



this quarter...

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President's Message



Happy holidays! Here we are at the end of the year and the time has come for me to hand over the reins to new leadership. I know that our organization is in the best of hands and I wish much success to our President-Elect, Ed Durham, Vice President-Elect, Lynn Burke and board members. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving the organization during my term.

We've had many challenges over the past couple of years, a troubling start in 2020 with Covid and all that came with it. But despite the obstacles, we've managed to regroup and reconnect with each other. We're meeting monthly once again and, through much dedication and hard work, we've had two successful fundraising events this year! Thank you to our committees and all the MG's who have worked tirelessly on these projects.

As you all know, the big news of recent is that the NWLA Master Gardener's have a new home! We are in the process of moving to our new location at LSU's AgCenter's Red River Research Station located in Bossier City. Although the change may be difficult, and take some adjustment at first, to be physically located at one of the extension offices offers many benefits and opportunities for us to grow. By the time you read this, I'm hoping that the move will be completed and we can begin our new adventure. I thank all who've *rolled up their sleeves* and have worked so hard to help relocated us...it's been a huge undertaking!

In closing, I must say that I'm looking forward to a little slower pace now that my term as president is over. I wouldn't have wanted to miss the experience for anything though! If any of you need my help, I'll still be around. See you at the December meeting.



LSU AgCenter's Red River Research Station and the NWLA Master Gardener's new home base.

Hope you all have a very Merry Christmas,
Sadie Bolyer, NWLA MG President

NWLA Master Gardeners -



Looking Forward



The year is winding down, the holidays are upon us and most of our gardens are going to sleep, (*for a short while*).

While enjoying this small break from yardwork, I'm thinking of all the possibilities that the new year will bring our organization and also, reflecting on the successes of the previous two years. I'd like to thank Sadie Bolyer for her great leadership as NWLA MG President and also for her

friendship. What a challenge to lead us through all the uncertainty of the Covid-19 crisis, and she has done it with style and grace. THANK YOU Sadie!

Our move to the Red River Research Station is well underway and a whole new set of challenges are facing us to make a smooth transition to our new home. *New offices, new storage facilities, new greenhouse space, some new committee leaders, new phone numbers, new, new, new!* It's going to be new fun, new opportunities, and new results. Come out and be part of it!

As president-elect, I'm looking forward to serving this great organization in the coming year and promise to do my best to lead us through the challenges ahead...I'm anxious to hear your suggestions about our future or any of our programs and activities, so feel free to contact me with your ideas. We are going to need a lot of help and patience with the upcoming changes...so get your garden tools cleaned and sharpened and put away, and come help us complete the move.

Ed Durham, NWLA MG President-Elect

“It's going to be new fun, new opportunities, and new results. Come out and be part of it!”



Until further notice, our regular monthly membership meetings will continue to be held at Broadmoor Baptist Church (4110 Youree Dr.) on the 2nd Wednesday of each month 11:30-1:00.

Rose Time: *Buy 'Em, Plant 'Em, Grow 'Em*



Every year Valentine's Day comes along and we are reminded of the special people in our lives. It should also remind us of a couple of items in our landscape that may need special attention, namely roses. Here in Northwest Louisiana, Valentine's Day coincides with the ideal time to prune back rose bushes so they will be ready to burst forth with strong growth as the temperatures began to warm. Of course, if no roses are currently in the garden, this is a perfect time to fulfill that promise to add one. This could be a single potted rose for the porch, a specimen rose in the garden or planting a whole flower bed devoted to roses.

All types of roses can benefit from an annual pruning to stimulate strong, vigorous growth, which results in more abundant blossoms, since the majority of roses bloom on new growth. It also helps in keeping bushes more compact and easier to care for in the home garden. Pruning helps reduce disease problems by improving air circulation and removing dead and diseased tissue. This also eases the removal of old leaf debris left under the bush from the previous year.

Pruning should be done with bypass pruners and loppers for larger cuts. Heavy work gloves and long sleeves are also recommended to avoid getting cuts and scrapes. Pruning cuts should be made with sharpened, and cleaned pruners. Dull pruners of any type may crush the cane as it is cut and duty pruners can spread unwanted diseases directly into a freshly opened wound on the rose.

Before starting to prune, examine the plant and visualize what the pruned plant should look like. Begin by removing all dead, diseased or sickly wood. Sickly canes tend to have a yellowish-green or brownish-green color and may be shriveled. Secondly, remove crossing canes. This is when two canes that are crossing and rubbing against each other. Lastly, determine the desired height.



Rose Time – *continued*



The height to which roses are pruned is a personal choice. Some rosarians prefer to leave as much healthy wood as possible, but most will cut their hybrid tea bushes back to 18 to 30 inches, or prune back one-third of their length each year. Miniature roses should be pruned back to about 12 inches and shrub roses should be

pruned back and shaped at this time, making sure not to remove any more than one-third of the overall shrub. With modern shrub roses this will help with keeping them compact and dense. Some of the old garden, climbing roses, or antique roses may need to be pruned a little differently, depending on the type and use in the garden. A few antique and species roses are like some climbers and should only be pruned after their glorious spring display.

The best way to learn how to prune roses effectively is to first watch someone else. The American Rose Center, in Shreveport, LA is owned and operated by the American Rose Society and is home to over 20,000 rose bushes of 100+ varieties in 65+ separate gardens. In the first two weeks of February every year the Rose Center puts on an educational demo and work day that will educate and demonstrate how to prune properly in exchange for an hour or so volunteer labor. They will also discuss how to successfully grow roses including topics like preparing the soil, watering, fertilizing and caring for your roses.

Mark A. Wilson,
Northwest Regional Horticulture Agent

Coral Drift® (Rosa hybrid Drift® Series) LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Super Plant Fall 2013





december

One of the first winter migrants to arrive in southern gardens is the Dark-eyed junco. Also called "snowbirds" they make the trek southward from their northern breeding grounds which are primarily Canada and Alaska. Juncos have over 30% more feathers (by weight) in the winter than they do in summer. Remember to provide clean, fresh water and seed for all our feathered friends!



veggies to plant

Beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, Chinese cabbage, collards, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, mustard greens, onions, radish, rutabaga, shallots, spinach, Swiss chard, turnips.

Give the holiday gift of manure to your garden this month!

poppy talk



The common name "poppy" refers to a large number of species in at least 12 different genera in the subfamily *Papaveroideae*, which is within the plant family *Papaveraceae*. Poppies are familiar to most people, who quickly recognize the papery, tissue-like blossoms in bright warm colors.

For successful poppy growing in zone 8, direct sow your seeds in the garden during December or January. Poppy seeds need to be exposed to a period of cold temperatures to germinate.

Poppies are not easy to transplant and actually do not fare well if their roots are disturbed, so starting them indoors is not recommended.

Poppies bloom profusely in full sun, under cool growing conditions and in our area they'll put on a show-stopping display beginning in March and continuing through May! They are known for self-sowing, sometimes with abandon, and you may find seedlings popping up all around the garden bed. They are not invasive and the seedlings are easy to pull up if they land in unwanted places. Top poppies for our area: Red Corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), Iceland poppy (*P. nudicaule*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), and peony-flowered poppy (*P. somniferum*).



Cool-season annual herbs are not bothered by winter freezes and actually prefer to grow in the cool to mild days and chilly to cold nights we have here during the cool season. Herbs we grow as cool-season annuals include parsley, cilantro/coriander, celery, dill, chicory, fennel, borage, arugula and chervil.

Perennial herbs are also generally not bothered by winter cold. Some of the perennial herbs that do well here are mints, lemon balm, rosemary, burnet, sorrel, catmint, garlic chives, oregano, thyme, sage, lavender, monarda, catnip, anise hyssop, mountain mint, French bay, pineapple sage and rue.

Fertilize herbs every time the weather is pleasant to help them take advantage of favorable growing conditions and continue to harvest small amounts to keep plants neat and tasty!

Original content: Dan Gill, LSU AgCenter Horticulturist

veggies to plant

beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, Chinese cabbage, collards, garden peas, Irish potatoes, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, rutabagas, spinach, Swiss chard and turnips.

Adding fruits to your landscape this year? Consider blackberries! Prime-Ark® Freedom and Prime-Ark® Traveler are two thornless primocane-fruiting blackberry cultivars from the University of Arkansas that you might be interested in trying. While *Traveler* was developed with commercial producers in mind...it is also suitable for backyard growers. Be sure to check out these YouTube videos for great info on these cultivars...presented by LSU AgCenter Specialists, Kiki Fontenot and Heather Kirk-Ballard.



[2020 LSU AgCenter Blackberry Field Day \(Varieties\)](#)

[Get It Growing: Prime-Arc Traveler blackberries have many advantages - YouTube](#)



Get a jumpstart on spring and summer garden pests...checkout LSU AgCenter's "Horticulture Hints" to **review tips** and the use of horticultural oils.

lsuagcenter.com

A wide variety of plants may be pruned during the winter and early spring, including most woody plants such as trees and shrubs, hedges, screens and foundation plantings that are not grown for their flowers. Both evergreen and deciduous plants may be pruned.

For trees and shrubs that are grown for their flowers, you must consider when they bloom before you decide when to prune them.

You should avoid extensive pruning of spring-flowering trees and shrubs that bloom from January through April, such as Japanese magnolia, star magnolia, silver bell, parsley hawthorn, Taiwan flowering cherry, quince, azalea, Indian hawthorn, deutzia, philadelphus, spirea, banana shrub, wisteria and camellia. These plants have already set their flower buds for spring bloom, and any pruning done before they bloom will reduce the floral display these plants will produce.

On the other hand, summer-flowering trees and shrubs, such as crape myrtle, vitex, althea, oleander and abelia, do not have flower buds set on them now. These plants set their flower buds and will bloom on the new growth they produce in spring and early summer. As a result, they may be pruned during winter and early spring and will still bloom well.

Excerpt from: Tips for Pruning in Winter and Early Spring, LSU AgCenter Horticulturists, Richard Bogren, Dan Gill

veggies to plant

beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Swiss chard, collards, lettuce, mustard, potatoes, radishes, spinach, snow peas and turnips. Plant seeds of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants in greenhouses or under lights indoors.



Where Do Insects Go in the Winter?

Insects have a variety of methods for surviving the coldness of winter.

Migration is one strategy for escaping the killing temperatures. The Monarch Butterfly is the foremost example of this maneuver, but other insects migrate into northern areas from the southern states in the Spring. Crop pests are the most obvious of these migrants.

Overwintering as Larvae. Many insects successfully pass the winter as immature larvae. The protection of heavy covers of leaf litter or similar shelters protect the woolly bear caterpillar, while other insects replace the water in their bodies with glycerol, a type of antifreeze! Some grubs simply burrow deeper into the soil to escape the cold.

Overwintering as Nymphs. Not many insects are active in the winter, but the nymphs of dragonflies, mayflies and stoneflies live in waters of ponds and streams, often beneath ice. They feed actively and grow all winter to emerge as adults in early spring.

Overwintering as Eggs. Lesser numbers of insects lay eggs which survive the winter. The most prominent insects in this category are Praying Mantids, and the destructive Corn Rootworms also engage in this strategy.

Overwintering as Pupae. Some insects overwinter in the pupal stage, then emerge as adults in the spring. Moths in the Silkworm Family, Saturniidae, may be found attached to food plant branches as pupae in the winter.

Hibernation as Adults. Many insects hibernate as adults. Lady bird beetles are a well-known example, and are sometimes seen in great numbers in the fall as they congregate at high elevations. Many large wasps seek shelter in the eaves and attics of houses or barns. Tree holes, leaf litter, and under logs and rocks are common shelters for overwintering adult insects. The Mourning Cloak Butterfly is usually the first butterfly that is noticed in the Spring, and this is because it hibernates in tree holes or other shelters during the winter. As in some insect larvae, it reduces the water content of its body, and builds up glycerol which acts as an anti-freeze. Honey bees stay in hives during the winter, and form clusters when temperatures fall. They also are able to raise the temperature by vibrating wing muscles.

In general, insects are able to survive cold temperatures easiest when the temperatures are stable, not fluctuating through alternate thaws and freezes. Many insects can gain shelter and nourishment through the winter in a variety of micro-habitats. Among these niches are under the soil, inside the wood of logs and trees, and even in plant galls. One kind of fly is known by fishermen to be present in certain galls in winter, and the fly larvae are consequently used as fish-bait. Blankets of snow benefit insects by insulating the ground and keeping the temperature surprisingly constant. Honeybees have been studied during the winter and are found to remain semi-active in hollow trees through the generation of body heat. The consumption of up to 30 pounds of stored honey during the winter months makes this possible. Heat energy is produced by the oxidation of the honey, and circulated throughout the hive by the wing-fanning of worker bees. Insects that are inactive during the winter months undergo a state in which their growth, development, and activities are suspended temporarily, with a metabolic rate that is high enough to keep them alive. This dormant condition is termed diapause. In comparison, vertebrates undergo hibernation, during which they have minor activity and add tissues to their bodies.

In-Season Produce for Louisiana

WHAT'S GROWING?



PRODUCT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Apples						J	J	A	S	O		
Asian Pears							J	A	S	O		
Asparagus		F	M	A	M	J						
Beans					M	J	J	A	S	O		
Blackberries					M	J	J					
Blueberries					M	J	J	A				
Broccoli	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Cabbage	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Cantaloupes							J	A	S	O		
Carrots	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Cauliflower	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Celery	J	F	M	A	M						N	D
Cherries						J	J					
Collards	J	F	M	A	M				S	O	N	D
Cucumbers					M	J	J	A				

PRODUCT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Eggplant							J	A	S			
Figs						J	J	A	S	O		
Garlic			M	A	M	J	J					
Gooseberries							J	A				
Grapefruit							J	A				
Grapes							J	A				
Greens			M	A	M				S	O		
Herbs				A	M	J	J	A	S	O		
Kale							J	A	S	O	N	
Lemons	J	F									N	D
Lettuce	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Mandarains	J	F									N	D
Mayhaws				A	M							
Muscadines								A	S	O		
Nectarines							J	A				
Okra						J	J	A	S	O	N	
Onions			M	A	M	J	J	A				
Peaches						J	J	A	S			
Pears							J	A	S			

PRODUCT	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Peas					M							
Peppers							J	A	S			
Persimmons									S	O	N	
Plums									S			
Pomegranates									S	O	N	
Potatoes					M	J	J					
Pumpkins									S	O		
Raspberries							J	A	S	O		
Rhubarb					M	J						
Spinach	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Summer Squash						J	J	A	S	O		
Strawberries			M	A	M							
Sweet Corn								A	S			
Sweet Potatoes									S	O		
Swiss Chard	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Tangerines	J	F	M	A	M					O	N	D
Tomatoes						J	J	A	S	O		
Turnip	J	F	M	A	M	J			S	O	N	D
Watermelons								A	S	O		

Of all the propagation methods we use in the greenhouse, probably the most difficult is propagating by way of seeds, but it is the method that will allow you to make the most plants.

Seeds are tricky to propagate for two reasons. For one, they're really like babies; quite fragile and vulnerable to their environment. The other reason has to do with the fact that

plants are quite individualistic in the way they have evolved to carry on the species, (e.g., requirements for seed germination). Some seeds are designed to be eaten and passed through the digestive track where their hard outer covering is dissolved. Others are designed to go through a cold spell and not wake up until the ground reaches a certain temperature. Still others need heat before they'll germinate.

The method I'm going to describe in this article is referred to as "Cold Moist Stratification." It is the most difficult method of propagating seeds, but it is also the method needed for seeds from most perennials that self-seed and come from environments where they must endure freezing temperatures. Examples are cone flowers, Rudbeckia, milkweeds (*except for Mexican milkweed*) and pin cushion flower.

For these plants nature has created a hard shell that locks in a plant's dormancy and keeps the seed safe and sleeping until it's warm enough for it to sprout. This shell also must be hard enough to resist the temporary warm spells that occur in January and February.

One of the things that makes this method of propagation tricky is that different plants need different amounts of time before they're ready to break dormancy. Leave a plant in moist cold too long and its susceptible to rot, take it out too soon and it won't be ready to germinate. Two other difficulties which I've had a lot of experience with is that if the seeds are kept too moist, they'll

develop a mold which kills them, but if you don't give them enough water they'll dry out and also die. In this article, I've described my own personal method for cold moist stratifying seeds.

to get started



farmhouseandblooms.com



naturenorth.com

Materials:

You'll need some **rough, all-purpose sand**. This is not the playground type that you get at the garden center. That sand is too smooth. You'll want the uneven sand used for concrete. You can also use peat moss sand. However, I believe it's more likely that the seeds will become moldy using peat. You'll also need **water, Ziplock bags, and a marker**.

Important Tip!

Read the instructions on the seed pack, or if you're propagating seeds from your own garden, do your research....*different plants need different amounts of time in cold, moist stratification*. Some only need a month, while others need as long as three months.

Process:

- Begin by filling a small bowl with your sand. You don't want to have too much sand because you can lose your seeds and have them all bunch up together. This is especially true with tiny black seeds.

-Next you add only enough water so you can form the sand into a ball. (fig. 1) There shouldn't be any excess water dripping from the ball of sand.

-Once you've formed the ball place it back into the bowl and break it up. Now you're ready to add your seeds. (fig 2) Mix seeds in thoroughly.

-After you've mixed the seeds with the sand, put them into a Ziplock bag, seal it, mark the date and type of seeds that are in the bag. (fig. 3)

-Check the bag every two weeks to make sure there's no mold growing on your seeds and that the seeds are still moist. *Give it a try!*

-Mike Livingston, NWLA Master Gardener



Photos by Mike Livingston

garden-to-kitchen



INGREDIENTS

FOR THE ROSEMARY OIL:

1 cup olive oil

4 (4-inch) sprigs fresh rosemary

FOR THE SOUP:

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium yellow onion, chopped (about 1 cup)

2 garlic cloves, minced (about 1 tablespoon)

1 quart low-sodium vegetable stock, plus more as needed for reheating

1 medium head cauliflower, cored and broken into 1 1/2-inch florets (about 2 1/2 lbs.)

2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more to taste

1 teaspoon black pepper, plus more to taste

Freshly grated zest of 1 lemon, for serving

FOR THE CROUTONS (OPTIONAL):


3 cups diced rustic country bread (3/4-inch pieces)

*Great for a cold
winter night!*

*Directions
ahead
↳*



PREPARATION:

1. **Make the rosemary oil:** In a medium skillet, combine the olive oil and rosemary sprigs. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes, lowering the heat if the oil reaches a full simmer. (You want to cook it at a very gentle simmer to avoid frying the rosemary.) Carefully pour the oil and rosemary into a small bowl, leaving a slick of oil in the pan if you plan to make croutons. Allow the rosemary to cool completely in the oil while you make the soup.
2. **Make the soup:** In a heavy pot or Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-low. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender and translucent, 6 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. (Be careful not to let the garlic scorch!)
3. **Add the stock**, cauliflower, salt and pepper, and bring to a boil over high. Lower the heat, cover, and simmer until the cauliflower is tender when pierced with a fork, about 10 minutes.
4. **Meanwhile**, make the optional croutons: Heat the reserved skillet with the residual rosemary oil over medium. Add the bread cubes, sprinkle generously with salt and pepper, and cook, tossing often, until toasted all over, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer the croutons to a plate or board to cool.
5. **Strain and discard** the rosemary stems from the rosemary oil. Working in batches if necessary, carefully transfer the vegetables, stock and 1/4 cup rosemary oil to a blender and blend on high until creamy. Add more rosemary oil to taste, and blend to combine. Return the soup to the pot and bring to a simmer. If the soup seems thin, let it simmer for 5 to 10 minutes to reduce slightly. (Remember: The soup will continue to thicken as it cools.) Season to taste with salt and pepper.
6. **Serve hot.** Garnish each serving with a swirl of rosemary oil, a few croutons, and a sprinkle of lemon zest. The soup will thicken as it sits; add more stock as necessary when reheating. Leftover rosemary oil will keep in a sealed container at room temperature for up to 1 week. 

Tea From Your Garden

Did you know that pine needles, nut-grass, and goldenrod can all be used to make tea?

Several years ago we went to the Butterfly Festival in Haynesville, Louisiana and listened to Dr. Charles Allen's presentation on wild edible plants. He has researched this topic extensively and is recognized as an expert in plant identification. We were surprised to learn about some unexpected plants that can be eaten or used to make tea and coffee. Dr. Allen always brings a variety of teas that he makes from various plants for the audience to sample.

Some of the plants that can be used to make tea include Sweet Goldenrod, *Solidago odora*, part of the Aster (*Asteraceae*) family. It actually tastes a bit like licorice. You can also make an herbal tea using the dried leaves and stem tips of Monarda (bee balm plant).

We have returned to the festival many times and always make a point of going to listen to Dr. Allen's presentations. They are always interesting and informative.

So, next time you are out on walk, look around. Those ruby red mulberry fruit, dark green pine needles, and bronze witch hazel leaves that you pass by just might be something of hidden value - all ingredients for a hot cup of tea on an autumn afternoon. *see next page disclaimer

-Debbie and Rick Simmons,
NWLA Master Gardeners



Other varieties of teas we sampled
made from local plants –
all surprisingly sweet!

Clover
Trifolium

Sassafras
Sassafras albidum

Japanese Honeysuckle
Lonicera japonica

Muscadine
Vitis

Dewberry
Rubus

For more info on Dr. Allen 



Dr. Charles Allen is a Botanist and a retired Professor of Biology from the University of Louisiana at Monroe and also retired from Colorado State University's Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands. He is a charter member and past President of the Louisiana Native Plant Society (LNPS).

His publications include: *Edible Plants of the Gulf South*, *Wildflowers of Louisiana*, *Trees Shrubs and Woody Vines of Louisiana* and *Grasses of Louisiana, 3rd ed.*

With Dr. Malcolm Vidrine, he helped to establish the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society and its restoration projects. In recent years, he has offered plant identification classes at home and on the road; taught master naturalists programs, and presented programs on edible plants, wildflowers, native plant landscaping, and butterfly gardening



He and his wife Susan own and operate Allen Acres B&B, a nature oriented paradise in west central Louisiana where he organizes and leads many area field trips. In March of 2019, he was awarded the first Caroline Dorman Outstanding Naturalist Award by the Louisiana Master Naturalist Organization.



Publications available through-

allenacresbandb.com

www.nativeventures.net

www.amazon.com

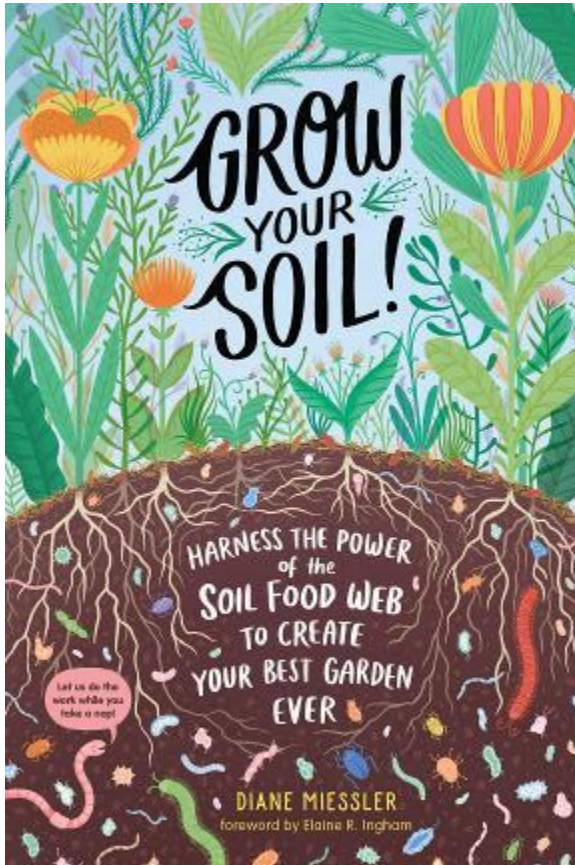
Allen Acres Bed & Breakfast-

(Reviews on TripAdvisor)

allenacresbandb.com

318.328.2225

***Remember, never consume anything unless you are sure exactly what it is. Ask an expert and consult field guides if you are unsure of a plant identification. Many edible plants have relatives or mimics that are not safe for consumption, so always err on the side of caution. Also, verify with your health professional what is safe for you.**



Grow Your Soil! Harness the Power of the Soil Food Web To Create Your Best Garden Ever

by Diane Miessler (2020)

“Great information presented in a fun, easy-to-read format (infographics, sidebars, tidbits, and fun prose). Fantastic resource for all gardeners, regardless of experience level!”

—Goodreads Reviewer

“Just purchased this book myself. It really is the most “readable” book that I’ve found on soil science. Engaging format and great illustrations. You’ll want to have this one on your gardening bookshelf!”

—Chris Bertrand

Top Book Picks!

It Fell From the Sky

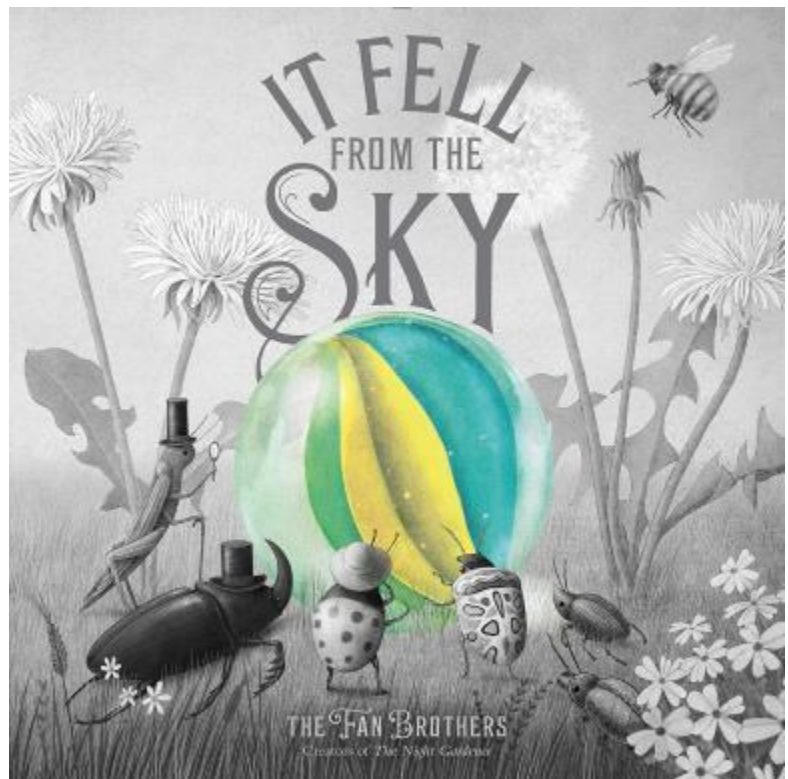
by the **Fan Brothers**, (2021) creators of the critically acclaimed *The Night Gardener*. Ages 4-8

“Okay...this isn’t a “gardening book” but it does take place in a garden! It’s also a delightful children’s book and a great holiday gift for the little ones in our lives!”

—Chris Bertrand

“Whimsical and elegantly illustrated picture book about community and the importance of giving back—and the wonder that fell from the sky.”

—Goodreads



318 Growers -



readlola.com

Caroline King's first job was at an Amish Farmers Market in Pennsylvania, but she thought she was too much of a city girl to plant a garden herself. After settling in Louisiana with her husband, the Air Force veteran began growing her own food for a healthier lifestyle. Twenty years later, she's become a prolific heirloom seed saver, has transitioned into organic gardening and has educated countless other gardeners. What she doesn't eat or share with others, she sells at her small roadside stand, Heirloom Farms General Store at her small Haughton farm. »

The Seedling talked to King recently about heirloom seeds and gardening.

Seedling: How Did You Get Interested in Gardening?

King: I read a book called the *Maker's Diet* (Jordan Rubin).

He used food to basically reverse a death diagnosis of Crohn's disease. I didn't have Crohn's, but I did have a lot of illnesses that were related to my bad diet. I eventually came across Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company in Missouri. They had this book out, and it gave you a description of how to grow just about everything. We decided to have a garden. It did pretty good, but we didn't have the adequate growing spot. There was a lot of shade. I didn't know then that the location of the garden was important to how well things did.

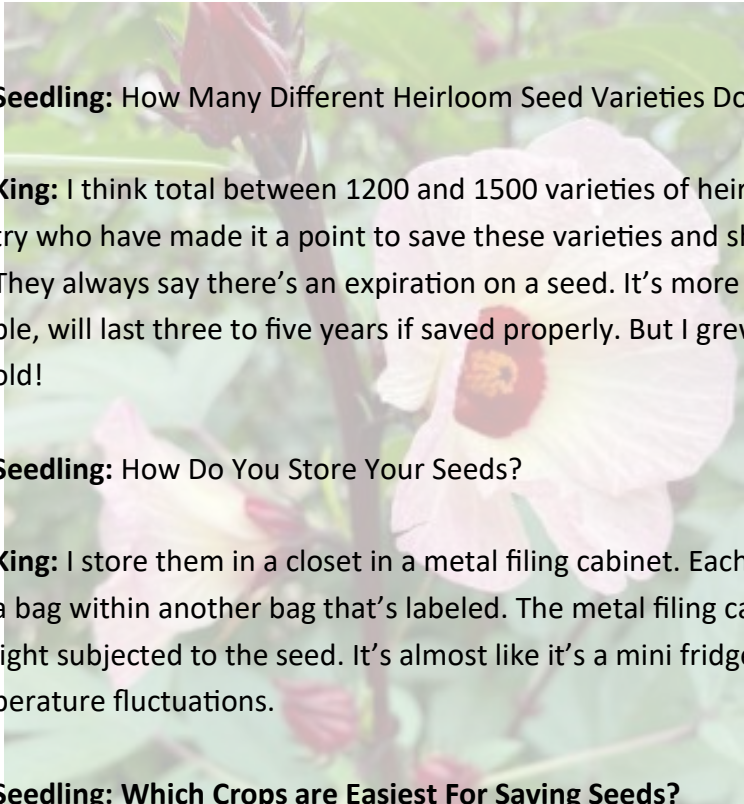
Seedling: When Did You Start Saving Seeds?

King: By 2004 I was 100 percent sold into Baker Creek. I started understanding more about heirlooms, how to save seeds. At that time there was no one who sold you a heirloom plant. Everything was hybridized. You can't save hybrid seeds because hybrid seeds very rarely produce true. I learned trial and error how to balance heat and light, how to germinate seed.



Heirloom Farms





Seedling: How Many Different Heirloom Seed Varieties Do You Have?

King: I think total between 1200 and 1500 varieties of heirlooms. There's a handful of us around the country who have made it a point to save these varieties and share them with the public.

They always say there's an expiration on a seed. It's more of a generality that the tomato seed, for example, will last three to five years if saved properly. But I grew a tomato variety from seed that was 10 years old!

Seedling: How Do You Store Your Seeds?

King: I store them in a closet in a metal filing cabinet. Each one of them has been dried properly. They're in a bag within another bag that's labeled. The metal filing cabinet is in a closet that has no ventilation and no light subjected to the seed. It's almost like it's a mini fridge. You don't want to subject seeds to light or temperature fluctuations.

Seedling: Which Crops are Easiest For Saving Seeds?

King: Watermelons, cantaloupes. You always want to make sure that you allow that fruit to grow to its most ripe point on the plant. So if you have 10 plants and you want to save seeds, say Plant #10, I'm not touching it. That's going to be my seeds, and I'm going to harvest off the rest. All peppers are super easy. All winter squash seeds are very easy to save. Cucumber, yellow squash, zucchini can be a pain (seeds are soft rather than dry) so I don't usually save them.

Seedling: So You Now Grow Seeds for Baker Creek?

King: The last two years I had seed contracts with them. I grew Alabama Red Okra for them. I grew peppers for them. The year before that I grew watermelons, They have people who grow more, who have hundreds of acres. I was inspected to make sure I was going to grow things in the way they accept. I'm also in Seed Savers Exchange trial program,

Seedling: Can You Share an Heirloom Seed Story?

King: There's the Adele Tingle pie pumpkin. The guy who ran the Ringgold Farmers Market is a friend. Friends of his family were the Tingles. When they went through Adele Tingle's things after she passed, they found an envelope of seeds of these pie pumpkins with no names. She grew them every year. He gave me some of his seeds. The family brought them to Louisiana by wagon train when they settled here.





Seedling: Do You Have a Favorite Heirloom Tomato?

King: Black Krim. It came from a region in Crimea in Russia. Baker Creek did a study in 2013, They took about 10 different varieties of tomatoes—some orange, some yellow, some purple, some red. They did them based on their Brix content, their nutritional content and scored them. The Black Krim came out number one.

Seedling: Tell Me About Your Gardener Education.

King: By 2008, I figured out my calling was to take all of the health and growing advice and teach people how to grow their own food. The first time we had a garden class was in early 2008. We had it at a gas station eating area with 15 to 20 people. By that fall, we had it at the firehouse, and it had been that way until right before Covid. We had LSU Ag partner with us and I would try to find other farmers in the area who knew other techniques.

Now, I'm doing permaculture, so I've been talking to people about how to get their ground regenerated, their soil regenerated. I still talk about heirlooms, seed saving, cheap ways to grow because I know people have different budgets. I'm doing more of these one-on one consults. I have them bring a notebook, their goals and take pictures of their growing area Then I tell them from there how they can develop that into their own garden.



Seedling: What's New in Your Garden?

King: Hibiscus is my new crop this year. I ended up from a pack of red drop hibiscus from Territorial Seeds. It's also called Jamaican Sorrel, Roselle, Rosella. I think they sent them to me to trial one year. I was looking around later and found them. I took the pack and started a whole tray of them in the greenhouse. I assumed it was just another flower to add. Then, I researched it and completely changed. It's for making tea. I planted them in full sun and they took off. Now I'm in the process of saving the calyx (sepal). You boil them in water, and it makes tea. You get a real subtle cranberry flavor.

Seedling: You've Taken a Sabbatical This Year. Tell Me More.

King: I didn't grow en masse like I normally do. I created two small beds and made them 100 percent permaculture. I needed to take a break physically This was my year to have fun, my year of rest. Sometimes when you work so hard at it, you burn out. I wanted to connect/reconnect into why I love to garden.

-Jane Allison, NWLA Master Gardener

Gardening consults are \$25 and include training in permaculture and homesteading. For more information on gardener education and farm stand hours, contact Heirloom Farms at 318-540-6670 or join the

[Heirloom Farms General Store](#) Facebook page.

photos sources: Heirloom Farms (Hibiscus, Preserves, Beans), Jane Allison (Tomatoes).

Events & Things to Do!

December 2021

-compiled by Jill Beebe, NWLA Master Gardener

Now through Dec 23rd, 38th Annual Christmas in Roseland, American Rose Center, visit website for info on special Santa Visit and Christmas Market dates, 877 Jefferson Paige Rd, Shreveport. \$5.00 per person/ \$20.00 per car, 318.938.5402, rose.org

Sun, Dec 5th, 8:00 am—6:00 pm A Rural Christmas Life, LSU Rural Life Museum & Windrush Gardens, 4560 Essen Ln, Baton Rouge, LA (admission : \$10.00 per person, 10 yrs and under free)

Wed, Dec 8th, 11:30-1:00 NWLA MG Christmas Luncheon, Broadmoor Baptist Church

January 2022

***Wed, Jan 12th , 11:30-1:00** NWLA MG General Meeting, Broadmoor Baptist Church

February 2022

***Wed, Feb 9th, 11:30-1:00** NWLA MG General Meeting, Broadmoor Baptist Church

***Wed, Feb 16th, 11:00 am**, Shreveport Garden Study Club presents guest speaker: John Coykendall, author, master gardener, renowned seed saver and classically trained artist. Featured in the PBS documentary *Deeply Rooted: John Coykendall's Journey to Save Our Seeds and Stories*. Author of *Preserving Our Roots*. LSUS University Center Theatre, One University Place, Shreveport, LA, Free to the public.



Photo: Sarah Hackenberg

***Sat, Feb 26th, 10:00 am**, Akins's Nursery & Landscaping, Garden Education Series— "A Beautiful Lawn" **Free** (call to register) 318.868.2701 akinsnursery.com (10% off plants & gifts with MG membership card)

***Sat, Feb 26th, 9:00 am**, Louisiana Nursery Gardening Seminars & Workshops **(Topic TBA)** Call for info or to register 318.925.0971, \$5.00 admission. louisianasnursery.com

Events approved for ed hrs & MG General Meetings w/guest speaker, members receive 30 min ed hrs.*

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Editorial Notes-



With all the *must do's* during the holiday season, I'm so thankful that my garden demands less of me!

I wonder do you like to "clean the garden" or "leave the garden" at this time of year? I fall into the latter, preferring to do it in the early spring. I enjoy seeing the remnants of the past year's labors...the memory of summer's vibrancy hidden under all the leaves. Somehow, I think this helps me ease into the new year. It also provides a place for many garden beneficials to overwinter.

During the brief pause before the seed catalogs start arriving and thoughts of pruning, fertilizing, and early spring planting fill our heads, let's remember to take time to enjoy the garden for "how it was." *How it will be* comes soon enough!

In closing, I hope you enjoy the wonderful articles written by your fellow master gardeners! Many thanks to them! You will notice this newsletter includes hyperlinks to the various websites and resources...hope this makes it easier to browse some to the great info! Big thanks to one of our writers, Jane Allison for suggesting it!

Happy Holidays and Happy Gardening!

Chris

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