

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I really, really, really don't like winter.

I don't hate winter as I know it's a necessary part of the plant cycle, that many plants need the rest and the chill hours to flourish and produce fruit.

But it seems the winters get more challenging every year.

In the past month or so we've seen record snowfall (!) and record low temperatures here in Acadiana. This was followed by a few weeks of false spring, which triggered new growth on our plants and even saw my blueberries and paw paws blossom. I optimistically bought tomato and other vegetable plants, though luckily I didn't have time to put them in the ground. Now, as I write this on February 20, we're back down in the mid 20s. I sit in a living room once again full of patio plants (I really DO need a greenhouse) and can only hope that the subfreezing temperatures don't wreak havoc on the new growth and fruit production.

Yes, we realize (hope?) that spring will get here soon. I tell all my casual and rookie gardener friends that it's easy to be a gardener in the spring. I often tell them this as they're loading up on tropical potted plants and perennials from the big box stores, plants that won't survive a mild freeze or our hot humid summers. I guess planning for and overcoming the challenges of winter and summer is what distinguishes us as MASTER gardeners.

Spring brings a flurry of LPMGA events, opportunities to volunteer and to learn. Here are a few on the horizon:

Pine straw sale, March 29. Susan Wilhelm has agreed to organize this and will be asking for orders and volunteers in the next few days.

Festival des Fleurs, April 5. Our plant sales here are a major fundraiser for our organization, and we will need plenty of volunteers to set up and man the booths. In addition, the Festival itself has asked for LPMGA members to volunteer to help with the event.

Dans le Jardin, June 13, at the Lite Center. Bootsie and her committee are hard at work planning this event and lining up speakers. Mark your calendars for this educational opportunity.

LPMGA

GENERAL MEETING

March 5th, 12 PM

West Regional Library

501 Old Spanish

Trail

Scott

Board Meeting

March 18th, 1PM

IRA NELSON

2206 JOHNSTON ST.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- ♦ **Meetings/Board**
pg 2
- ♦ **Cindy Landry** pg
2
- ♦ **PineStraw** pg 2
- ♦ **Maddox Miller** pg
3
- **What Plant Is
This?** Pg 4
- **Answer** pg 5
- **Spring Social** pg 5
- **Companion
Plants** pg 6
- **Begonias** pg 7
- **Garden Prep** pg 8
- **Dans le Jardin** pg
9
- **Volunteers
needed** pg 9
- **Calendar** pg 10

MEETINGS

**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

MARCH 5	MARCH 18
APRIL 2	APRIL 15
MAY 7	MAY 20
JUNE 4	JUNE 17
JULY	JULY
AUGUST 2	AUGUST 15
SEPTEMBER 3	SEPTEMBER 16
OCTOBER 1	OCTOBER 21
NOVEMBER 5	NOVEMBER 18
DECEMBER 2	DECEMBER 16



Cindy Landry receives Certificate of Completion from LPMGA President John Hebert.

PINE STRAW SALE



Susan and Ed Wilhelm will need volunteers for our pine straw sale.

Date: March 29, 2025

Where: Demonstration Beds, Ira Nelson

Time: 8:30 am to 12 noon

Price: \$16 per bale (note they are priced as high as \$22 a bale in our area)

Each bale covers 40 to 50 SF 3 inches deep. These are large round bales.

Please email Susan Wilhelm to place an order and reserve your bales: flitzyw1@att.net, please include your phone number.

VOLUNTEERS CAN SIGN UP AT THE MARCH GENERAL MEETING OR EMAIL SUSAN.

SUSAN CAN ALSO BE REACHED AT 337-523-0323.

State of the (graft) Union



Let us all reflect on LPMGA's impressive work in 2024 and look forward to the year ahead. In our community, like many others across Louisiana, there are motivated Louisiana Master Gardeners who combine their interest in gardening with their excitement for making a difference in the community. We are blessed in the Lafayette area to have YOU-a dedicated group of individuals who work tirelessly to educate, beautify, and enrich our community. Your efforts in educational outreach and environmental stewardship make a lasting impact on our area. As Louisiana Master Gardeners, you all carry out the LSU AgCenter's mission to *Innovate, Educate, and Improve Lives*.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all of you who generously share your time, knowledge, and passion for gardening. Your contributions not only enhance the beauty of the Lafayette area but also promote sustainability, conservation, and a love for gardening among people of all ages.

The 2024 Louisiana Master Gardener Annual Report shows the Lafayette program as being one of only five in the state to exceed 10,000 hours of volunteer service. Moreso, Lafayette is in the top three programs in the State (#2 to be exact) who logged an impressive 12,391.55 hours in 2024 – which accounts for over 14% of LMG volunteer service hours in Louisiana. This impact is further calculated to be valued at \$355,637.49 – WOW!

10,000 hours of effort has become a societal benchmark of sorts to show that you have mastered a skill and become an expert in that area. With 10,000 hours of service collectively in 2024, you all achieve an expert-level impact on our community on an annual basis.

There has been a continual and lately very relevant push from our LSU AgCenter administration to report our efforts and document the true impact of our services. In a time of uncertainty about future budgets, our reports are critical in justifying our federal, state, and local funding that sustain our programs. I appreciate all of your efforts and encourage you all to continue reporting those impacts.

Your dedication, hard work, and passion truly make a difference in the lives of so many. Your collective efforts help our communities bloom in ways that go far beyond our gardens.



-Maddox Miller, LSU AgCenter

WHAT PLANT IS THIS?

A hardy semi-evergreen perennial, it ranges from 2 to 4 feet tall on green, square, branching stems which turn woody in their 2nd year of growth. It grows well in relatively poor soil in Zones 3 to 9 in well-drained alkaline soil in full sun.

Its small, green, pointy leaves are pleasantly pungent and have been used for thousands of years. Boiled to make a tea, it is an expectorant and soothes a sore throat, and aids in digestion. Patted on skin eruptions, it calms and helps to heal. It was thought to cure leprosy and it has recently been found that the penicillin mold will grow on its leaves. When dried, the leaves can be added to potpourri. They are also added sparingly to salad and soups. They are also used in making liqueurs Chartreuse and Benedictine, which were thought to be medicinal.

In summer, this plant produces long spikes of closely packed salvia-like flowers in lipped clusters in leaf axils up oneside of the stems. These flowers can be blue, purple, red and pink and attract butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. Dried or fresh, these flowers make lovely arrangements.

Following the flowers, tiny brown, flattish, tear-shaped seeds appear. These should be planted indoors in early spring or outdoors in late spring in light, well-drained soil. This plant will self-seed and can also be propagated by stem cuttings in spring or division in fall.

In Biblical times, this plant was used for cleansing and purification.

Do you know what plant this is?

Karen Trahan

kctrahan@hotmail.com

337-643-7821



WHAT PLANT IS THIS
ANSWER

Hyssopus
officinalis: Hyssop

MAY VIDACOVICH TO HOST SPRING SOCIAL

Yea!! May said yes to hosting our Spring social again this year. May 7 is the day and more information will follow soon. Be on the lookout for details in about 2 weeks. See you there. Pam Womack

Companion Planting: Maximizing Growth Through Strategic Pairings

By: Mandy Hatman

Companion planting adapts traditional knowledge to Louisiana's unique growing conditions. Understanding how plants interact helps create resilient gardens that withstand our heat, humidity, and long growing seasons.

Benefits for Louisiana Gardens

- Natural pest management suitable for our climate, reducing the need for chemical interventions
- Improved soil health in challenging clay or sandy soils through diverse root systems
- Maximized space in raised beds and container gardens, essential for urban gardens
- Enhanced resilience during extreme weather events common to our region
- Better pollination through strategic flower placement
- Reduced water needs through complementary plant relationships

Louisiana-Tested Combinations

- Okra & Peppers – Okra's height provides afternoon shade for peppers while maintaining good airflow
- Sweet Potatoes & Bush Beans – Sweet potatoes prevent soil erosion while beans add nitrogen; both thrive in our long summers
- Tomatoes & Basil – Traditional pairing that thrives in our heat; basil deters many tomato pests
- Eggplant & Marigolds – Marigolds deter nematodes common in Louisiana soils and attract beneficial insects
- Cucumbers & Nasturtiums – Nasturtiums attract pollinators and deter pests while providing edible flowers
- Mirlitons & Herbs – Our local squash variety benefits from aromatic herbs that confuse pest insects

Avoid pairing crops with similar disease susceptibility - especially nightshades. Space for air circulation to prevent fungal issues; vertical gardening can maximize airflow in our humidity.

Happy planting!

The Beguiling Beauty of Begonias

Perennially adored for their captivating beauty and versatility, begonias are plants that have charmed gardeners and horticulturists alike for centuries. These exquisite plants belong to the family Begoniaceae and encompass a vast range of species and hybrids, each possessing its unique allure and characteristics. From their vibrant blooms to their intricate foliage, begonias offer an array of visual delights, making them a prized addition to gardens, homes, and landscapes worldwide.

Begonias dates back to the late 17th century when they were first discovered by French botanist Charles Plumier. During his exploration of the Caribbean islands, Plumier encountered these remarkable plants and named them in honor of his patron, Michel Bégon, a French colonial administrator. Since then, begonias have spread across the globe, captivating plant enthusiasts and evolving into a diverse group of ornamental plants.

Begonias are renowned for their diversity, with over 1,800 species and numerous hybrids, they exhibit an astonishing range of forms, colors, and sizes. They are broadly categorized into several groups based on their growth habits and appearance:

Fibrous Rooted, Tuberous, Rhizomatous and Cane begonias.

The versatility of begonias allows them to be used in various landscaping and decorative applications. Begonias can be planted in garden beds and borders to add color and texture. Their vibrant blooms and attractive foliage create visual interest and complement other plants. Container gardening with begonias is a popular choice for patios, balconies, and indoor spaces. Their trailing and cascading growth habits make them ideal for hanging baskets and window boxes. And Begonias make excellent houseplants, adding a touch of nature to interior spaces. Their unique foliage and compact growth make them suitable for tabletops, shelves, and windowsills.

Begonias are truly a gardener's delight, offering a kaleidoscope of colors, shapes, and textures that can transform any space into a vibrant oasis. Their rich history, diverse varieties, and relatively easy care requirements make them a beloved choice for plant enthusiasts of all levels. Whether adorning a garden bed, enhancing a container arrangement, or gracing an indoor setting, begonias continue to captivate with their beguiling beauty and timeless charm.

Spring Garden Preparation in Louisiana

By: Mandy Hatman

Louisiana's mild winters and early springs mean different timing than standard garden guides suggest. Gardeners should begin prepping in January/February for spring planting. Understanding our unique climate patterns helps create a more productive and resilient garden.

Early Spring Tasks

- Test soil when dry enough to work - our soils often need pH adjustment due to high rainfall
- Add organic matter to improve clay soil drainage; consider local sources like sugar cane bagasse
- Install raised beds if flooding is a concern; minimum 8" height recommended
- Clean and sharpen tools before the rush of planting
- Check irrigation systems for hurricane season preparedness
- Begin transition to heat-tolerant varieties

Start composting fresh material for summer soil amendments

Planting Timeline

- January-February: Direct seed cool season vegetables; protect from occasional freezes
- February-March: Transplant tomatoes and peppers; choose varieties bred for heat
- March-April: Plant heat-loving crops like okra and sweet potatoes
- Year-round: Succession plant heat-tolerant greens
- Plan fall garden during summer months

Consider quick-growing crops between seasons

Weather Considerations

Plan for unexpected freezes and early heat waves. Have row covers ready and create shade options for young plants. Consider hurricanes when planning trellises and structures. Create windbreaks for storm protection. Install rain gardens to manage heavy rainfall periods. Maintain good drainage pathways. Group plants by water needs for efficient irrigation.

Happy planting!



LOUISIANA IRIS PLANTING PROJECT NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

LPMGA has been fortunate to have received a grant for planting Louisiana irises. If you are interested in joining the project we will need volunteers to plant irises, research and find sources for each of the 5 species of Louisiana irises and to prep the irises and planting areas. The actual plantings will take place in October to November but researching where to purchase and ordering the plants will start very soon. If you have no experience planting irises, we will be happy to teach you.

If you are interested in joining in, please contact Louann McClelland-Long for more information. If you know of reputable sources for the 5 Louisiana iris species please pass that information on to Louann, it will be greatly appreciated.

Louann McClelland-Long
mglouann@gmail.com or (337) 501-7998

LSU AGRICULTURAL CENTER
 COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
 1010 Lafayette Street, Suite 325
 Lafayette, LA 70501-6884

for the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our Web site at www.lsuagcenter.com



MARCH 2025

JANUARY 2025 GENERAL MEETING,
 W. REGIONAL LIBRARY, SCOTT.
 MARCH 5TH, 2025

BOARD MEETING, IRA NELSON,
 MARCH 18TH

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.**

Please send newsletter items to:

Editor Mary Gladney newsletter@lpmga.org
 The Master Gardener program is a division of the
 Louisiana Cooperative Extension Agency
 1010 Lafayette Street/Suite 325,
 Lafayette, Louisiana 70501
 Telephone (337) 291-7090 Fax (337) 291-7099
 The AgCenter website is www.lsuagcenter.com

The Louisiana cooperative extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. Louisiana State University and A&M College, Louisiana Governing Bodies, Southern University, and the United States Department of Agriculture A State Partner in the Cooperative Extension System.

It is the policy of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability.

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.