, nasturtium, nicotiana, pansy, petunia, phlox, poppy, snapdragon, stock, , sweet peas, bachelor's button, Virginia stock and wall flower.

- Summer bulbs may still be growing, but colder weather is in the not too distant future and none of them should be fertilized now. Bulbs that are in active growth such as Louisiana iris, calla lily, Easter lily and spider lily (Lycoris) could be fertilized lightly now.

- Azalea lace bugs will be active through November. These insects feed from the underside of the leaves causing small, white dots on the upper side of the leaves and dark brown spots on the back. Do not let a lot of damage occur before you treat. Once the damage occurs, the leaves will not turn green again even if you control the lace bugs. Spray under the leaves with Orthene (acephate), Malathion or horticultural oil every ten days or as needed.

- Move any plants you intend to winter indoors to very shady areas outside, such as under carports or trees, for the next three or four weeks. This will allow them to adjust to lower light intensities before you bring them inside where light is more limited. Make sure you place plants in front of bright windows when you bring them indoors. Also check them for insect pests and other hitchhikers before bringing them in.

- Spray plants such as camellia, holly, gardenia, magnolia, privet and citrus with horticultural oil sprays to control scale and whitefly.

- Dig, divide and transplant perennials such as daylilies, ajuga, daisy, rudbeckia, coreopsis, yarrow and others now through February. Keep plants well watered and mulched.

- Water in newly planted bedding plants with a half strength fertilizer solution to get them off to a good start. Don't forget that late October through early December is the time to plant spring flowering bulbs. Tulips and hyacinths are exceptions that are planted later. They must first be chilled in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator for six to eight weeks, and are planted in late December through mid January. Plant sweet peas now through November. If you wait and plant them in the spring they will not have time to grow and bloom before hot weather sets in, so planting in fall is a must. Choose a sunny location at the base of something they can climb on such as a chain-link fence or lattice work. Sweet peas planted now will generally begin to bloom in March and last until early May.

- Control aphids with insecticidal soap or horticultural oils.

- Control caterpillars on cool season vegetables and bedding plants with applications of Bacillus thuringiensis (or BT for short). This bacterium is deadly to caterpillars but harmless to other organisms. So remember, not all caterpillars need to be destroyed. Citrus trees, for example, will recover from the feeding of orange dog caterpillars and the giant swallowtail butterflies that they become are a marvelous addition to your garden. Now is the season of free mulch. Collect fallen leaves to use as mulch. Use a bagging mower to chop and collect them at the same time. Chopping the leaves makes for a more even look and they do not blow away in the wind.

Farmers Markets in the GNO Area

Gretna Farmer's Market
300 Huey P. Long Ave.
Every Saturday, except the Saturday of Gretna Fest, 8:30AM-12:30PM
https://www.gretnala.com/visitors/farmers-market/

Nawlins Outdoor Market
1048 Scotsdale Dr., Harvey
Saturdays 9AM-5PM & Sundays 9AM-4PM
Fridays 11AM-3PM
https://www.facebook.com/NawlinsMarket/

Old Metairie Farmer's Market
Bayou Metairie Park, Between Metairie Lawn Dr. and Labarre
1st & 3rd Tuesday of the month, 3:30PM-7:30PM** Check for seasonal dates!
https://www.oldmetairiegardenclub.com/tag/farmers-art-metairie-market/

Jean Lafitte Town Market-Lafitte
920 Jean Lafitte Blvd.
Last Saturday of the month, 9AM-2PM
https://www.facebook.com/JeanLafitteLa/

Lafreniere Park Market-Metairie
3000 Downs Blvd.
Wednesdays, from 1-6PM
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064920097975

Westwego Farmer's Market
484 Sala Ave., Westwego
3rd Tuesday of the month, 11AM-3PM
https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100075979938725

Laughing Buddha Farm
4516 Clearview
Store Pickups, preorder online at
https://www.laughingbuddhanursery.com/

Westwego Shrimp Lot
100 Westbank Expy, Westwego
Daily Mon-Thurs 8AM-6PM, Fri 8AM-7PM, Sat 7AM-7PM, https://www.facebook.com/officialwestwegoshrimplot

Harahan Farmer's Market
501 Oak Ave., Zeringue Park, Harahan
Sundays, 9AM-1PM
https://www.facebook.com/HarahanMarket

The Market at Kenner City Park
3800 Loyola Drive, Kenner, LA
Thursdays 1PM-6PM
2nd & 4th Saturdays 10AM-2PM
https://www.facebook.com/RivertownFarmersMarket

Community Farmers Market
2624 Burgundy St, New Orleans
Saturdays 12-4 PM

Terrytown Farmers Market
1785 Carol Sue Ave., Terrytown
1st & 3rd Sundays of the month
10 AM - 2 PM

Local Independent Garden Centers

Jefferson

Perino's Garden Center	3100 Veterans Memorial Blvd., Metairie, LA 70002	(504) 834-7888
Rose Garden Center	4005 Westbank Expressway, Marerro, LA 70072	(504) 341-5664
Banting's Nursery	3425 River Rd., Bridge City, LA 70094	(504) 436-4343
Jefferson Feed	4421 Jefferson Hwy., Jefferson, LA 70121	(504) 733-8572
Nine Mile Point Plant Nursery	2141 River Rd., Westwego, LA 70094	(504) 436-4915
Palm Garden Depot	351 Hickory Ave., Harahan, LA 70123	(504) 305-6170
Double M Feed Harahan	8400 Jefferson Hwy., Harahan, LA 70123	(504) 738-5007
Double M Feed Terrytown	543 Holmes Blvd., Terrytown, LA 70056	(504) 361-4405
Sunrise Trading Co. Inc.	42 3rd St., Kenner, LA 70062	(504) 469-0077
Creative Gardens & Landscape	2309 Manhattan Blvd., Harvey, LA 70058	(504) 367-9099
Plumeria Insanity Nursery	https://www.facebook.com/Plumeria-Insanity-Nursery-102123651930419	
Garden Specialties, Inc.	3601 Florida Ave., Kenner, LA 70065	(504) 468-2300

Soil Vendors

Schmelly's Dirt Farm	8301 Olive St., New Orleans, LA 70118	(504) 535-GROW
Reliable Soil	725 Reverand Richard Wilson Dr., Kenner, LA 70062	(504) 467-1078
Renaissance Gardens	9123 W. Judge Perez Dr., Chalmette, LA 70043	(504) 682-9911
Rock n' Soil NOLA	9119 Airline Hwy., New Orleans, LA 70118	(504) 488-0908
Grow Wiser Garden Supply	2109 Decatur St., New Orleans, LA 70116	(504) 644-4713

If you would like your licensed retail nursery listed, please email gnogardening@agcenter.lsu.edu

Local Independent Garden Centers

Orleans		
Harold's Plants	1135 Press St., New Orleans, LA 70117	(504) 947-7554
We Bite Rare and Unusual Plants	1225 Mandeville St., New Orleans, LA 70117	(504) 380-4628
Hot Plants	1700 Feliciana St., New Orleans, LA 70117	www.hotplantsnursery.com
Pelican Greenhouse Sales	2 Celebration Dr., New Orleans, LA 70124	(504) 483-9437
Grow Wiser Garden Supply	2109 Decatur St., New Orleans, LA 70116	(504) 644-4713
Jefferson Feed Mid-City	309 N. Carrollton Ave., New Orleans, LA 70119	(504) 488-8118
Jefferson Feed Uptown	6047 Magazine St., New Orleans, LA 70118	(504) 218-4220
Ninth Ward Nursery	2641 Deslonde St., New Orleans, LA 70117	(504) 296-8398
Crazy Plant Bae	800 N. Claiborne Ave., New Orleans LA 70119	(504) 327-7008
Canopy Plant Company	6030 St. Claude, New Orleans, LA 70117	(504) 381-4033
Too Tall Nursery	2817 N. Roman, New Orleans, LA 70117	tootallfarm@gmail.com
New Orleans Succulent Boutique	Online Sales	https://sites.google.com/view/nolasucculentshop/home
Root Life Mobile Plant Nursery	Pop Up Locations	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?d=100053554224887
Rosalie Arts & Design	Online Sales	rosalietorres.square.site
Plaquemines		
Southern Gateway Garden Center	107 Timber Ridge St., Belle Chasse, LA 70037	(504) 393-9300
Belle Danse Orchids	14079 Belle Chasse Hwy., Belle Chasse, LA 70037	(504) 419-5416
St. Charles		
Plant & Palm Tropical Outlet	10018 River Rd., St. Rose, LA 70087	(504) 468-7256
Martin's Nursery & Landscape	320 3rd St., Luling, LA 70070	(985) 785-6165
St. Bernard		
Nice Plants, Good Pots	6720 St. Claude Ave., Arabie, LA	Etsy.com/shop/NicePlantsGoodPots
St. Tammany		
The Boho Being	1184 Front St., Slidell, LA 70458	(985)707-1623

Help Support Horticulture programs in the Greater New Orleans Area

Funding helps the LSU AgCenter agents provide help for:

- School and Community Gardens
- Seed Libraries
- Demonstration Gardens
- Educational Scholarships
- Local Research
- and Much More

Click here or go to: https://bit.ly/3UQRS7H

Scan the QR code above or click the link to go to the LSU Foundation donation webpage.
Look for Greater New Orleans Horticulture Support Fund

Lawn Care Do's & Don't's

Do:

1. Make every effort to pull up or otherwise control warm season weeds going to seed now. If you let the flower set and drop seed your problems will only be worse next year. Do not put weeds with seeds on them in your compost pile.
2. Apply selective herbicides and sedge killers to kill off summer weeds and sedges.
3. Apply pre-emergent herbicides to prevent winter weed germination.
4. Continue to scout for insect damage and control with insecticides if necessary.
5. Continue to scout for fungal damage and control with fungicides if necessary. The most prevalent is called Large Patch of Warm-Season Turfgrass.
6. Take a soil test.
7. Apply sulfur or lime to adjust the pH if necessary according to soil lab recommendations.
8. **Leave the leaves**. The leaves falling on the ground are an excellent source of organic matter for your soil. Use the mower to shred them and leave them in place to break down. You can also collect leaves to add to your compost pile. In the spring you can aerate the lawn and rake out the compost over the area and fill in the holes.

Do Not:

1. Do not apply fertilizer until mid-February or March of next year.
2. Do not lay sod.
3. Do not spread warm-season turfgrass seed.
4. Do not dethatch the lawn.
5. Do not aerate the lawn.
6. Do not overseed St. Augustine or centipede grass with winter ryegrass. In these lawns, ryegrass can compete with the turfgrass as spring comes on.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

Follow us on Facebook at GNOGardening
For more information visit LSUAgCenter.com

Have Questions? Contact the LSU AgCenter Extension Agent in your Parish.

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