

Tips for Gardeners

Fruits & Nuts

Pecans

It's pecan grafting time. Use the whip graft in March, and use the bark graft method in April and May.

Recommended varieties for Louisiana include Candy, Elliot, O'Conee, Summer and Melrose.



Spray pecans for the gall-forming disease just as leaves bud out in the spring. In late May, check the end shoots on pecan trees for nut set. If there is a respectable amount of pecans set on your tree(s), continue spraying with a recommended mix of fungicide and insecticide. Remember, pecans must be spray every 14-21 days, depending on weather. Spraying can be stopped in mid-September. Timing the pesticide application is critical. Contact your county agent for a pecan spray schedule and pest control publications.

Fruit Trees

Peaches, plums, nectarines, apples and pears need spraying regularly to prevent insects and diseases from taking their toll. You may want to consider this simplified spray schedule designed specifically homeowners.

Spray fruit trees at the following intervals:

- 1. Petal fall - when 75% of the blossom petals have fallen.**
- 2. Shuck split - when the leaf scale below the petals falls off, occurring about 10 to 14 days after petal fall.**
- 3. First cover spray - 10 to 14 days after shuck split**
- 4. Second cover spray - 10 to 14 days after first cover spray.**
- 5. Repeat second cover spray every 10 to 14 days up to within 10 days of harvest.**

One combination of insecticides and fungicides that can be used is carbaryl (Sevin) or malathion and captan or benomyl. These materials can be mixed together readily. Infestations of fruit-damaging insects may occur after you complete the above schedule. If so, use Sevin and spray as needed. If it rains within 48 hours after you spray, spray again immediately.

Buy insecticides as emulsifiable concentrates or as wettable powders. You may use either type to spray fruit trees, but the wettable powders are better.. Mix at the following rates for a 3-gallon mix:

Carbaryl (Sevin)	50% WP - 3 ½ Tbls. (Insecticide) 80% WP - 2 ½ Tbls.
Malathion	25% WP - 3 Tbls. (Insecticide)

Captan	50%WP - 4 ½ Tbls. (Fungicide)
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Figs

In late May or early June, figs begin to suffer from drought stress. They must receive frequent applications of water to reduce the possibility of fruit drop during the hot, dry weather of June. Apply water slowly over the root systems of figs and allow it to trickle for several hours. A heavy organic mulch will also reduce drought stress.



Blackberries

Rosette, or double blossom, is caused by a fungus. It is a serious disease of erect and trailing blackberries.



Buds on new canes are infected in the early summer, but no symptoms develop until the next spring. Numerous leafy sprouts (witches brooms) appear from infected buds in the early spring. These shoots are stunted, pale green, and later turn bronze. Flowers are pink, not white, and the petals are twisted. A whitish spore mass covers the pistils and stamens. Berries do not form from infected blooms, and those from non-infected blooms on the same cane will be small and of poor quality. Dig and discard infested plants.

Blueberry Pruning

Rabiteye blueberries are fast growers and can reach 6-8 feet in a few years. Prune back to 48 inches after harvest. Plants will have time to produce more fruiting wood before frost. Old, unproductive canes can also be cut back to ground level; leaving a maximum of eight to ten fruiting canes. Dormant pruning of rabiteye blueberries removes fruiting wood and will reduce yields. After-harvest pruning is best.