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Gardener's Gazette

A LAFAYETTE PARISH MASTER GARDENERS PUBLICATION

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 10

November 2024

Louisiana Master Gardener

LPMGA General Meeting
November 6th, 12 Noon
Southside Library
Lafayette, LA

Board Meeting
November 19th, 1PM
IRA NELSON
2206 JOHNSTON ST.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's so hard to believe that this message is for the November newsletter. 2024 has zipped by, which means that our December social is coming up. It is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4 at the River Oaks Catering and Event Center, 520 E. Kaliste Saloom Road, in the Napoleon Ballroom at 6:00 pm. The deadline to pay your registration fee is November 25. I know it's only the end of October now, but if November is like the rest of the year, it will be over before you can say "where did it go?"

At the social we will be recognizing members who have been around for 20 years. They are known as Platinum Members and are as follows: from the 2003 class - Christy Adams, Genee Foley, Ellen Grote, Cheryl Perret and Kathy Troyanowski; from the 2004 class - Chris Butts. They will be recognized with gift certificates and are invited to attend the social free of charge. These ladies deserve these rewards and so much more.

Today, October 24, the mentors met again with the 2024 trainees. As a mentor, I have had the pleasure of being around the class several times and every time, I am more excited about seeing these trainees join our ranks. They are enthusiastic and energetic. A good number of them will have logged their 40 volunteer hours before the social and I have no doubt our organization will be the better for their participation. They will finish the class on Thursday, October 31.

Be on the lookout for the electronic ballot for electing 2025 officers. It should go out on November 10 and your vote is due back by November 17.

Happy gardening!

Bootsie Durand

MEETINGS AND PLANTFEST

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
November 6	November 19
December 4	December 17

PlANTFEST A GREAT SUCCESS

The weather was perfect and the community turnout was outstanding. The LPMGA had a wide variety of plants offered for sale. I noted May Vidacovich had sold all the topicals before noon and Cindi Wiley sold all but 2 of the roses she had for sale. Becky Taylor's suggestion of including house plants seem to be well received and I noted many young people leaving with a lovely potted plant to nurture. Cindi Rizinger-Johnson's team's raffle had outstanding prizes and the ticket sales showed everyone thought so.

Although I can not mention everyone involved the net profit of around $9,000 speaks to all of them and their success. Mary

A LOOK AT NOVEMBER'S BOARD MEETING

LPMGA election will be conducted electronically November 10th through November 17th.

Due to scheduling conflicts the November general meeting will be held at the South Regional Library. Our Speaker will be Ginger Bourg.

Maddox reminded us that the 6 continuing ed and 20 Volunteer hours must be completed each year to be considered an active member.

There will be a survey sent out to members on allowing members of a current on going class to purchase MG merchandise, receive MG email, and purchase pine straw. This has been done differently from one year to another.

Growing Persimmons – A Festive Fall Fruit

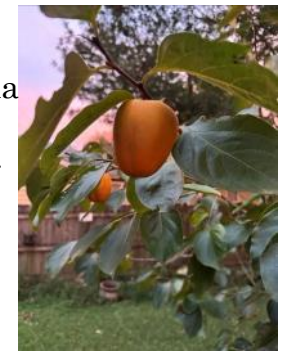
Persimmons, *Diospyros spp.* are wonderful additions to the home landscape. Known for their glossy foliage, striking orange fruits, and adaptability, these trees not only add aesthetic beauty but also produce delicious fruit. Persimmons are among the lowest maintenance fruit trees for the Louisiana landscape.

Before choosing which persimmon tree to plant, it's important to understand the two main species grown in Louisiana: American persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) and Japanese persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*). American Persimmons, *Diospyros virginiana*, are native to Louisiana. These trees can grow quite large, up to 35-60 feet tall, and are known for their resilience and hardiness. The fruits of American persimmons are small - typically only 1-2 inches in diameter, and they are astringent when unripe, meaning they can be unpleasantly bitter. American persimmons are dioecious, meaning male and female flowers grow on separate trees.

Japanese Persimmons, *Diospyros kaki*, are smaller trees, typically growing to about 15-30 feet tall, making them a great choice for most home gardens. They are prized for their larger, more uniform fruits and can be either astringent or non-astringent. Non-astringent varieties, such as 'Fuyu' can be eaten while still firm, providing a crisp, sweet flavor. Astringent types, like 'Tanenashi,' need to ripen fully – oftentimes to a soft, gelatinous texture - to lose their bitterness. Japanese persimmons are often self-pollinating, making them easier to grow in smaller spaces where planting multiple trees might not be feasible.

Persimmons need full sun for optimal growth and fruit production. Select a planting site that gets at least six hours of sunlight per day in a well-draining location. Minimal pruning is needed, but it can help shape the tree and encourage stronger fruiting branches. Prune in late winter or early spring while the tree is still dormant. Remove any dead or crossing branches and thin out crowded areas to improve air circulation. Persimmons don't require heavy fertilization and are relatively resistant to pests and diseases. One issue noted this past year was the problematic fall webworm. Early detection and treatment is important in avoiding the complete defoliation of a tree.

In addition to the aesthetics, persimmon fruit are high in fiber, vitamins A and C, antioxidants, and beta-carotene. Besides eating fresh, persimmons can be dried, used in baked goods, or made into preserves. Persimmons are an excellent fruit with a distinctly "fall" flavor and appearance. The ideal time to plant persimmon trees in Louisiana is during the dormant season, which is typically late fall to early winter – beginning now! This will give the tree time to establish its roots before the spring growing season begins. These trees are underutilized and offer exceptional focal points in the garden. Happy gardening and I hope you all are enjoying the exceptional weather!



-Maddox Miller, LSU AgCenter

2024 LPMGA CLASS FIELD TRIP

By Karen Carruth

On September 19th, the 2024 LPMGA training class took a field trip to the St. John Restaurant in St. Martinville. Tucked away just steps from the Bayou Teche, St. John restaurant is well known for its impressive seafood cuisine consistently receiving high marks for food, service and great value.

When we arrived, we were greeted by the Hydroponics engineer, Derick Thibodeaux, and the Farm to Table Director, Isabel Picou. The trainees were treated to an informative tour of the hydroponic operation that is housed adjacent to the restaurant. There are two greenhouses; the Greenhouse West which contains tomatoes, and the Greenhouse East which grows cucumbers.

A drip system is utilized in both of the greenhouses with a nutrient solution added to feed the plants. The plants are contained in a small bucket holding a type of lightweight clay or a perlite mix. Ms. Picou grows San Marzano and Super Sauce tomatoes and said the plants can grow year-round. She said the most challenging months are June, July, and August, when the temperatures within the greenhouse can exceed triple digits. At the time of our visit, the cucumbers had recently been restarted after a spider mite infestation a few months earlier rapidly spread from plant to plant.

Ms. Picou then led us to a separate building dubbed the "Ice House," where lettuces are grown. We viewed several different varieties of lettuce including butter lettuce, Salanova Green, Summer Crisp (Cherokee), and Romaine.

The Ice House uses a technique called Nutrient Film Technique, or NFT. Lettuce is suspended in a tray resembling a rain gutter, and the reservoirs have nutrient system added along with an air stone. The roots of the lettuce are fed through a channel that goes directly to the roots along with water. The system is completely flushed every four weeks.

Hydroponics can be, in some ways, less intense than traditional gardening. There are less opportunities for certain pests, and better control of things like temperature, rain, and harsh sun. There are still protocols that must be followed to ensure humidity inside the greenhouse does not encourage powdery mildew or other fungus. Air flow is maintained with large fans, open windows, and heaters are used during the very coldest days of winter.

After our very informative tour, we settled in for a delicious lunch in the restaurant. St. John is known for their crabcakes and steaks, but I decided on a shrimp and oyster plate that was more than enough to share with the mister at home. All of us were treated to a fresh salad grown on-site which was a wonderful conclusion to our visit.

We would like to thank Chef Grayling Thibodeaux, who along with an amazing waitstaff, treated our large group like family.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT PLANT THIS IS?

By Karn Trahan

This plant is a native deciduous tree which grows in bottomland from Zones 5 to 9 in acidic to alkaline soil which is well drained. With perfect growing conditions it can reach a mature height of up to 120 feet. Its trunk can have a diameter of 4 to 5 feet. Cold hardy and drought-tolerant, it has great strength, with stout spreading branches in an upright rounded form. This neat appearance makes it a good choice for lawns, parks and urban plantings. Overhead power lines and ground infrastructure like water pipes must be avoided, considering the mature size of the plant. Its lateral roots can span an area which is 4 to 7 times the tree's crown size, and it can grow 12 to 24 inches a year.

This tree's leaves are 6 to 8 inches long and consist of 7 to 9 toothed lobes. They are simple and alternate. The upper surface is dark green, the lower surface paler green, and becomes bright red or orange in the fall. The leaves are shed over a relatively short period of time, reducing maintenance.

Pendulous pollen-bearing male catkins appear in mid-spring that fertilize the miniature female flowers on the same plant or on nearby trees. Olive-green twigs terminate in a cluster of buds, which are light-colored. The acorn is ¾ inches to 1 ¼ inches long with a thick scaly cup that is flat and saucer-like: a cap for an elf. Although relatively pest-free, it can be affected by wilt, gypsy moths, and anthracnose, canker, caterpillars, borers and leaf miners.

Do you know what plant this is?

Mary Beyt hosted a **garden stroll** Saturday, October 5, for members of the 2024 MG trainee class. The walk-and-talk included discussions of soil, mulch, and principles of design, such as rhythm and repetition. Mary's home at 126 Girard Woods Dr. is the Lafayette Garden Club's Garden of the Month.

1. Among the strollers were host Mary Beyt, Christi Disher, Peggy Broussard, and Master Gardener Anna Bernard.

2. Rachel Thibodeaux and Yvonne Mitchell observe design principles in action.

3. Yvonne Mitchell, Peggy Dronet, and Rachel Thibodeaux explore the coulee Garden.

ANSWER WHAT PLANT IS THIS?

Shumard Oak,

Shumard red oak,

Swamp red oak

Perry's Pepper Poacher

Many years ago, our good MG friend, Perry Wilson, who has since left this world, worked hard to put in a garden of a variety of peppers that grow well in our area. The plants were beautiful and bountiful, but Perry realized the Peter Peppers that he had been nurturing so well were suddenly disappearing. Peter Peppers at that time were a great novelty, not only for their flavor but more so for their unusual shape (hence the name.) Seeds were limited and were in great demand, costing $1.00 each, so you can imagine Perry's despair to know that the crop he was anticipating was GONE.

Upon investigation, Perry discovered that a certain individual was seen in the garden in the late afternoons, *with a bag!* The suspected culprit was a person who, with his mother, had a booth alongside us at Festival de Fleurs and SOLD PEPPER JELLY!

Perry confronted the mother, I'm not sure if by phone or in person, and the lady denied picking our peppers. Perry then, in his slow Southern drawl, told her, "Ma'am, I just want you to know that pepper bed was for demonstration only, and those peppers were treated with a *toxic, systemic pesticide*, so if you make jelly with them you may be poisoning your customers." Mama panicked and immediately blurted out, "We haven't used them yet…their still in the fridge!" GOTCHA!

Subsequently, Perry posted skull and crossbones signs warning the garden visitors that the peppers were not safe for consumption (a little white lie.) And we never had another pepper poached.

Becky Taylor

PLANTFEST 2024

Our customers enjoying the demonstration gardens!

LPMGA cashiers hard at work

Cashier set up for Cash, Credit Card and Check

Lafayette loves Native Plants

Lafayette Garden Club was there!

ASK A MASTER GARDENER and The Rose Society.

STORIES FROM THE PAST

By Becky Taylor

Oh, How We've Grown!

Our Master Gardeners were blessed to have the hospitality of ULL to host our classes and our propagation efforts. In the beginning, in 1998, we were assigned to one bench next to the water cooler, use of their mist table, and an approximate 10 x 15 space in the shade house. I'm sure at times we tested the patience of our hosts, but they graciously tolerated us.

In 2002, through the efforts of Agent Denyse Cummins and ULL Dean and MG, Linda Broussard, we were given the use of an abandoned greenhouse at the west end of the INHC campus. I had often passed by and wondered what was growing in that greenhouse, only to discover it was WEEDS…up to the ceiling! After much hard work, the greenhouse was weeded, nursery cloth and pea gravel laid, benches brought in, and an irrigation system installed. There was no shade house, no outdoor potting bench, no use of the cottage, and no demo garden.

In 2003, our president resigned for personal reasons. Vice President Liz Edwards accepted the position and took the bull by the horns. She had a vision and got to work. She employed a ULL design student to create a French Parterre Garden. Thanks to then Sheriff, and future MG, Mike Neustrom, trustees were brought in to do the brunt work of forming the beds and laying limestone paths. The once uneven, grassy area in front of the greenhouse was transformed.

Agent Stuart Gauthier came on board and improvements continued. Soil bins were built, sidewalks laid, and cement trucks rolled in to pour a new shade house slab. A hoop roof was built, shade cloth and irrigation installed. I remember at the time remarking that the size of the shade house seemed outrageous, that it was far more space than we would ever need! Was I ever wrong!

The last step was when the ULL staff using the cottage moved to Cade and we had our clubhouse! Through the years we added the pergola, the outside shed, the outdoor potting bench, and a second storage shed. Boy, oh boy…we've come a long way from that single bench we were given at INHC so many years ago. None would be possible without the cooperation of AgCenter agents, ULL staff, and our awesome, hardworking Master Gardeners.

LPMGA 2025 Executive Board Election

SLATE

Election November 10th to 17th

Nomination Committee: Paul Manual

Vice President: Colette Anzalone

Susan Mead

Recording Secretary: Kevin Besse

Corresponding Secretary: Meagan Stogsdill

Member-at-Large: Sara West

Eutrocin dubuim-'Baby Joe'

This is a more compact species growing to only 3 to 4 feet in height and 1 To 3 feet wide. It is native to most of North East American swamps, river banks and moist thickets. This plant is adaptable growing in a wide range of soil types. It will take sun or shade and still do well. It late blooms attract a wide range of pollinators that may have limited resources at the time it blooms. It blossoms turn into soft buff colored seed heads that will persist late into the winter. It can be used in cottage gardens, planted in containers or incorporated into a mixed vegetable and flower bed.

The later is what I have done in my own yard. It is planted along side ginger, Toad Lily, African Hosta, Green Onions and Bok Choy.

Mary Gladney

OKRA

By Karen Carruth

The change in the weather is an indication that we are now knee-deep into the Louisiana fall season. And while some home gardeners are busily planning and planting their fall/winter crops, there are some crops that are still going strong that were spring/summer sown. One of those crops is okra.

Orka does very well in the heat, and is usually planted in the spring after all danger of frost. But I lost my spring stand of okra in some flooding rains this past June and had to start my garden all over again. I replanted okra, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and squash in August. While the other crops took awhile to take off, the okra grew tall and leafy very quickly.

I planted around 15 plants in a very sunny area where the soil had good drainage. I added compost to the native soil, but I seldom add any other amendments and the plants seem to grow happily. During the very hottest days, okra will require about an inch or two of water per week. A fast grower, you can expect to see the okra flower and produce in approximately 55-75 days, according to the seed packets.

I am growing three varieties of okra, Clemoson Spineless, Motherland, and Burgandy. Each produces a beautiful flower that rivals a tropical hibiscus. I have admired the yellows. pinks, whites, and blush colored flowers that okra produces. They can really put on a show.

Okra is best harvested when the pods are 2-4 inches long and tender to the touch. Larger pods tend to be tough and fibrous, but it really depends on the variety. At this time of season, I am harvesting okra daily. The more you harvest, the more you will get. In some areas orka can be a perennial plant, but with the frost we often get, it is probably best to just pull the plants out, collect the seeds, and compost.

I have been slicing and freezing my orka to use in our winter dishes. There is nothing quite like some stewed okra or a gumbo with fresh okra. Since I had a successful okra year, I hope to plant a few more plants next season.

Late Season Pollinators: Supporting Beneficial Insects in Autumn

By: Mandy Hatman

As the vibrant colors of summer fade into the warm hues of autumn, many gardeners in Louisiana might think the time for pollinators has passed. However, fall is a crucial season for many beneficial insects, and our gardens can play a vital role in supporting them.

Why Late Season Pollinators Matter

Many species remain active well into the fall, and some are just reaching their peak. These industrious insects are essential for:

Pollinating late-blooming plants

Building up energy reserves for winter

Laying eggs that will become next year's pollinators

Louisiana's Autumn Pollinators

Bees: While honeybees are less active, many native bee species are still hard at work. Look for bumblebees, sweat bees, and mason bees.

Butterflies: The iconic Monarch butterfly migrates through Louisiana in the fall. You might also spot Gulf Fritillaries and Cloudless Sulphurs.

Moths: Often overlooked, moths are important nighttime pollinators. The Luna moth and various sphinx moths are active in autumn.

Flies: Yes, flies! Hoverflies are excellent pollinators and remain active in cooler weather.

Plants That Support Late Season Pollinators

To help these beneficial insects, include these native Louisiana plants in your garden:

Goldenrod (Solidago sp.): A favorite of many bee species

Asters (Symphyotrichum sp.): Attract butterflies and bees

Joe Pye Weed (Eutrochium fistulosum): Loved by butterflies

Ironweed (Vernonia sp.): Attracts a variety of pollinators

Mistflower (Conoclinium coelestinum): A butterfly magnet

Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Fall Garden

Provide a Water Source: A shallow dish with pebbles makes a perfect insect drinking station.

Avoid Pesticides: These can harm beneficial insects. Use organic pest control methods instead.

Leave the Leaves: Many pollinators overwinter in leaf litter. Leave some areas of your garden "messy" for their benefit.

Provide Shelter: Leave hollow stems standing and create brush piles for overwintering insects.

Plant in Clusters: Groups of the same plant make it easier for pollinators to find and feed efficiently.

By supporting late season pollinators, we not only help these crucial insects survive the winter but also ensure a healthy start for our gardens come spring. So this fall, as you're preparing your garden for winter, remember to leave a little something for our tiny, hardworking friends. Your spring garden will thank you!

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NOVEMBER 2024

Nopvember 6th, 12 Noon, LPMGA General Meeting, South Regional Library, Speaker Jenny Bourg on Gardening Tips and record results.

November 19th, LPMGA Board Meeting, 1 PM Ira Nelson

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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