GNO Gardening

LSU AgCenter
Research · Extension · Teaching

September 2018

Tropical Update

In the May 2018 issue of GNO Gardening we gave instructions on pruning the roots of a pot-bound plant. The example used was a tropical hibiscus that was exhibiting signs of stress similar to drought and nutrient deficiency. An inspection of the plant revealed that the roots had completely filled the pot and could no longer properly take in water and nutrients.

On April 28 of this year, I pruned the roots and limbs of the plant and repotted it back into the original container. Since that time the plant has undergone a wonderful transformation. Prior to repotting, the leaves were sparse, small, limp, and yellowing. In addition there were very few flowers and those that did form were small. Now the plant is thickly covered in healthy dark green leaves and produces an abundance of large bright flowers. ~Chris Dunaway

Hibiscus plant prior to pruning.

(Top left) The leaves of the plant prior to re-potting were small, pale, and limp.
(Top right) After re-potting the leaves are larger, more plentiful, dark green, and firm.

At the end of June, I noticed an outbreak of aphids feeding on the tender flower buds.

Two treatments with horticultural oil spaced one week apart took care of the problem.

I used a product that comes in a hose end applicator bottle. These bottles are convenient since they require no measuring or mixing. Thoroughly spray the target plant making sure to cover both sides of the leaves, as well as the stems, and flower buds. Observe heat warnings on hot days.

Hibiscus plant after pruning.

September Vegetable Planting Guide

Crop	Recommended Variety	Planting Depth	Spacing Inches	Days Until Harvest * from transplant date
Beets	Detroit Dark Red, Kestrel, Red Ace F1, Ruby Queen	¼ inch	2-4	55-60
Broccoli	Arcadia, Diplomat, Gypsy, Packman, Premium Crop, Windsor, Greenbelt	⅛ inch	18-24	70-90*
Brussels Sprouts	Jade Cross E, Long Island Improved, Royal Marvel	⅛ inch	12-15	90*
Cabbage	Blue Vantage, Platinum Dynasty, Stonehead, Cheers, Blue Dynasty, Emblem, Rio Verde	⅛ inch	12-15	65-75*
Chinese Cabbage	None Given	¼ inch	12	60-80*
Carrots	Danvers 128, Purple Haze, Thumbelina, Apache, Enterprise, Maverick, Sugar Snax 54	⅛ inch	1-2	70-75
Cauliflower	Candid Charm, Cumberland, Freedom, Incline, Majestic, Show Crown, Wentworth	⅛ inch	18-24	55-65*
Collards	Champions, Flash, Georgia Southern, Top Bunch, Vates	⅛ inch	6-12	75
Kale	None Given	½ inch	12-18	50
Kohlrabi	Early Purple Vienna, Early White, Vienna, Winner	⅛ inch	6	55-75
Lettuce	Esmeralda, New Red Fire F1, Nevada, Tall Guzmaine Elite	⅛ inch	4-12	45-80
Mustard Greens	Florida Broadleaf, Greenwave, Red Giant, South-ern Giant Curled, Savannah, Tendergreen	⅛ inch	4-6	35-50
English Peas	Mr. Big, Novella II, Oregon Sugar Pod II, Sugar Ann, Super Sugar Snap	½ inch	2-3	60-70
Potatoes, Irish	Dark Red Norland, Red LaSoda, Red Pontiac, Kennebec, Yukon Gold	4 inches	12	90-120
Pumpkins	Atlantic Giant, Baby Bear, Gooligan, Sorcerer, Sprint, Silver Moon	½ inch	36-60	90-120
Radishes	Cherriette, Champion, White Icicle, April Cross	⅛ inch	1	22-28
Shallots	None Given	1 inch	4-8	50
Swiss Chard	None Given	¼ inch	6-8	45-55
Turnips	Alamo, All Top, Purple, Top White Globe, Seven Top, Southern Green, Top Star, Tokyo Cross	⅛ inch	2-6	40-50

Wooly Aphid or Mealybug, Mealybug Destroyer or Lacewing Larvae??? Here's How to Tell What's Bugging You!

The moist, hot dog days of summer are a great time to see a lot of the worst little critters to attack our gardens. Some particularly striking and noticeable creatures are the wooly aphid *Eriosomatinae* and the mealybug *Pseudococcidae*. Both are covered in white, waxy fuzz and suck plant sap, weakening the plant and often causing yellowing or wilting. If infestation levels occur and the plant is not treated, it may give up the ghost and die if the plant was not healthy and vigorous to begin with. I've seen both of these critters on a lot of tropical plants lately, including tropical milkweed (mealybugs), citrus trees (wooly aphids) and the non-native hibiscus (both mealybugs and wooly aphids).

A cluster of wooly aphids.

Both of these fuzzy critters are sap suckers and have piercing, sucking mouthparts. When wooly aphids and mealybugs feed, they secrete a sugary substance known as honeydew, which can cause sooty black mold and may be collected by ants who protect and tend them in a mutually beneficial relationship. Control for both is the same: hit them with some insecticidal soap or smother them with neem or all-season horticultural oil. Examine your plants regularly and try to treat these pests when they are still immature. Adults are more difficult to control. Observe temperature warnings to avoid burning the plants on hot days.

A cluster of Mealybugs.

Contact insecticides that are sprayed on these guys may not work so well because of their protective wax coverings. Wooly aphid adults tend to just fly away when disturbed. Systemic insecticides are also not to very reliable for control of either of these insects. Furthermore, since many of the plants that they feed upon are also pollinator or host plants for butterflies and bees, they should be avoided. A stream of water from a hose can work to blast them away, as can washing the plants by hand with an insecticidal soap.

So, how do we tell them apart? Mealybugs and wooly aphids are easily mistaken for one another and cause the same types of damage. Mealybugs love to feed near joints or nodes on plants, where the leaf petioles attach. Wooly aphids prefer to feed on the underside of leaves, on thin stems, and succulent twigs. Mealybugs are shaped somewhat oblong and dome-like, with joint lines running across their bodies, similar to a pill bug or roly-poly *Armadillidiidae*.

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Wooly Aphid or Mealybug, Mealybug Destroyer or Lacewing Larvae??? Here's How to Tell What's Bugging You! *(Continued)*

Underneath their wings and fluff, wooly aphid bodies are more pear-shaped. The bodies of the mealybugs are covered with white waxy flakes or strands, while the bodies of the wooly aphids are covered in white hairy material. When disturbed, wooly aphid adults will fly away and nymphs will scurry as fast as they can. Mealybugs move slowly or not at all when you disturb them. Wooly aphids produce excess wax which can coat the back of the leaves and stems that they are feeding on, while mealybugs do not.

A mealybug destroyer nymph.

There are some look-alikes that you may come across which are actually beneficial insects that will prey upon both mealybugs and wooly aphids. One in particular, the mealybug destroyer *Cryptolaemus montrouuzieri* is cigar-shaped insect and has white wooly tufts sticking out all over its body in the larval stage. One mealybug destroyer larvae can eat up to 250 mealybugs! The female destroyer (which looks like a black ladybeetle) will lay her egg in a cluster of mealybugs, and once it hatches, the mealybug destroyer will begin eating mealybug eggs, working up to mature mealybug meals as it grows. Another beneficial look-alike is the larvae of the green lacewing *Chrysopa spp.* which is hatched with spiny, VELCRO®-like appendages all over its body. It creates camouflage by attaching fibers and debris all over its body, making it look like a dirty cotton ball. Pick up that cotton ball and a small, alligator-like insect larvae will be wiggling underneath. Lacewing larvae and adults eat aphids and mealybugs and are most active in the summer months.

A lacewing nymph.

These white, wooly critters can be a real pest in the garden, however a closer look may reveal that they are actually a beneficial insect. It is prudent to check and make a positive identification before reaching for a chemical to control them.

~Anna Timmerman

Click here to see a cool video on mealybugs.

Holes!

You may have noticed the appearance of quarter sized holes in the ground beneath local oak trees. These are exit holes caused by the emergence of annual cicadas. These insects grow to be quite large during the years they feed underground. So, when they emerge they leave behind a substantial hole. Once the nymphs emerge from the ground, they often crawl up nearby tree trunks and grab hold. The back splits open and the adult cicada emerges and flies up into tree canopies. The loud droning sounds you hear in the evenings are male cicadas calling to the females.

Left: a cicada emerges from its nymph exoskeleton.

Right: the cicada must Inflate itself and wait until it dries and hardens.

Mirliton Refresher

A very good article on "Growing Vegetable Pears (Mirlitons)" by retired LSU Extension specialist Dr. Tom Koske was published in the March 2016 edition of GNO Gardening. But with the number of emails and phone calls the AgCenter has recently received regarding mirlitons, it's time for a refresher on this distinctive Louisiana cucurbit.

The mirliton *Sechium edule* (pronounced mel-uh-tawn or merl-uh-tawn, I won't argue for either) is also known as chayote in other parts of the world and has been known as "vegetable pear" since it was first introduced outside of New Orleans in the 1920's. While *Sechium edule* is grown in many tropical and subtropical areas of the world, the Louisiana mirliton is a variety that has been selected over the years to do well in our environment and has a distinctiveness all its own. This variety was almost wiped out by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and then Hurricane Gustav in 2008. Although chayote had by then become more commonly available in grocery stores, growing your own plants from these fruit did not yield the same plant that locals were used to. In an effort to bring back the Louisiana mirliton variety, retired professor Dr. Lance Hill, aka. "The Mirliton Man" started the Adopt-A-Mirliton program in 2009. Starting with some heirloom plants that he had gotten from a Tangipahoa Parish farmer, Dr. Hill has found and saved over a dozen different varieties of Louisiana mirlitons. Dr. Hill has also established the Mirliton.org Project, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the conservation and innovative uses of Louisiana heirloom mirlitons. The different varieties thus far identified and information on each can be found on this website. *Click on the links to the photo sites on the Mirliton 101 page.* Other features of the site include a market site to sell and buy certified heirlooms, a blog site where growers can post updates on their projects and growing information. Growers or seed-seekers should sign up for "alerts" and will be notified of available seed. They are working out arrangements with garden centers in the region who will sell only certified heirlooms. Much of the information available on growing mirlitons, types of mirlitons, and mirliton disease and insect problems is a direct result of Dr. Hill's diligent efforts.

A local grower examines his crop of mirliton fruit. *Photo by Lance Hill*

Mirliton is a perennial and a member of the Cucurbitaceae family and, like all other members, has both male and female flowers on the same plant (monoecious) and are self-fertile. You DO NOT need more than one plant to get fruit. The female flowers are easily distinguished by the "little fruit" (ovary) behind the flower petals. Mirliton flowering and fruit set is different from the majority of cucurbits that we are used to growing in the garden. Cucumbers, squash, zucchini, watermelon, cantaloupe, gourd, pumpkin, and even luffa will flower and set fruit regularly during most of the summer growing season. Mirliton, on the other hand, only produce flowers when the nights begin to

Female flower with ovary.

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Mirliton Refresher

(Continued)

Joseph Boudreaux holding up the fruit of is namesake mirliton variety. *Photo by Lance Hill*

get long which for us is in September/October. This is known as photoperiodism. Once flowering is triggered, mirlitons will flower and fruit until hit by a killing frost. Fruit is ready to harvest about 30 days after pollination/fertilization. Sometimes established plants will produce an early small summer crop, but the majority is produced in the fall.

For optimal growth and production Mirlitons should be grown in well-drained soil containing a high percentage of organic matter with a pH between 6.0-6.8. Locate the plants where they will get a minimum of 6 hours direct sunlight per day. They have shallow expansive roots that will grow out 6 feet or more from the base of the plant so that needs to be taken into account when selecting and preparing a site for your mirliton plants. Mirliton vines need some form of support because they love to climb and can branch out 40 feet or more. Growing on a trellis or fence works best. You should also mulch around the plant to keep down weeds and maintain soil moisture. To grow a plant from seed you need to plant the whole fruit (blunt side down) at a slight angle with the top just exposed at the soil surface in early spring once there is no danger of frost. If you bury it completely, it is more likely to rot. You can direct seed or start the plant in a pot for later transplanting. Starting the plants in covered pots will keep squirrels and other critters from digging out the mirliton before it has a chance to grow (and you know those critters will be on the prowl). You can use an unsprouted fruit but you get better results if you plant fruit that has sprouted. If the fruit has not already sprouted you can force them to sprout by placing them in a cool, dark, dry location protected from rodents. Within four weeks they will sprout and you can plant them into a pot or directly into your garden. If the sprout is very long, prune it back to about 5 inches prior to planting. There are also published methods for making rooted cuttings from mirliton vines. Be sure to do a soil test and make recommended amendments prior to planting. Keep the plant well-watered (no overhead or sprinkler irrigation) and side dress every two months until flowering begins with about a teaspoon of ammonium nitrate or a tablespoon of 8-8-8 per plant.

Cover newly planted mirlitons with hardware cloth to protect them from animals.

A sprouted Terri Pie Prickly White Mirliton

Fruit is ready to harvest when the surface no longer dents when you press it gently with your thumbnail. Leaving the fruit on longer will result in larger fruit but it will be stringy. After harvesting, wrap your fruit in thin porous paper (paper towels) and store ideally at 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not store in the refrigerator. The cooler

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Leaf-footed but nymph feeding on mirliton buds.

Mirliton Refresher *(Continued)*

temperatures can damage the fruit. Often, fruit is left on the vine to fully mature if it will be used for planting in the spring.

The primary insect pests on mirlitons are leaf-footed bugs *Leptoglossus phyllopus*. They can cause extensive damage feeding by on flowers and fruit and reduce production. Synthetic pyrethroids (permethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin) are effective contact insecticides. There has also been recent success using kaolin clay sprays (Surround WP) as an organic control for stink bugs and leaf-footed bugs. You can also remove them by hand or use a vacuum.

Powdery milder on mirliton leaf.

Anthracnose on mirliton leaf.

Anthracnose on mirliton stem.

Anthracnose on mirliton leaf.

There are several diseases that you should be on the lookout for. The first is powdery mildew, an airborne disease caused by *Podosphaera xanthii* (see LSU Pub. 3181). Initial symptoms of mirliton powdery mildew include irregular yellow spots on both surfaces of the leaves. White, cottony mycelial colonies appear first on the lower surface of a leaf with no signs of the fungus on the upper surface Eventually, as the disease progresses, white cottony colonies develop on the upper surface of the leaf. The spots eventually coalesce and the entire leaf turns yellow and then necrotic. Necrotic leaves stay attached to the vine. The disease is favored by cooler temperatures (68-81° F) and high humidity. Remove and dispose of dead plant material and maintain good air circulation and proper sunlight to lessen disease incidence. You can also use potassium bicarbonate or sulfur-based fungicides.

The second disease to watch for is anthracnose caused by *Colletotrichum orbiculare* which can be soilborne or airborne. Anthracnose causes numerous circular dead spots on the foliage and the plant may lose most of its leaves. It will also infect and girdle the stems. Oftentimes infection occurs near the leaf margin resulting in V-shaped lesions on the leaf as the disease spreads. This disease is favored by warm humid weather conditions. Keeping the leaves dry helps to prevent the disease but fungicides containing chlorothalonil or copper are also effective. Maintaining good site drainage and using drip irrigation are cultural practices that help prevent anthracnose.

Mirlitons are also susceptible to root-knot nematodes. Planting at clean sites or site solarization prior to planting to prevent infection are the only means of control. In some areas, mirlitons only live 3-5 years due to root-knot nematode attacks. Find an article on solarizing garden soil in the June 2017 issue of GNO Gardening.

While we only eat the fruit, the entire plant is edible. In some areas the tendrils are used in salads and stir-fry and the tubers (which can reach 20 lbs.) are harvested and cooked like yams. Most people are familiar with stuffed mirliton but there are quite a few recipes in local cookbooks and online. There will soon be a separate page for mirliton recipes on the mirliton.org website. It can even be used for jams, jellies and wine.

We would like to express our appreciation to Dr. Lance Hill for his valuable input and pictures for this article and his passionate work on maintaining the lineage of the Louisiana Mirliton.

Don't forget to check out www.mirliton.org for more information.

~Dr. Joe Willis

CAUTION

MASTER GARDENERS AT WORK

Congratulations

to the

2018 Graduating Class

of

Louisiana Master Gardeners

This year, using the flipped classroom approach, we were able to graduate 59 enthusiastic volunteers to help increase research based horticulture knowledge in our community.

In the Kitchen with Austin

Corn Salad

Ingredients:

5 ears of fresh corn

1 small red onion, diced & rinsed

1 lb. grape tomatoes, cut in half

¼ cup red wine vinegar

¼ cup olive oil

A hand full of fresh basil, torn

salt and pepper to taste

The wonderful thing about this salad is that you can enjoy it all summer long! For a smoky twist, try grilling the corn before assembling the ingredients.

Shuck the corn and boil the whole ears in salted water for about 6-8 minutes. Remove the corn from the boiling water and place it directly into a large bowl of ice water. When the corn is cool enough to handle, cut the kernels on the cob. Place the corn kernels and the remaining ingredients in a serving bowl. Toss gently to combine, adjusting salt and pepper to suit your taste.

Bon Manger!

Get That Sucker!

Shoots growing from the base of a crape myrtle tree are called suckers.

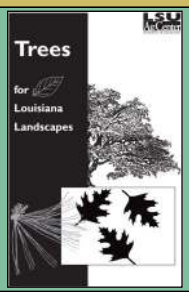
Prune away all new shoots growing from the base. Remove any grass and weeds next to the trunk and lay down a little mulch. Never use a string trimmer near the trunk of a tree.

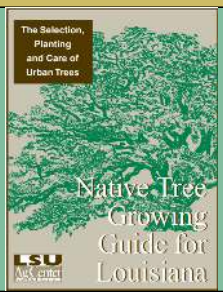
These suckers produce a very messy appearance, can cause crowding leading to branch rubbing and reduced air flow. They also divert nutrients from other parts of the tree.

Once the suckers are removed the elegant trunks are revealed.

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Crape myrtle trees require full sun. Planted in the shade, they tend to grow tall and lanky in their search for the sun. This tree should not have been planted in this location.

Check out Trees for Louisiana Landscapes and the Native Tree Growing Guide for Louisiana for list of good understory trees that do will in our area.





Coming Events

THREE EVENTS. ONE WEEKEND.

The South's premiere celebration of locally-sourced food and drink.

Farm and Table New Orleans, September 7-8, is a weekend celebrating the cultivation, distribution and consumption of locally-sourced food and drink held at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

Featuring a Gulf Coast chefs competition dinner, the Chefs Taste Challenge, an educational conference, and a free, family-friendly FAMboree festival, F&T is the premiere destination for all things fresh, local and healthy.

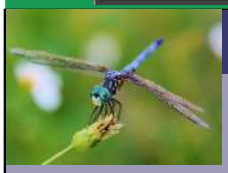
NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK
BOTANICAL GARDEN

CITY PARK PLANT SALES

September 8
Pelican Greenhouse
9AM – Noon

Fall Garden Festival
October 6, 10AM – 5PM
October 7, 10AM - 4PM

For additional information, call 504/483-9464, visit our website at www.neworleanscitypark.com, or e-mail to plants@nocp.org



Talk: The Natural History of City Park's Dragonfly and Damselfly Communities

Location: New Orleans Botanical Garden.
Enter through the Tolmas Visitor Center at 5 Victory Drive.
Start: Sep 22nd at 10:00 am
End: Sep 22nd at 11:00 am
$5 Children and adults over 7 years old.
To register: Call (504)483-9473
e-mail scapley@nocp.org

Learn about the Natural History of City Park's Dragonfly and Damselfly Communities! See some dragonflies and damselflies on display. Venture into the Park to observe these insects in their natural habitats. Learn about their natural history and how to properly catch and handle these creatures!

Andrew Harper is a senior at Loyola University New Orleans. He is currently conducting research on the specie diversity and abundance of dragonflies and damselflies within New Orleans City Park. It is the diverse ecosystems within the New Orleans urban environments that have shaped his research interests.

Coming Events

LOUISIANA Master Gardener™

An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

Tangipahoa Parish Master Gardener Association

LSU AgCenter
Research · Extension · Teaching

Saturday, September 15th, 2018 9 am to 3 pm

LSU Ag Center
Hammond Research Station
21549 Old Covington Hwy, Hammond, LA 70403

$5 per auto, bring the kids and friends

Walk among butterflies
Watch hummingbird banding
Make hummingbird feeders
Photograph pollinators
Build bee hotels and houses
Pet the critters
See honeybee hives
Learn to garden
Discover pollinator magic
Listen to experts

9:00	*Planting for Moon Gardens*	Tammany Baumgarten
10:00	*Buddleia, Butterflies and Beyond*	Yan Chen
11:00	*WANTED Citizen Scientists*	Sarah Rayner
12:00	*Pollinator Portraits*	Royal Tyler, Jr.
1:30	*Wings of Life*	Disney Nature Film

9:00	*Beetles and Flies, Oh MY!*	Mary Helen Ferguson
10:00	*Native Plants for Pollinators*	Gina Hebert
11:00	*Trashy Critters: Detritivores*	Lee Rouse
12:00	*Hummingbirds*	Kathy McCrocklin

9:00	*A Year in the Life of a Bee-K*	Keith Hawkins
10:00	*A Bee's Viewpoint*	Betty Miley
11:00	*Pollination Reproduction: Wow!*	Harriet Buckner

Food-Crafts-Plant Vendors Market

For more information
Like and Follow Pollination Celebration at
www.facebook.com/PollinationCelebration
http://tpmga.org/pollination

If you have a disability requiring special accommodation for your participation in this event, or have questions, contact 985-748-5462 or email Event@tpmga.org

For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our Web site: **www.lsuagcenter.com**

Coming Events

Date	Event	Cost	Link
Sunday, September 2nd 4:30-6:00 PM	Fall Garden Prep Class @ All You Need (Formerly Southbound Gardens)	$20	https://www.facebook.com/events/1611308409176592/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Thursday, September 6th 3:00-7:00 PM	Delgado GrowthWorks Plant Sale @ The Delgado Greenhouse. On the City Park campus next to the Student Services Building at the corner of Orleans Ave and Navarre Ave.	Free Entry	https://www.facebook.com/DelgadoGrowthworks/
Friday, September 7th 9:00 AM	LSU AgCenter Market Ready Training @ NOLA Farm to Table	Free with registration	https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2018-new-orleans-marketready-training-tickets-44163120081
Friday, September 7th 8:30 AM-4:00 PM	Farm & Table Conference @ Ernest N. Morial Convention Ctr.	$99 advance registration	https://farmandtablenola.com/conference-2018/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Friday, September 7th 6:00 PM	Farm & Table Chefs Taste Challenge @ Ernest N. Morial Convention Ctr.	$99 advance registration	http://chefstastechallenge.com/
Saturday, September 8th 11:00 AM—6:15 PM	Farm & Table FAMboree @ Ernest N. Morial Convention Ctr.	Free to public	https://farmandtablenola.com/famboree/attendee-experience/
Saturday, September 8th 8:00 AM-NOON	New Orleans Botanical Garden September Plant Sale @ Pelican Greenhouse	Free Entry	https://www.facebook.com/events/834068716770108/
Sunday, September 9th 1:00-2:15 PM	Planting for Fall Interest @ Longue House and Gardens	$5, free for Longue Vue Member	https://www.facebook.com/events/2206951192886732/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Wednesday, September 12th 6:00-7:30 PM	Where the Wild Things Grow– Native Plants for School Gardens @ Gallier House	$10 advance registration	https://www.facebook.com/events/2148305118759814/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Saturday, September 15th 9:00 AM-3:00 PM	Pollination Celebration @ LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Center	$5/ car to park, free admission	https://www.facebook.com/events/174276416459885/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Saturday, September 15th 10:30 AM-12:00 PM	Urban Water Management @ All You Need (Formerly Southbound Gardens)	$20	https://www.facebook.com/events/1242092729261496/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**
Saturday, September 22nd 10:00-11:00 AM	The Natural History of New Orleans' City Park Dragonflies @ New Orleans Botanical Garden	$5	https://www.facebook.com/events/1686874604760532/ ***Master Gardener Continuing Ed Credit!**

Coming Events

School Garden BOOT CAMP

Click Here to Register

Date: Saturday December 1st

Time: 8 AM - 4 PM

Location: The Greenhouse Classroom at the Delgado Community College City Park Campus

Pre-Registration Required!

A full day program available to Greater New Orleans area teachers, administrators, and school volunteers.

Topics include:

- Site planning and garden design.
- Funding sources and grant writing.
- Planting schedule and garden maintenance.
- Food safety and cafeteria compliance.

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Visit our Facebook page for more information.
https://www.facebook.com/events/240526549941798/

Fall Garden Festival

At the New Orleans Botanical Garden

Join garden lovers at this year's Fall Garden Festival to celebrate the event's 21st anniversary. The annual Fall Garden Festival is an educational experience for home gardeners and professionals.

The festival includes plant & garden product exhibits, sales throughout the garden, a Children's Fun Fest activities area, educational programs, music, arts & crafts, and more. Educational programs take place in the Garden Study Center and are free with entrance to the show. There will be live music each day for patrons to enjoy. This event is sponsored by the New Orleans Botanical Garden, New Orleans City Park, the New Orleans Botanical Garden Foundation, and Friends of City Park.

When: Saturday, October 6th from 10 AM to 5 PM
Sunday, October 7th from 10 AM to 4 PM

Contact: Susan Capley, New Orleans Botanical Garden Education Director SCapley@nocp.org or call 483-9473.

September Checklist/Garden Tips

From now until next spring, do not apply fertilizers containing nitrogen to most landscape plants. Fertilizing trees, shrubs, lawns and ground covers with nitrogen in the fall can reduce the hardiness of some plants and promote winter injury.

Many summer weeds are setting seeds now. Do not let this happen! Pull these weeds and dispose of them to reduce weed problems next year.

Evaluate caladium plantings. When the plants begin to look tired and less attractive and about two-thirds of the leaves have fallen over, it's time to dig the tubers. Caladiums may return the next year if left in the ground, but it is more reliable to dig them and store them indoors over the winter. 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.

Order spring bulbs in time for them to arrive in October or November. Bulbs are also readily available in local nurseries now. You can go ahead and purchase them, but there is no hurry to plant them.

Flower plumes or seed heads of ornamental grasses can be cut and used in arrangements. Spray with a little clear shellac or hair spray to keep them from shattering.

It is time to divide and transplant Louisiana irises, Easter lilies, and calla lilies. Louisiana irises generally do best when divided every three years.

Not much in the way of ornamentals to plant this month. It is too late to plant warm season plants and too early for cool season plants. If you remove failing warm season plants then prepare the soil for the fall planting and cover with mulch.

Water your vegetable and flower gardens deeply and thoroughly once or twice a week during dry weather. When a good rain occurs (one-half to one inch), adjust your watering schedule accordingly. A daily watering is not recommended for established plants. It increases diseases and encourages a shallow root system. Newly seeded beds, however, should be watered daily until the seeds come up. New transplants also need to be watered more frequently. And plants in containers may need to be watered everyday.

Many of the summer blooming perennials are finished or finishing up their floral display for the year. Cut back the flower stalks and old faded flowers to keep the plants looking attractive.

Mulches may have decayed and thinned out over the summer. Replenish mulch layers with fresh material to maintain about a two to three inch thickness. Ideally, use what you can get for free – such as leaves, dry grass clippings or pine straw. If you prefer the appearance of a purchased mulch, put down an inch or two of leaves, dry grass clippings or pine straw, and then top it off with an about an inch of your favorite purchased mulch. This will save you money and still give you the look you like.

Remove the canes from blackberry bushes that produced fruit this summer. They will not produce again. Vegetative canes may be tipped back to control their growth

The hurricane season is kicking into high gear now, and if you haven't already done so, its time to look over your landscape. In particular, shade trees in the landscape should be carefully evaluated to make sure they are in good shape. Dead branches must be pruned off and dead trees removed entirely.

Check all your plants for pests as you groom. Now is still a good environment for spider mites. You can use light horticultural oils and some of your other control measures now that you couldn't use in the previous hotter months. Just make sure that you apply them in the early morning or late evening so there is sufficient time with temperatures below 88 for the spray to dry.

Only light pruning will be appropriate on shrubs from now on. Late, heavy pruning will stimulate growth in the fall and increase the chance of cold damage to your shrubs. Remember, spring flowering shrubs and gardenias, hydrangeas, sasanquas and camellias have already set their flower buds. Any pruning now will remove flower buds and reduce the display.

The eggplant and pepper plants that you nursed through the summer should be coming on in gangbusters now but keep an eye on insect pests since many of them have been waiting for this flourish as well.

Roses are just getting into their second season of flowering and some of the finest flowers will be produced over the next couple of months. However, blackspot, powdery mildew, aphids and spider mites can still be a problem, so keep up the diligent care and husbandry and the rewards will be great.

September Lawn Care:

An abundance of our calls for help concern problems with lawns. Keeping a "manicured" lawn requires proper planning, maintenance and application of fertilizers and pesticides including insecticides, herbicides and fungicides. It is important to make informed decisions on the selection and application of these products. For example; Some may be safely applied at certain times while others can destroy the lawn.

Before proceeding there are three things that you should know about your "lawn"

1. What type of turfgrass are you growing? The variety of grass that you are growing makes a big difference in many decisions including fertilizer recommendations and herbicide selection.
2. What type of weeds, pests and diseases are present at different times of the year? Most lawn pests and disease are treated only when they appear.
3. What are the soil pH and nutrients available in your lawn? Take a soil test and compare the results to those recommended for your situation.

Things to do now:

- Check the lawn for weeds. If present, Identify them, then mow the lawn with a bagging mower and dispose of the clippings to help remove seeds that have already set. Next apply the appropriate herbicide or hand pull the weeds.
- Repair those areas of lawn that are dead or dying due to insects, disease or wear. Remove any dead grass, till the area and smooth the surface. Finally, lay sod to give you that nice green carpet. Remember to keep it well-watered during establishment.
- If you have a history of winter weeds, now is the time to apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent the seeds from germinating. Click here for an article on pre-emergent herbicide from Lee Rouse.
- You may apply lime or sulfur to adjust the pH if necessary.
- Continue to monitor for pests and disease and treat accordingly.
- This is the last month to aerate before winter if necessary.

Things not to do:

- Do not apply fertilizer to the lawn at this time. Bermuda grass is the exception and may need a final fertilizer application before winter.
- Do not dethatch unless absolutely necessary.

Find more information about lawn care in the Louisiana Lawn Best Management Practices Guide.

Your Local Extension Office is Here to Help

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