

Tips for Gardenerers

Landscape/ Ornamentals

Lantanas are good plants for Louisiana Landscapes

A perennial flowering plant that is becoming increasingly popular in Louisiana landscapes is lantana.

It's available in trailing and upright growth habits and will flower almost continuously throughout the summer. Lantana was the "Louisiana Select" plant last spring.

Many new lantana cultivars have been added in the last few years. Flower colors include white, light yellow, golden yellow, orange, pink, red and purple. Trailing lantanas are commonly available in purple (lavender), white, and gold flowers. Upright growing lantanas tend to have orange, red, and pink flowers. Recommended varieties include: New God (golden yellow), Silver Mound (white), Dallas Red (red), and Trailing Purple/Lavender.



Lantanas are great for landscape plant but also excel in containers. They perform well on a patio, or other areas, if full sun is available most of the day. Water as needed, and fertilize often when growing lantanas in containers.

Lantanas are usually planted in Louisiana beginning in mid-April and can be continued all the way through the summer. Garden centers have lantanas available in 3-inch or 4-inch pots. Plant containers of trailing lantanas this size on 188-inch centers, and upright lantanas on slightly wider spacing. If you buy gallon containers, plant these on 3- to 4-foot centers. Complete coverage of the planted area takes as little as six weeks.

Fertilize lantanas twice during the growing season, once at planting and again in mid-to-late summer. Spread a slow-release fertilizer over the planted area; follow label recommendations.

In addition to providing landscape color most of the year, lantanas attract butterflies. Try lantanas this year. You'll be pleased with the results.

Roses

Get roses off to a great start this spring by beginning a regular spray program for black spot control. Black spot is the most destructive disease of roses of Louisiana and looks like nearly circular black spots with frayed or margins. Fungicides containing benomyl, captan, mancozeb, chlorothalomid, thiophanate methyl or diphanate methyl plus mancozeb are recommended. Be



sure to follow label directions.



Caladiums

Caladium corms are planted in April. Wait until the soil warms and night temperatures are above 60 degrees F. Caladiums prefer a loose, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. They do well in shade with little light, and their colors of green-white, green-pink, or green-red fit into almost any landscape. Recommended varieties for Louisiana include Miss Muffet, Mumbo, Pink Gem, Red Frill, Seagull, Sunset, Sweet Heart, Fire Chief, Rosebud, White Queen, Candidum Junior, and Carolyn Wharton. Remember that caladiums grown in

sunny locations need plenty of water and additional nitrogen fertilizer. Select the strap-leaf varieties for sun tolerance. Caladiums are in short supply this spring so purchase early for best selection.

Pruning

Prune summer-flowering shrubs and evergreen shrubs in March and April. Spring-flowering shrubs (azaleas, spiraea, forsythia, flowering quince, hydrangea, etc) should be pruned after flowering. Always preserve the natural form of a plant when pruning, and have a reason to prune. Thin from within the center rather than shearing the plant, which destroys the natural form. Be sure to prune azaleas, if needed, by the end of June to preserve next year's flower buds.

Landscape Weed Control

One of the most challenging problems we face in our home landscapes is controlling weeds in flower beds. They compete for water, nutrients, light and space. In addition, they can harbor many insect pests. But the main problem with weeds is they spoil the appearance of the landscape.

Keys to proper weed control in landscapes are weed identification, ornamental plant identification and cultural control. Determine whether the weeds are a grass, broadleaf or sedge. Control is different from one to the other.

Make sure you know the names of all ornamental plants in your landscape beds. This is critical in determining what weed control measures you can use. Select a weed control product that will be effective in controlling the weed species without harming the landscape plants. The best weed control program uses all available recommended cultural practices. Prevention, manual control, mulching and competition will reduce weed pressure.

Prevention means to make sure beds are weed free before planting. Existing weeds should be removed. Many of us think that tilling will take care of any existing weed problems, but tilling actually can bring many weed seeds to the soil surface where fast growth will occur once conditions are favorable. Mulching after tilling, re-tilling lightly a week or two after the first tilling and using pre-emergent herbicides are recommended control options.

Most of us don't like it, but hand pulling weeds can accomplish a huge amount of control. Stay ahead of the weeds. Don't let the weeds stay ahead of you. Make

sure to pull any weeds before they go to seed.. Some produce more than 100,000 viable seeds per plant. Mulching is great for controlling or preventing weeds. Mulch bedding plants to a depth of 1 inch, shrubs to a depth of 2 inches and trees to a depth of 4 inches. Don't pile mulch around the trunk of plants. This leads to moisture accumulation and possible disease problems.

Vigorous ornamental plants are good competition for weeds. Make sure landscape plants are properly maintained. A solid canopy of foliage from ornamentals will inhibit and out-compete weeds for water, light and space.

Herbicides are an important and sometimes necessary portion of a weed control program. Grass control can be accomplished fairly readily in ornamental beds, while broadleaves and sedges are a more difficult challenge. For weed management, remember that cultural practices, weed identification and herbicides are the keys to success.

