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# Gardener's Gazette

A LAFAYETTE PARISH MASTER GARDENERS PUBLICATION

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 2 February 2024

Louisiana Master Gardener

**LPMGA General Meeting**
**February 7th**
**Southside Library**
**12 Noon**
**Speaker Chris Adams**

**LPMGA Board Meeting**
**February 20th1PM**
**IRA NELSON**

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# President's Message

As I write this we are starting to thaw out, but who knows for how long. However, I have heard more than once that February is going to be a cold one. As I used to hear an old TV weather forecaster say, "Let's just wait and see." I guess he was covering all his bases by saying that.

Speaking of cold, we need a new heater in the cottage. It is a combination heater/AC unit. We're asking members if they have any experience with buying or installing such an animal; or let me know if you know someone who fits the bill. We'd like to get it donated or at least discounted, but in any case, it needs to be replaced.

And speaking of needs, we are looking for one, preferably two, people to take over chairing Plant Fest this year. L.J. and Jim did a great job last year; however, they will not be able to take that on this year. We have a solid foundation on which to build for our 2024 event. So, if you are good at organizing and want to play an important part in the success of our association this year, please let me know.

You have probably heard by now that the School Garden Initiative Cookoff is Saturday, February 3 at David Thibodeaux STEM Magnate Academy. Volunteers are needed to help set up and man various stations. If you need to get Saturday hours, let Linda Beyt know, and she will tell you the time to report. If you don't need hours, just come by to attend a fun and uplifting event. The program starts at 10:00 am.

One other bit of news – the pergola is being demolished (or will be soon) at the Demo Garden. It is in very bad shape and needs to go ASAP. Some of our manly members will do the tearing down and probably the planned rebuilding of it. If you have any ideas on the design for a new one, let us know. Thanks to Ed Wilhelm and Heather Warner-Finley for taking on the organizing of this work.

I don't know whether to say, "keep warm" or "stay cool", so I'll say both to cover my bases.

Bootsie Durand, LPMGA President 2024

# MEETINGS AND WHAT PLANT AM I

**2024 LPMGA General Meetings**
**First Wednesday Monthly**
**Daytime: 12:00pm**
**Evening: 6 pm**

**2024 LPMGA Board Meetings**
**1pm on Third Tuesday**

**Dates, times, topics, and locations are subject to change**

| GENERAL MEETINGS | BOARD MEETINGS |
|---|---|
| February 7 | February 20 |
| March 6 | March 19 |
| April 3 | April 16 |
| May 1 | May 21 |
| June 5 | June 18 |
| July 3 | July 16 |
| August 7 | August 20 |
| September 4 | September 17 |
| October 2 | October 15 |
| November 6 | November 19 |
| December 4 | December 17 |

## WHAT PLANT IS THIS?

This plant is a perennial deciduous tree, native to North America and Mexico. It is monoecious and is pollinated by bees.
It has a single non-suckering trunk whose bark matures to blue-grey with darker horizontal striations. With a lifespan of 40 years or more, it can grow 2 to 3 feet a year when young, and can reach a height of 40 feet, although it usually stops at about 25 feet. Growing on woodland edges or on open fields, it enjoys full sun with a bit of afternoon shade. When mature, it is drought tolerant. Soil should be dry to moist but well drained.

Showy, fragrant white flowers appear in spring before it's leaves, which are about 5 inches long and 2 inches wide. The leaves have serrated margins, with minute glands on the petiole near the base of the blade. This is a host plant for the Tiger Swallow-tail butterfly and the Cecropia moth. A 1-inch fruit follows the flowers, turning from yellow to mauve to purple as it ripens from July to September. The tart fruit can be eaten fresh or made into preserves. Birds and mammals also enjoy these fruits. The seeds of members of this genus contain amygdalin and prunasin which break down in water to form hydrocyanic acid (cyanide).
Don't eat the seeds.

Propagation of this plant is by soft-wood cuttings, semi-softwood cuttings taken in summer, and seeds, which require cold stratification.

Do you know what plant this is?

# Camellias Warm Up the Winter Landscape

Camellias are some of the most spectacular winter-blooming species of plants found growing in Louisiana landscapes. Camellias are evergreen shrubs that are native to Japan but have been a staple in Louisiana for many years.

One of the most widely planted and recommended varieties of Camellia is the 'Shi Shi Gashira'. The 'Shi Shi Gashira' is a relatively dwarf shrub that grows to 4-5 feet tall and 4-5 feet wide. Another showstopper is the 'Leslie Ann' camellia, which has been named a Louisiana Super Plant along with the 'Shi Shi Gashira'. Both types of camellias have been noted for their prolific flowering between late fall and early winter. The dark green, glossy leaves are striking on camellias and contrast well with the flowers.

Camellias prefer to be planted in well-draining soils and do not like to have "wet feet". Camellias also like soil on the acidic side, which means a soil pH below 7. Most camellias grow best in part sun to part shade, but some camellias can handle full sun. The most "famous" camellia is familiar to most Louisianians as many enjoy a brew from their leaves – tea.

An upcoming opportunity to learn more about camellias and purchase specimens is at the Baton Rouge Camellia Society Annual Show on February 17th-18th. The event will be held at the Burden Museum and Gardens which has an impressive collection of camellias. More information can be found on the Baton Rouge Camellia Society Facebook page. Many local garden centers also carry a variety of camellias, so stop by to see the local selection. Now until early Spring is a great time to plant trees and shrubs, so plant a camellia today for a future winter display!

-Maddox Miller, LSU AgCenter

# BETWEEN THE ROWS

By MaryAnn Arbruster

Well, it's cold again, but, this is a great time to start seeds. Yes, believe it or not, now is the time to start seed for several warm weather plants. Why should you plant seeds and work to keep them alive during the cold/hot/cold of our mercurial winters, when you can buy transplants after the weather warms up? Well, transplants are one way to do it, but then you're limited to whatever the big growers decide to grow. When you choose the seeds yourself you have access to hundreds, if not thousands, of seed varieties – heirlooms, hybrids, everything – seeds so rare you'll never see it from commercial growers and seeds with great stories attached to them. Once you start learning about the variety of seeds available, you'll be much less likely to rely on what the growers offer you as transplants.

Now, if you want to start seeds and don't have a greenhouse and, like me, don't have a lot of good window light, you might want to try a cold frame. A cold frame is like a mini-greenhouse, specifically intended for seed starting. You can buy them from several online sites, but you can build one easily. A simple frame, with an angle to the top allowing the cover to slope from top to bottom, and an old window as the top works fine. The sides can be wood, cement blocks, or even hay bales as shown in the photos below. You can place the cold frame anywhere if you can access it easily - because you have to open it during those warm days that we have here from time to time. Place the cold frame in a handy place so that you can open it in the morning when necessary. It can be placed in a garden bed, on the lawn or even on a drive or other hard surface. The frame should be oriented so that the shortest depth faces south. This allows the most sun to the plants inside.

Now you have some choices to make. You can plant the seeds in the garden soil if the frame is set over a garden bed, but if you set the frame over lawn or hard surface, you can either fill the frame with good soil, or you can plant in pots or 6-packs and place those into the frame. Keep the seeds evenly moist and watch for temperature extremes. If low temperatures are predicted, cover the entire frame until it warms up again. If high temperatures are predicted (over 50) open the lid and prop it open, a little or a lot depending on how high it is supposed to get. Just remember to close it again before the sun goes down.

Now that you have a place to plant the more tender seeds, which seeds do you plant this month? It's time to plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and kohlrabi, but plant these inside, or in the cold frame, not out in the open yet. There are seeds you can plant outside in the open garden now though. All month you can plant beets, Swiss chard, Irish potatoes and radishes in the open garden. Through the middle of the month, you can plant broccoli, Chinese cabbage, carrots and cauliflower, then starting mid-February you can plant beans and sweet corn. I know the list is not as long as usual, but it is February.

There are few insects around this month, but the weeds are already starting. Try to keep those under control while they are tiny and while the ground is soft from the rains. It's so much easier that way, and yes, I know just how easy it is to not pull them, because they are so small and seemingly innocuous. But they grow so quickly! If you don't pull them NOW, they will be out of control and setting seed before you know it. And every time I see a weed setting seed, I think of this old farmers' adage, "One year seeding, seven years weeding." It's true, so take care of those weeds while it's still easy to do.

After you clear away a section of weeds you can sprinkle that area with corn gluten meal, an organic pre-emergence herbicide. Corn gluten meal stops seeds from germinating for about six weeks, then breaks down into a nitrogen fertilizer to feed the plants growing there later. It's available in a couple of name brand products, like organic Preen, but that's the expensive way. If you go online you can find it as the generic 'corn gluten meal' for a lot less. I found it at the big box stores in liquid, ready to spray formulations and the more normal granular formula. Use five pounds for 250 square feet or follow label directions. Just remember that you are treating the area with a product that inhibits seed germination. You cannot treat the area, then plant seeds next week or next month. You must wait at least six weeks for seeds, but you can use transplants in that area immediately. The corn gluten meal will not affect transplants, only seeds.

I know this isn't as much to do as most months, but it is the middle of winter. In other places we would still be a month or more away from planting anything. This is the time of year most gardeners are browsing through catalogs and dreaming – because that is all they can do. Their gardens are covered with snow and ice. So consider yourselves lucky, and

Until next month,

Good Gardening

## HEALING TRADITONS UPDATE
**By Mary Perrin**

**On January 13, the Healers Garden committee hosted Opelousas herbalist Lanier Cordel at Vermilionville during its regular quarterly Healing Traditions of Acadiana speaker series. The series is an outgrowth of their work at the Healers Garden, and has been going strong since 2013. Lanier's topic was the impact that the use of medicinal plants during the Civil War had on the soldiers. The presentation expanded and altered the way we view Civil War medical practices and the use of medicinal herbs from 1861-1865, their impact on the war's outcome, and the surprising impact it continues to have on present day health care. If members of LPMGA wish to view a video of this presentation, go to the acadianamuseum.com website and click on videos on the homepage. From there click on history.**

## Our investment account at Community Foundation of Acadiana

Over a decade ago, membership and administrators of Lafayette Parish Master Gardener Association (LPMGA) saw the need to create an investment account to deposit funds designated for long-term goals. The primary long-term need identified at that time was the possible need to purchase our own facility should our relationship with UL at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center be terminated. While this was not an impending threat then or now, leadership at that time thought it would be wise to prepare for the possibility in the future.

In 2013, LPMGA opened an investment account at the Community Foundation of Acadiana (CFA). The account was initially set up as an endowed account that would allow donors to contribute directly to the account, though in 2017 the account was converted to a non-endowed one. LPMGA funded the account during 2013, then made another significant deposit in 2017. Other than that activity, the investment account has been mostly dormant, earning interest and investment returns without additional deposits. Many members have questioned the purpose of the account, the types of assets in which our funds were invested, and the fees associated with that account. When Yvonne Lanoux took over as treasurer in 2023, she set up a meeting between her and me and the staff at CFA to understand the account details.

CFA manages the account on our behalf. The funds are not restricted so that our organization may deposit and withdraw funds as we see fit. CFA offers a variety of investment options, in a range of risk tolerances from Risk Averse to Aggressive. Our funds are invested in their Moderate Mix, which in turn is allocated with 50% of the funds invested in equity securities, 40% in fixed income securities, and 10% in cash. This appears to be appropriate for our organizational goal of long-term growth of this investment. The equity portion, in particular, has the best opportunity for long-term growth but also can be characterized as volatile. In 2022, for example, the funds recorded an unrealized capital loss of over $7,000. That loss was recovered in 2023 and the funds realized positive gains for the period. Increases and decreases are to be expected, but the overall trend should be that our investments increase at least at the rate of inflation. The annualized return of the Moderate Mix portfolio over the past ten years is 4.73%.

CFA does charge a management fee of 0.69% per year which amounts to about $500 per year. This is typical in the industry although there are some lower-cost providers out there. We do get monthly statements on the account which are reported to the Finance Committee and Executive Board. The Treasurer and Finance Committee will continue to monitor the account and explore additional investment options.

John Hebert Vice President 2024

## WHAT PLANT IS THIS?

Prunus mexicana:

Mexican plum, Inch plum, Bigtree plum

# LORE, LEGENDS AND MORE

The following fun information is from the Farmers Almanac 2024, written by Melissa Mayntz, Volume 297. It is not complete, but more like a book report of what I read and found interesting.

Bees have many positive impacts on our world, so it is no wonder they have been part of our lore, superstitions, and cultural beliefs for centuries.

**Honeybee Lore and Legend**

In ancient Greece and Rome, bees were seen as messengers and servants of the Gods. Bees were believed to have been formed by the tears of Ra, the sun god of Egypt, to deliver his message to earth. All three of these ancient cultures, as well as ancient Chinese and Celtic civilizations, considered honey a sacred gift for the dead.

**Honeymoon**

Believed to originate in Scandinavia, the tradition of the honeymoon was first the practice of providing a newlywed couple with a month of wine or mead to celebrate the sweetness of new marriage and encourage happiness.

**Tell The Bees**

The practice of "telling the bees" is still popular today in both western Europe and the United States Appalachia. Because of their value to the family people believe bees should be treated with the same respect as family and be told when something major happens. For example, if the beekeeper dies the bees must be told very gently of the change of beekeepers. The beekeeper is considered the head of the hive. This will keep the bees from leaving or undergoing deep mourning.

With so much wonderful lore associated with bees it is no wonder we are protective of them. So remember to encourage our local beekeepers by purchasing local honey and bee-related products.

# Spring Garden Adventures Anyone?
## By
## Julie Jewell

At this point in my life ---shall we say the junior Golden Girls era --- checking things off my bucket list seems more important than ever and, Dear Reader, you will not be surprised to learn that several items on that list include garden tours and flower shows! So, who's up for an adventure in Spring 2024?

**March 2 – 10, 2024 Philadelphia Flower Show**
This is America's largest horticultural event featuring stunning displays by the world's premier floral, garden, and landscape designers. Tickets begin at $50 per adult. **phsonline.org**

**March 21-23, 2024 The Garden Club of Charleston's "Springtime in Charleston" House and Garden Tour**
If you want to shell out $75.00 you can go to the Preview Party on the 21st. If not, the actual tours are on the 22nd and 23rd. Those are a bit pricey too at $65 per day. Let me tell you, this shindig is about as southern as it gets! The first question on their FAQ page is "What should I wear?" Please note, that in addition to suggesting comfortable clothing, the lovely ladies of the Garden Club of Charleston ("one of the oldest and largest garden clubs in America") forbid the wearing of high-heeled shoes or ---horror of horror—even kitten-heeled shoes "inside these historic homes". Hmmph!!! If I can't at least wear my kitten-heeled shoes, I just may have to reconsider Charleston's place on my bucket list! Just kidding, anyone who knows me knows that it has been decades (and decades) since I have worn anything other than tennis shoes. **thegardenclubofcharleston.org**

**April 19 - 20, 2024 Garden Club of Savannah NOGS (North of Gaston Street to the Savannah River) Tour of Hidden Gardens**
This is a self-guided tour in Savannah's Historic District. Tickets are $60. For additional fees, you can add a trolley tour featuring the botanical history of Savannah, and a Southern Tea at National Historic Landmark house. **gardenclubofsavannah.org**

**May 21-25, 2024 The Royal Horticulture Society's Chelsea Flower Show**
This event is billed as "the world's greatest flower show" and features cutting-edge garden design, fabulous floral displays, a plant-packed pavilion and endless shopping. Categories include Show Gardens, Sanctuary Gardens, and an All About Plants area. The Sanctuary Gardens are therapeutic gardens. The Forest Bathing Garden is inspired by the ancient Japanese practice of Shinrin-youku, which means bathing in the forest atmosphere and reconnecting with nature through our senses. This is one of several accessible gardens which provides places of refuge, solace and reflection for those with a medical condition Other gardens include one dedicated to Autistic persons which highlights the mind's complexity and beauty; a World Child Cancer's Nurturing Garden; and a Freedom from Torture Garden! There are also Balcony and Container Gardens including the Junglette Garden which contains tropical plants and includes a "fungus fence". **rhs.org.uk**

Happy Exploring!
Julie

# DANS LE JARDIN NEEDS YOUR HELP

LPMGA will present the 2nd Dans le Jardin on March 22, 2024. Gail Wakefield and Cindy Wiley are in search of door prizes and items for the silent auction.

We need door prizes things like: small garden tools, aprons, mugs, workout cups, or small gift cards. For our Silent auction we would like more upscale items. Blooming plants, framed pictures, a nice plant stand, a garden bench or a few days at your vacation home. Things that will make folks want to donate a little money to us. GET CREATIVE!

Please contact Gail or Cindi with your kind donations.

## INVASIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

By Carol Antosiak

Native to Asia and Africa and introduced into Florida as an ornamental in 1905, Air Potato has become a Tier I invasive species in Louisiana (and elsewhere), indicating it has a severe negative impact on native plant communities.

It does this by rapid upward growth, out-competing native plants, including trees. Not only does it grow 6-8 inches *a day,* reaching 150 feet or more, but it also produces hundreds of bulbils (the 'potatoes') in the leaf axils which fall to the ground and successfully produce more vines.

Almost impossible to eradicate from large areas by digging or chemicals, beetles from Nepal have been introduced to control Air Potato. The adults and larvae of the beetle are host-specific, feeding only on D. bulbiferous and will not eat any other Dioscorea, including the native species. For more info on this program in Louisiana see attached document and decide for yourself.

Although Air Potato has been a popular "passalong plant' for years, if someone should hand you one, just say no to Air Potatoes!

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# FEBRUARY 2024

**LPMGA General Meeting February 7th, 12 noon Southside Library Johnston Street**

**LPMGA Board Meeting February 20th Ira Nelson Horticultural Center**

**Beauregard Master Gardener Garden Foru, Feb. 11, Deridder**

**Baton Rouge Spring Garden Show March 10-11**

**Northshore Garden Show and Plant Sale March 16-17**

**Dans le Jardin, March 22, 2024**

*Gardener's Gazette* is issued to all members of the Lafayette Parish Master Gardeners' Program. All members are encouraged to submit news, educational features, and photographs. **The deadline for all submissions is the 17th of each month for publication in the next month's issue unless otherwise noted.**

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If you have a disability which requires special assistance for your participation in our meetings, please call the LSU AgCenter 291-7090

**Please note: All meeting and event dates, times, and locations are subject to change.**