



Master Gardener™

An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

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What in your life is calling you,
 When all the noise is silenced,
 The meetings adjourned....
 The lists laid aside,
 And the Wild Iris blooms
 By itself
 In the dark forest...
 What still pulls on your soul?

Rumi



Photo by M Blazek

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Stinging Nettle: A Curse Or A Blessing?

Stinging nettle grows worldwide in temperate and tropical climates. It is known by many common names: heartleaf stinging nettle, fireweed, firegrass, heartleaf nettle, bichu, common nettle, nettle worth, hokey pokey, devil's leaf, burning nettle, dwarf nettle, nettles ortie. Stinging nettle is in the *Urtica* genus. The word “*urtica*” comes from the latin word *uro* meaning to burn. Crazy to think that this noxious plant is not only considered a foraged edible, but it has also been used in traditional folk medicine for centuries, and its dried stem has been used to create woven cloth for over 6000 years. Each of these topics will be reviewed more fully later in this article. First, an introduction to the nettle.

Varieties in Louisiana

Urtica chamaedryoides is native to the southeastern United States and into Mexico. *Urtica dioica*, another stinging nettle variety, can also be found from southern Canada to Florida and west as far as Ohio. One variety of *Urtica dioica sp* is native to this area. Another *Urtica dioica sp* is native to Europe and Asia, introduced into the Americas long ago. A third variety of stinging nettle found locally is *Urtica urens*, also native to Europe. There are numerous other varieties world-wide, but these three can be found in and around Louisiana.

Description

Stinging nettle has tiny tubular hairs on the stems and leaves. The bulbous base of each hair is a sack containing histamines and acetocholines. If bare skin touches the stem or leaf of any *Urtica sp*, the tiny needle-like hairs detach, penetrate the skin, and inject these irritating compounds causing an immediate severe and painful rash.



U. chamaedryoides is a generally a low growing plant about four to 20 inches tall. The green stems branch out from the base. *U. dioica* is a taller plant at six to seven feet in height. *U. urens* is a smaller dwarf variety.



Stinging Nettle: A Curse Or A Blessing? continued

U of Florida Extension



The stems of nettle are green to red with numerous tiny stinging hairs. The leaves are heart-shaped, opposite, approximately an inch wide and one to three inches long. The leaf and stem size vary among species. The European varieties generally have larger leaves. The leaves resemble mint in all varieties. Unlike mint, nettle

leaves have numerous tiny stinging hairs. The flowers bloom March to November and are green to white in color. Native *Urtica sp* plants have both male and female flowers, each with four to five petals. In the European varieties the male and female flowers are on separate plants. Flowers are wind pollinated. The flowers are tiny, less than an inch in diameter, and not immediately noticeable.

Stinging nettle is an herbaceous plant. Some varieties are annuals that re-seed each year. Others are perennials with extensive networks of rhizomes reaching out across large areas. Stinging nettle can be found in sunny meadows, partial shade, moist wooded areas, rich moist soils, and in disturbed landscapes such as farmed fields. Some gardeners even intentionally place it in their pollinator gardens to attract beneficial insects. For instance, *U. chamaedryoides* is the host plant for the larvae of the Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*), the Eastern Comma (*Polygonia comma*), the Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*), and the Question Mark Butterfly (*Polygonia interrogationis*).



Painted Lady image from butterfly atlas, U of S Fla



Eastern Comma image from U of S Fla



Morning Cloak image from butterflyidentification.com



Question Mark image from butterflyidentification.com

Other stinging nettle varieties attract many other pollinator species. As mentioned previously, stinging nettle flowers are wind pollinated. The insects are attracted to stinging nettle as a host plant for egg laying and larval nourishment. Once the adults lay their eggs on the nettle, they will pollinate other plant species in the vicinity as they seek nectar to eat.

Stinging Nettle: A Curse Or A Blessing? continued

The Rash

Touching bare skin to stinging nettle will result in contact dermatitis. This can be an intensely burning, pruritic (itching) rash, one more reason to wear gloves when weeding. The reaction is immediate and lasts 24 to 48 hours. You may even think you grabbed a wasp or a buck moth caterpillar.



You can gently apply something sticky, like scotch tape or a hair removal wax strip, to grab the tiny nettles and pull them out. To reduce the symptoms of this rash, gently wash the area with cool water and soap. Warm to hot water may increase the absorption of irritating toxins and worsen symptoms. Other home remedies that may relieve the symptoms include applying aloe vera, cool compresses, or a paste made with water and baking soda. Try to refrain from scratching or rubbing the rash. Antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine or loratadine, may help itching. An over the counter (OTC) topical hydrocortisone cream can help relieve swelling. Avoid hot showers and extreme heat until the rash is better. The rash is not contagious to others who touch the affected skin. If it does not improve in several days, consult your healthcare provider. In extreme cases, exposure to stinging nettle can cause severe reactions in people who are highly allergic to its toxins. Swelling in the throat and difficulty breathing can occur. This is very rare but can happen shortly after exposure. Should this occur, call 911 for immediate assistance.

Foraged Edible

First... a disclaimer: I have never foraged nor eaten any variety of stinging nettle. So, the following information is second-hand for the adventurous gourmand. I have heard that nettle tastes like mild spinach. The leaves and tender stems are the edible parts of the plant but can never be eaten raw. Harvest only young leaves and stems in spring. Larger and older plants are too fibrous. To deactivate the toxins and stinging parts, the leaves and stems should be boiled or dried. Nettles can be eaten in stews, soups, and as a stir fry. Tea can be brewed using dried nettle leaves. Stinging nettle is high in protein, iron, and Vitamins A and C.



Stinging Nettle: A Curse Or A Blessing? continued

Medicinal Properties

Folklore stories claim that pulling stinging nettle by the roots while calling out a sick person's name can drive away that person's fever. While that may be stretching its medicinal capabilities, stinging nettle has been used for centuries as an herbal folk treatment for allergies (like hay fever), urinary tract infections, arthritis, internal bleeding, nosebleeds, anemia, enlarged prostate, poor circulation, enlarged liver, diabetes, diarrhea, asthma, cancer, heart failure, and may other diseases. It is promoted as a general tonic for prevention of aging and baldness. Both the leaves and roots have been used for medicinal purposes. Stinging nettle is officially listed in the European pharmacopoeia as an alternative medicine.

However, in the published medical studies, the evidence is insufficient, weak, non-existent and conflicting as to whether nettle is an effective treatment for any of those conditions. In other words, stinging nettle has not been scientifically proven by modern medical standards to be effective in treating those diseases.

However, there may be some efficacy in nettle, taken alone or in conjunction with other botanicals, slightly lowering blood sugar. Its effect on hemoglobin A1c is unclear. Hemoglobin A1c is a test to measure long-term blood sugar control in people with diabetes.

Topical or oral preparations of stinging nettle (alone and with other medications) may improve arthritis symptoms. It does not slow progression of arthritic diseases. It only improves symptoms and may reduce the need for pain medications.



Of course, it is never wise to treat a serious condition without medical advice. Self-prepared concoctions and unprescribed over the counter (OTC) preparations should never be used to treat serious disease without advice from your healthcare provider. Before starting any alternative treatment ask your healthcare provider to check for drug



interactions between the natural medicine or OTC and any other medications you may be taking. There are known drug interactions between stinging nettle and other medications, including prescriptions, other herbals, supplements, and OTCs.

Stinging Nettle: A Curse Or A Blessing? continued

Natural Fiber

The fiber in the mature stems of stinging nettle is called ramie when it is used in cloth production. It is like hemp and flax fibers which also come from plants. It was once called grass cloth, grass linen, or china grass. For thousands of years ramie has been woven into clothing, sailcloth, fishing nets, fire hoses, hats, and paper. The cloth has been found in ancient mummy tombs in Egypt. Ramie is still used today in the production of natural fiber cloth and can be found on the labels of many clothing items. It is resistant to bacteria, mildew, rotting, and insect attack. As a natural fiber it is cool, absorbent, dyes fairly easily, and resists stains. Ramie fabric is strong, durable, and does not shrink. So it can be laundered at home. Ramie is commonly blended with cotton and other natural fibers for today's fashion industry.



So.... stinging nettle... is it friend or foe? A blessing or a curse? A lowly noxious weed to be eradicated from our yards or a delicious treat for pollinator larvae and humans that should be welcomed in our gardens?

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Jamie Blazek
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Florida Parishes Juvenile Detention Center A STMGA Project



Photo by Christine Foster

Master gardener volunteers and LSU Agcenter County Agent, Will Afton, began working on a new STMGA project on March 16, 2021 at the Florida Parishes Juvenile Detention Center in Covington. The work began with weeding an existing blueberry patch and the placement of new pine straw. Several of the facility residents assisted in the clean-up. As the work progressed Will and our master gardeners educated the residents on the care and fertilization of blueberry plants. A new compost pile was started. Future plans include the installation of a 30 by 50 foot raised garden area and continued education of the youth residents on building, planting, and caring for an edible garden.



Photo by Christine Foster

Many thanks to those who volunteered their time and blueberry expertise. Anyone interested in helping with this project can contact Christine Foster.

Christine Foster
Master Gardener
FPJDC Project Coordinator

Where Insects Go During Winter

Humans survive the winter months by dressing warm, staying by the fireplace, and drinking hot chocolate. Insects have more creative ways of surviving winter, even the mild winters of Louisiana. Insects have survived for millions of years due to some unique adaptations: migration, overwintering, freeze avoidance and tolerance, and diapause. This article will review these survival adaptations in insects.



Image from dreamstime.com

Migration

As master gardeners we all have heard about the migration patterns of the monarch butterfly. Each fall millions of monarch butterflies leave their summer breeding grounds in the United States and Canada. They travel over 3000 miles to overwinter in southwest Mexico. It is the longest migration route of any animal. As the days get shorter and the temperature drops, the monarchs abandon their breeding and feeding grounds to start their southward flight. Once in Mexico, the monarch searches out the oyamel fir trees that are only located high in the mountains in certain parts of Mexico.

When the temperature begins to rise in Mexico, the monarchs begin their migration north. The flight from Mexico to Canada can take four to five generations to complete and another four to five generations to return back to Mexico.



Image from fieldmuseum.org

Overwintering In Place

Many insects overwinter where they live as adults. They can survive by hiding in tree bark, leaf litter, or even your house. Leaves and other litter are essential shelter for hibernating bumble bee queens, and the larvae of numerous butterfly and moth species. Leaf and mulch piles also attract lady bugs. So please leave those leaves! That way the lady bugs will overwinter in your yard and will be ready to attack aphids in spring.



Image from garden.org

Where Insects Go During Winter, continued



Tent caterpillars spend the winter as eggs laid in a mass around a small branch of a tree. This will keep the eggs safe during the winter and provide larvae plenty of food when spring comes. The caterpillars hatch, then feast on the new leaves.

Insects, such as the fruit flies, spend winter as pupa inside galls which are round balls or bumps on the stem of plants. House flies, due to their small size, are capable of crawling into cracks and crevices for warmth and protection. These insects reproduce prolifically. Their survival rate is increased by their sheer numbers.

Beetles, such as the Japanese beetle, will spend the winter in its larval form as a grub which will bury itself below the frost line.

The female grasshopper will protect her eggs by burying them deep in the ground. Many butterflies and moths will also bury eggs deep into the soil.

Freeze Avoidance

Freeze avoidance occurs when insects are exposed to temperatures below the freezing point of their body fluids. Some insects have devised methods to avoid freezing by a process called dry hibernation. They expel the food and liquid from their bodies eliminating any liquid that would freeze. Some insects replace liquid in their bodies with glycerol, a type of natural antifreeze.



Image from carolinahoneybees.com

Some species of collembola (springtails) tolerate extreme cold by actually shedding part of their gut during molting, eliminating liquids that could freeze.

Honeybees clump together in the hive to keep the brood nest warm. They move their wings to circulate the heat produced by their bodies from the metabolism of honey they have consumed. Beekeepers know they must leave enough honey in each hive in the fall to ensure the bees' survival throughout winter. If the stored honey is insufficient, the beekeeper must provide a sugar syrup alternative during cold winter months.

Where Insects Go During Winter, continued

Freeze Tolerance

There are some species that can tolerate being frozen solid in the winter and then thaw out in the spring. The painted turtle can tolerate body fluids dropping to temperatures well below freezing and can endure partial freezing. The Upis beetle will freeze at minus 19° F and can endure temperatures as low as minus 100° F. The banded Woolly Bear Larvae can survive the cold temperatures of the Arctic.



The bacterium called the Resurrection bug has survived 120,000 years buried three kilometers deep in the Greenland ice sheet. Scientists believe that its tiny size (0.9 micrometers by 0.4 micrometers) allows it to move between tiny ice veins as it searches for edible debris. The oldest specimen extracted from ice was about eight million years old.

Diapause (Hibernating)

While undergoing their unique methods of cold tolerance, some insects enter a state of dormancy called diapause. Diapause is a period of suspended development which can occur at any life stage depending on the species of insect. The pesky mosquito does not simply die off during the colder months. How they survive differs between species. The mosquito that is responsible for transmitting the Sika virus overwinters in egg stage. As temperatures begin to drop below 50 degrees, the adult females deposit their final batch of eggs in a water-holding area. The adult will eventually die, while the newly deposited eggs enter a state of diapause that suspends their development during the cold months. Aquatic insects have different strategies for winter survival. These insects do not survive as adults on land but as eggs under the water. Insects such as stoneflies, mayflies, and dragonflies will overwinter as nymphs in ponds and streams, often under the ice. They feed and grow all winter and emerge as adults in the early spring.



Insects are well hidden in winter, but there are several locations where they can be found. Ladybugs practice communal hibernation under mulch by stacking one on top of the other to share heat and buffer themselves from winter temperatures. Insects in all stages, adults, eggs, larvae, can be found in the ground, in trees, in water, and in cracks and crevasses. Next time a child asks you where insects go in winter, you can share these interesting methods. Then, go look for some!

Barry Pierce
Master Gardener

STMGA Field Trip To Northlake Nature Center

On April 8, 2021 STMGA members took a field to trip to the Northlake Nature Center in Mandeville to observe native iris in full bloom.



Photo by Dorothy Delaune



Photo by Dorothy Delaune



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere



Photo by Mary Kathryn Villere

For the Love of Fairies

Directly under an old crape myrtle and right next to the sidewalk in my front yard is a campground. It is miniature in size. Currently a gypsy wagon, a teepee and a retro-campervan all coexist near one another with mounds of bright lemon sedum defining the space. There is a tiny door that may or may not open to a tiny dwelling inside the tree. A glass pebbled pathway leads from the door to a wishing well. An adjacent play area has a slide and a picnic table. Nearby is a fire pit for taking the chill out of the night air.

It is all there exclusively for the enjoyment of fairies ... and those who believe in them.



Photo by B Stanga

I love the idea of fairies. The idea that beautiful, yet somewhat mischievous nature spirits, flit around our gardens sipping nectar along with the bees and butterflies. Adorning themselves with colorful petals and soft leaves. It is well known that fairies love flowers. That is reason enough for me to make sure that I have a variety of blooming plants for their pleasure. You just never know who may come to visit your garden and in what mood they might be. It is always best to try to please fairies. You do not want to be on their bad side.



Photo by B Stanga

For me, it is the possibility of seeing one that serves as my prime motivation for gardening. I see the evidence of their existence all the time. The ring of mushrooms left behind after a moonlit night of frolicking. The acorn cups, now empty and discarded. The beds of moss, a bit disheveled. All of these are food for my imagination and have me wondering, what have those illusive beings been doing?



Photo by B Stanga



Image from sturdyforcommonthings.com



Photo by B Stanga

For The Love Of Fairies, continued

Cicely Mary Barker published a collection of drawings and poems about flower fairies in her native England nearly a hundred years ago. Her images, with botanical accuracy, are of young, childlike beings that resemble the flower or plant after which they are named. While many of her favorite species of flowers are not found in our south Louisiana landscape, some are. Her poems are a delight for gardeners. I particularly like her tree fairies. She writes of the Willow Fairy:



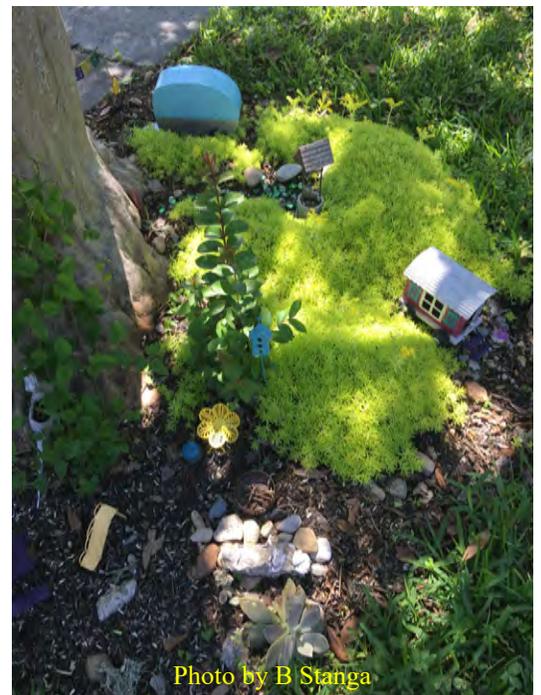
*By the peaceful stream or the shady pool
I dip my leaves in the water cool.*

*Over the water I lean all day,
Where the sticklebacks and the minnows play.*

*I dance, I dance, when the breezes blow,
And dip my toes in the stream below.*

I am convinced that we have swamp fairies here—perhaps they steer little boats made from cypress bark. Surely there must be a special Live Oak fairy, old and wise and dressed in skirts of Spanish moss.

If you do not want to admit out loud that you may believe in fairies but need a convenient excuse to try to attract them, just set up a little garden. Say it is for the grandchildren. There are loads of ideas on-line for containers using broken clay pots, bird baths, tea cups, fishbowls ... nearly anything. Keep a close lookout while on walks for interesting rocks, tiny pine cones, or seeds. Get out your glue gun and make a table or bridge from twigs. Incorporate plants with minuscule leaves, for example, thyme. Or try one of the many succulent varieties out there. A Bonsai tree would make a terrific centerpiece for your fairy designs. Or do like I did ... put a tiny garden at the base of a tree that has a beautiful trunk with hollowed places.



For The Love Of Fairies, continued



And do not forget to rearrange your display frequently... to delight the fairies ... and the neighborhood children alike.

Children have an eye for the little things that adults overlook. Creative young minds are such a joy to share in the enjoyment of the great outdoors. Fairy lore is a really great way to engage and interact ... activities we have not had enough of this past year.

It is easy to get started on your fairy garden. Ask yourself, if you were a fairy, where would you live? What would you wear? What would you do all day? What would you need? Where would you go? Who would be your friend?

Have fun with your fairies. Keep them happy ... and let me know if you see one.



Billie Stanga
Master Gardener

Roselle

Hibiscus sabdariffa

Last year a friend and I exchanged some plants. She gave me turmeric and milk weed, and I gave her Stokes Asters. I planted mine and they grew but, one day, looking at the milkweed, I realized it was not like any I had ever seen. A quick phone call and a photo later I was informed that I was growing Roselle. I collected some data from my friend and then researched the plant. If you have never grown Roselle, you might be interested in this beautiful and edible plant.

There are more than three hundred species of *Hibiscus* distributed in tropical and subtropical regions around the world which are mostly used as ornamental plants. Research has shown that some species of *Hibiscus* have certain medicinal properties. *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, commonly known as Roselle is one of these species. (Singh, Khan, Hailemariam, 2017)

True Roselle is *Hibiscus sabdariffa* from the family Malvaceae. Other names for this plant include sorrel, Queensland jelly plant, jelly okra, lemon bush and Florida cranberry. Both the leaf and the calyx are edible. The flowers are typical of the hibiscus.



Roselle, grown in India, Africa, Australia, South America, Hawaii, and Jamaica, was eventually cultivated in Florida in the early 1900's. There are two main types: the altissima variety is grown for its jute-like fiber and the sabdariffa for food and pharmaceutical products.

Roselle is a subtropical to tropical plant and sensitive to frost. It is an annual unless it is growing in a tropical field where it can self-seed. It is easily propagated using the seeds inside each calyx. When you harvest the red calyx, the seeds are easy to capture. Cut open each calyx and a white encapsulated seed ball pops out (about the size of a marble). Inside the ball is your seed harvest. The calyx is the Roselle fruit. Once the seed ball is removed, the calyx is edible and ready for immediate use. It may be saved by drying, cooking and preserving.

Roselle

Hibiscus sabdariffa, continued

If you grow any type of hibiscus, you know they provide season long color and beautiful blooms. The young leaves of the Roselle plant taste like citrus and can be used in salads, cooked as greens or added to other vegetables for flavor. The Roselle plants have the added benefit of its red, flavorful calyces. The red calyx can be boiled to make hibiscus tea or simmered in simple syrup that can flavor other drinks or jellies.



Photo by M Padgett



Photo by M Padgett

In India, Africa, and Mexico, all above ground parts of the Roselle plant are valued in native medicine. Infusions of the leaves or calyces are regarded as diuretic, choleric, febrifugal, and hypotensive. In Guatemala, Roselle “ade” is a favorite remedy for the after effects of drunkenness. (Morton, J. 1987)

Tips for growing Roselle Hibiscus from “Growing in the Garden.com” :

- The seeds germinate best at soil temperature between 75-85 degrees.
- The seeds do well with direct sow. Or you can grow in pots and transplant at 3-4 inches high.
- Plant between March and May.
- Harvest between October and November.
- Plant in well-drained, fertile soil in the sun.
- Space plants three to six inches apart

Harvest the Roselle calyces after the bloom fades and the flower falls off. The calyx will be about 1 inch diameter. Harvesting calyces early and often increases the overall yield of the plant. Save the seeds! To use the calyx, you must expel the seed pod, so saving is easy. You can shake the seeds from the dry pod and store them in a dark, cool location. Now you are ready for next year and you will have plenty to share with a friend.

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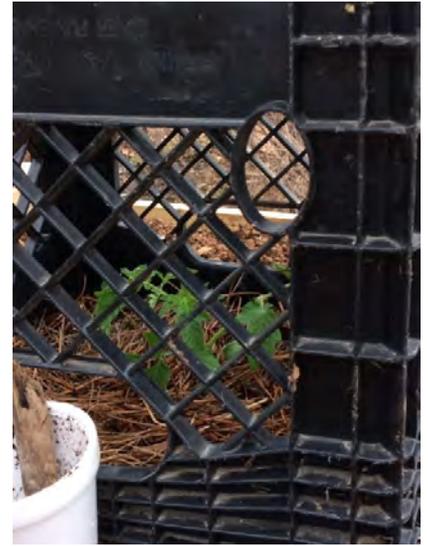
Mimi Padgett
Master Gardener
Vegucators' Chair

Tips For Supporting Tomato Plants And More

I have been growing vegetables for 55 years and have been experimenting with various options for plant support structures and general gardening techniques. In this article I will share some of my experiences, successes and preferences.

Growing tomato plants

My young tomato seedlings are planted in a raised garden bed. I harden the tender plants in the beds under milk crates turned upside-down. I grow the tomatoes in a raised bed because I have problems with wilt whenever I try growing them in the ground.



Staking and supporting tomato plants

Three common methods are 1) a stake for each plant tying them on with soft stretchy strips of fabric, 2) tomato cages, and 3) a cable run between two high posts which are six to eight feet tall. The tomatoes are planted in a row between the poles and directly under the cable. Then strings hanging from the cable are tied to each plant from above. Unlike cages this method allows plant movement and minimizes breaks.

With method 1 and 3, it was a full-time job for me to keep up with tying all the limbs and keeping them from breaking. The plants grew so quickly, I struggled to keep pace with their growth. With method 2, even though I kept increasing the size of my tomato cages, my plants always seemed to outgrow them. Then end up trailing on the ground or breaking off where they hung over the wire.

Two years ago I came up with a system that works well for me: I purchase nylon garden netting with five-by-five inch openings. I run three layers horizontally across my tomato bed. The first layer is about 1 foot above the soil surface

The next layer is about 15 inches above the first one.

I tried metal fencing (cattle fencing) layers in the past but did not like the rigidity or hole size. Nylon garden netting is easy to find on-line.



Tips For Supporting Tomato Plants And More, continued

The third layer of netting for tomato plants is about 15 inches above the second layer. The top layer of netting is about three and a half feet above the surface of the soil, or four to five feet from the ground/path level because of the raised beds.

Using this support system has several advantages:

No tying and no stem breakage.

Harvesting and weeding is easier while I reach horizontally between the support layers to access the weeds and the ripe tomatoes.

The layers allow for good air flow.

I place t-posts at the corners of the bed and every 10 feet or so along the length of the bed. I use eight-foot posts with about one foot buried and seven feet exposed above ground.

If you look closely in some of the tomato pictures you can see my drip irrigation system that waters the roots and avoids getting the leaves wet.



I am happy with this system because I have healthier tomatoes and less labor. The only thing I need to do is occasionally direct the stems and leaves up and over the next layer of net as the plant grows.



Tips For Supporting Tomato Plants And More, continued

Supporting pepper plants, pole beans, and cucumbers

This same system works really well for pepper plants but you generally only need two layers of netting.

I have also used one layer of netting successfully with my bush beans. It makes it easier to find and harvest the beans as the mature plants tend to get floppy. An added advantage is the support minimizes contact between the plants and the ground.

I can use the netting placed vertically to support cucumbers and pole beans.



The post structure will also support shade cloth during the hot summer months, as well as, support frost protection in early spring.

I hope my fellow master gardeners find these tips useful. To successful gardening!

All photos were taken in this article by L Steffee.

Laura Steffee
Master Gardener
Vegucator

Beauty on the Road



I can not help but enjoy the wildflowers on the roadsides. I cringe when I see the mowers come out! In spring, the irises, butterweed, lyre leaf sage, and daisy fleabane give our roadways color and provide nectar for butterflies and bees. Clover ... crimson and white ... are also lovely this time of year. Even though they are native to Europe, they are beneficial to bees. Of course, these are just a few of the numerous flowers you may see on the roadsides. If you, too like the flowers, please join me in asking the highway department to notice them as well.



According to the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, "the Louisiana DOTD Wildflower Program is enlisting the help of the Master Gardener Programs and enthusiasts . . . to catalog the various wildflowers on the roadside."



To access the form, go to <http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov>. Then enter "wildflowers" in the search box. Click on the "Wildflower Locations Form."

This is an easy way to bring attention to the flowers that make our routine drives a little more interesting and a lot more beautiful. I hope you will try it and save the beauty on the road!

Monica Pierce
Master Gardener

Slidell Branch Library Herb And Pollinator Garden

The Slidell Branch Library Herb and Pollinator Garden Committee held a work day on Monday, March 29, 2021. Members trimmed away much of the previous summer's growth as well as some freeze damage. The garden is looking attractive again and is ready to be refreshed with new herbs and other plants that support essential pollinators. Many thanks to those who helped on Monday, as well as, those who came out on previous workdays. Thanks to Cathy Wills who shared some surplus herb and flower seed packets!

We look forward to organizing another Herb Fest when the library is ready for public events. Anyone who is interested in helping with this committee in any way should contact Janet Schexnayder at janet.schex@gmail.com



Photo by J Schexnayder

Tassie Wahl, Cathy Wills, Linda Franzo and Janet Schexnayder working on the library garden.

Janet Schexnayder
Master Gardener
Slidell Farmers Market STMGA Chair

The Fontainebleau State Park Project Of The St. Tammany Master Gardener Association

After our well-attended March kick-off meeting via Zoom, the Fontainebleau State Park Project committee members hit the ground running and started digging. These are pictures of the first two workdays: April 9, and April 23, 2021.

The first workday was on the garden surrounding the signpost at the entrance to the Park. This area has been a maintenance problem in the past because it is in full sun, relies mainly on natural rainwater, and have had foraging deer dine on some previous plantings. Survivors from the original plantings were supplemented with Pink Indian Hawthorne (*Rhaphiolepis indica*), Red Sky Lantana (*Lantana camara*), Redleaf Loropetalum (*Loropetalum chinense f. rubrum*) and a beautiful perennial Blue Salvia (*Salvia guarantica*) to contrast with the pink and red. The new plantings are both drought tolerant and deer resistant.



Sam Weigel, Kris Majnerick, Sharon Hassinger, Kim Burt, Patti Zebrick, and LSU County Agent, Will Afton begin re-landscaping work on the Fontainebleau State Park Entrance.

The Fontainebleau State Park Project, continued

The second workday was devoted to the areas surrounding the Ranger's Station where visitors must check-in to enter the Park. We planted a Shumardii Oak, known as swamp red oak (*Quercus shumardii*) in the grassy island near the front of the station. A water oak (*Quercus nigra*), a fast growing red oak, was placed in the grassy area to the rear. We also planted native Louisiana Iris in the backwash of a stream near the picnic table. Swamp sunflowers (*Helianthus angustifolius*) and tall Mexican petunias (*Ruellia brittoniana*) were planted to the rear of the Station.



Kim Burt, Sam Weigel, and Kris Majnerick planting native iris near the Ranger's Station on day two.



The long-term goal of the project is to add more native plants and trees, especially further into the park. Eventually, we intend to introduce an informational tagging system, and initiate a pollinator garden near the campground. There are three workdays planned in May: the 3rd, 15th, and the 24th. Any master gardener interested in helping can contact Kim Burt.

Kim Burt
Master Gardener
Vegucator
FBSP Project Chair

Northshore Garden And Plant Sale 2021

The 2021 Plant Sale has been scheduled for Friday, May 28 and Saturday May 29, 2021 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the St. Tammany Parish Fairgrounds. The whole committee is so excited that we are having the Plant Sale this year. We will be following all the State, Parish and LSU safety guidelines including wearing masks and social distancing depending on what is in place at that time. Be prepared for warmer weather than we usually have during March.



Photo from STMGA website

Thursday, May 27, 2021 from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm we will need volunteers to set up. Come anytime, but we definitely need some volunteers to be there later in the afternoon to help unload late arriving vendors. As always, we need volunteers to take everything down after 4:00 pm on Saturday (and you get double hours for staying).

Currently, we have 31 vendors confirmed and 5 or so others that we are hoping will join us. It is great to have so many that want to participate this year. I think we will have a lot of interest from the public as well.

The publicity committee is busy getting the word out through newspaper ads and articles, on-line platforms through the Advocate and Fox 8, radio spots, calendars, Facebook, STMGA website and the Causeway signs. But we need your help! The number one advertisement for the Plant Sale is you, our Master Gardeners. Please tell your family and friends, your garden clubs, your book clubs, and neighbors. Send the flyer to people you know and post it on your Facebook page. If you took flyers and a poster at the meeting, please distribute them around the area. We need your help! If you need flyers or posters, please let me know.

We will have a hospitality area for the vendors and our Master Gardeners with coffee, water, and wrapped snacks. If you would like to bring some wrapped snacks, please let Deb Melancon or Barbara Briggs know what you want to bring and when you will have them available. Because of the restrictions about social distancing, we are not going to be able to “hang out” at the hospitality area for long. We want to lead by example so keep that in mind.

We all appreciate the great care you have taken with all the plants you propagated last year for the Backyard Plant Booth. Just a few more weeks and you can clear them out! These can be dropped off on Thursday anytime or Friday morning. Please label them and, if you have a picture of the plant, that is helpful.

Northshore Garden And Plant Sale 2021, continued

We will be hosting a reception for the vendors and Master Gardeners at 4:00 pm Thursday. If you would like to bring something for that, let Deb Melancon or Barbara Briggs know.



Will has lined up a terrific slate of speakers. The topics include organic gardening, growing figs, hummingbirds, growing and preparing tea, and composting. We will not have a tent. The chairs will be spaced six feet apart in the rodeo area. When in the vicinity, please be as quiet as possible during the talks. In addition to the scheduled speakers, Mimi Padgett is working on getting several table talks during each shift.

We began signing up volunteers at the membership meeting in April and had a terrific response. Several areas are all booked, but there are still plenty of places for you to volunteer. Check out MoM each Monday for the list of areas that still need some help. Contact Trish Andermann (tandermann@gmail.com) to let her know where you would like to volunteer. Additionally, we will have sign ups at the May membership meeting.

If you are in the Class of 2020, you will need to pick up a green badge. These will be available at the May meeting and during set-up. Once you volunteer, you will need the 2021 insert to go into the badge in order to enter the Plant Sale for free. We will have these at the May meeting, at set-up, and also at the gate with Janice Binnings the days of the Plant Sale.

One more thing. This is the last year I can chair the Plant Sale, so we need someone to step up to do this for 2022. I will be happy to talk to you about what it entails and will be available to help you navigate through it in the coming year. I have had so much fun with this and I know you will also!

Everyone is excited about our event so I hope you will come out and volunteer. We will make it the best one ever!



Julie Deus
Master Gardener
Plant Sale Chair

Impatiens – Still Making History

Mr. Claude Hope, known in plant lover circles as the “father of impatiens,” was exactly that. He is the reason we have come to know impatiens as one of the most popular bedding plants among home gardeners. Mr. Hope first noticed the plant back in the 1940s while traveling through Central America where it grew in the shade provided by fence rows. He crossed those wild, orange-colored flowers again and again until a stable plant was produced. Over the next couple of decades, Mr. Hope released the Elfin series, the first impatiens flowers introduced to the world. The Super Elfin and Dazzlers series followed and became extremely popular in home gardens for the next several decades.

Everything was going as planned with the introduction of impatiens to the gardening world until 2003. An impatiens plant was diagnosed with symptoms of a downy mildew in England. The same pathogen started showing up in impatiens in the United States around 2012. The pathogen is classified as an oomycete, which is the same classification for *Phytophthora infestans*, the organism also responsible for Phytophthora Root Rot.



Impatiens Downy Mildew (IDM) has been wreaking havoc on Louisiana landscapes ever since. There was not much resistance in the available plants. It got so bad that plant nurseries stopped carrying the old impatiens varieties that were released by Mr. Claude Hope.

Fast forward to 2021 and plant breeding programs have made major progress in resistance to IDM. Currently, the LSU Agcenter is highlighting one of these new releases.

Impatiens – Still Making History, continued

The Beacon series of impatiens marks a new milestone in the history of impatiens plant propagation. IDM practically ended the production of impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) plants back in the 2010s. Driven by this, Ball Horticulture introduced Beacon Impatiens to the gardening world. The plants were released to researchers in 2020 and positive data was collected throughout the country.



Image of Beacon Impatiens from LSU Agcenter Super Plant Facebook page

These big, beautiful, and robust plants have good resistance to IDM and instantly fill the role of color provider in shady Louisiana gardens. The plants themselves grow to similar sizes, about a foot and a half tall and slightly narrower in width. Currently, there are seven colors available which include bright red, violet shades, salmon, coral, orange, white, and rose.



Image of Beacon Impatiens from lsuagcenter.edu

So, if you failed at growing impatiens in years past, give Beacon Impatiens a try. After all, it is a winner of the Louisiana Super Plant Program in 2021.

We stand by and encourage their incorporation into gardens across the state.

Will Afton
County Agent
LSU AgCenter



Brood X

There has been a lot of news coverage lately about Brood X (or Brood Ten). But what is so special about a bunch of locusts? First, Brood X is several species of periodical cicada, not locust. Locusts are migratory, voracious grasshoppers with chewing mouthparts that can decimate crops. Cicadas are of a different order of insects with sucking mouthparts that feed mostly as nymphs on the sugars in underground tree roots. Annual cicadas are green, emerge each summer, and serenade us at dusk. Periodical cicadas live underground for years and

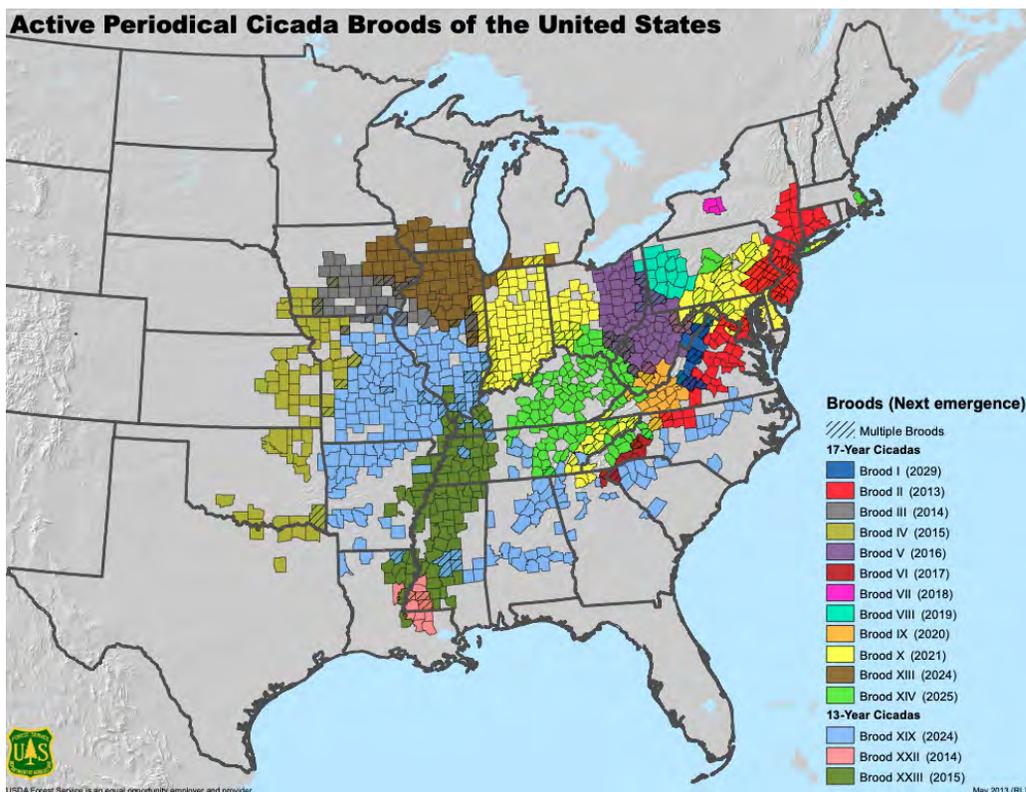
Periodical Cicadas



Image from scientificamerican.com

emerge after spending all that time in the soil. Some emerge every 13 years, others every 17 years. These periodical cicadas are referred to as broods. Broods are specific to a local area. There may be more than one species of cicada in a brood. Technically there are 17 broods, but some broods have not been seen for a while. Each year a different brood emerges. Brood X cicadas are known for their bright red eyes.

Brood XXII is the periodical cicada group that emerges in southeast Louisiana every 13 years, last seen in 2014. Two other periodical broods emerge further north in Louisiana, Brood XXIII (a 13-year brood last seen in 2015) and Brood XIX (also a 13-year brood last seen in 2011).



The US Forestry Service map showing all cicada broods, year of emergence, and territory.

Brood X, continued

Brood X contains three species, is the largest of all cicada broods, and was last seen in 2004. It is due to emerge in the mid-Atlantic states in the spring of 2021. When the ground temperature reaches around 64 degrees F, trillions of immature cicadas will dig themselves out of the ground. After crawling into the trees they will spend a week maturing into adults. They do not bite or sting and are not poisonous. In fact, some people eat young cicadas as a stir fry or deep fried.

Adult male cicadas begin a very loud concert to attract females to mate. The sound is created by contracting an organ called the tymbal. Then the sound is amplified by their hollow body. Their calls can get up to 90-100 decibels. That is as loud as a lawnmower! The female clicks her wings together to indicate she is interested in mating. After her eggs are fertilized, she cuts a deep slit in a tree branch and lays her eggs. Mature trees are unharmed by underground nymphs and the egg laying adults. Small, immature trees may be harmed by too many egg deposits. Small trees can be protected with netting.

Individual cicadas live four to six weeks after which they die and fall to the ground. There the bodies become food for small predators or decompose adding nutrients to the soil.

After four to six weeks the newly hatched cicada nymphs fall from the tree, dig into the ground, and remain there for another 17 years feeding on the sugars in the tree roots and tilling underground soil.

The Brood X phenomena will begin in May and last until late June, early July. It will occur from northern Georgia to New York and into the midwestern states.

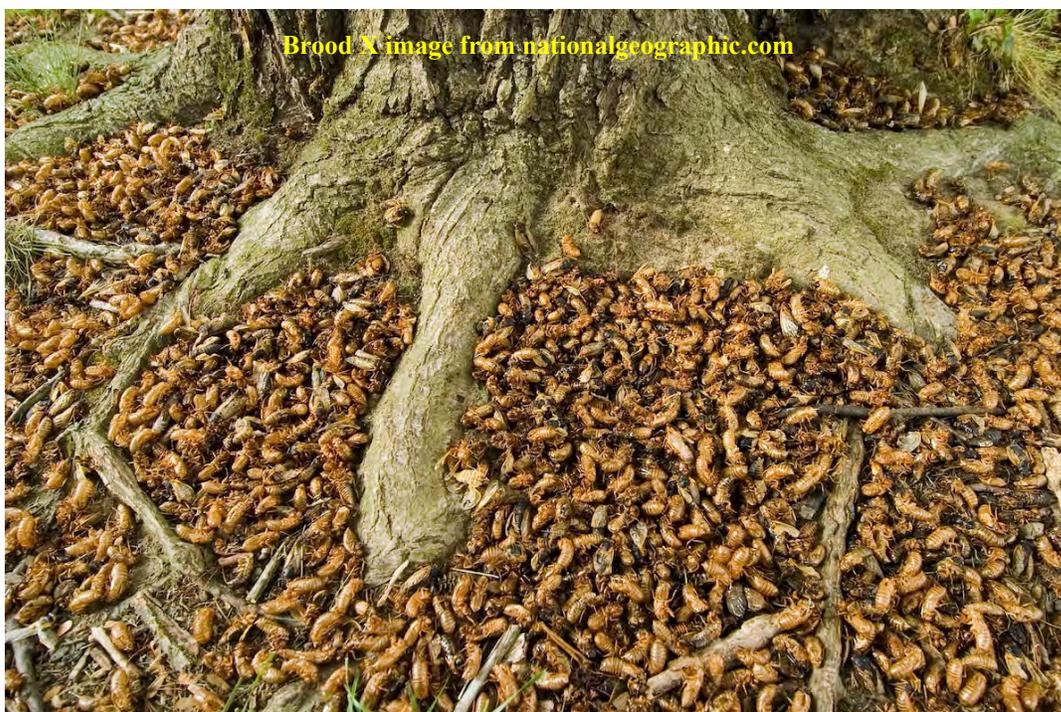
So, although we may not get to see the wonder of Brood X here in Louisiana, it may be worth a trip north to check out the cacophony. After all ... they will not emerge again until 2038.



Click below or copy and paste the web address to view an interesting BBC video by Sir David Attenborough on Brood X:

Amazing Cicada Life Cycle/Sir David Attenborough's Life In the Undergrowth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjLiWy2nT7U>

Brood X, continued



References:

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