

LSU AgCenter's  
**Ornamental Horticulture**  
**E-Mail Update**  
**February 22, 2010**



*topics and events of nursery, landscape and floriculture  
interest to Louisiana's green industry*

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**Ornamental Plant of the Week for  
February 22, 2010 – 'Sorbet' Series  
Violas (from Allen Owings)**

The Sorbet series violas from PanAmerican Seed (a division of Ball Horticulture) always perform well in LSU AgCenter landscape plant evaluations. The series blooms early and performs well in the south Louisiana landscape from January through mid May. There are 33 varieties and 6 mixes in the series.

**Sustainable Landscape News (from John Young, Dan Gill and Allen Owings)**

Current Landscape Activities for Feb and March - February 18

[http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news\\_archive/2010/february/news\\_you\\_can\\_use/You-can-find-plenty-to-do-in-your-landscape-now.htm](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news_archive/2010/february/news_you_can_use/You-can-find-plenty-to-do-in-your-landscape-now.htm)

**Items to Consider When Planting Landscape Trees (from Allen Owings)**

- ✓ Planting the root balls at the proper depth. This is at the grade at which they were growing in the container or slightly above this grade. The top of the root ball should be at the same level or slightly higher than the soil grade. Do not cover the lower trunk with soil.
- ✓ Planting hole width needs to be considered. The width of the planting hole should be 2-3 times wider than the tree's root ball. This allows for lateral root development and expansion. Remember that tree roots desire to grow out from the planting hole. The planting hole should be no deeper than the root ball of the tree going into the planting hole. Make the sides of the hole rough instead of

smooth – this is especially important in clay-type soils.

- ✓ Avoid planting root-bound plants. If trees are overgrown in the container, cut the encircling roots enough to encourage outward root growth and prevent future circling. This even helps when the trees are not necessarily overgrown in the container.
- ✓ Mulch properly. Too much mulch or not enough mulch is common. Do not pile mulch around the base of trees. Mulch to a depth of 3-4". Pine straw, pine bark and hardwood bark are good mulch materials. Go out with mulch instead of going up with mulch. Avoid mulch “volcanoes.”
- ✓ Do not amend the backfill soil. Backfill soil is the soil removed from the planting hole. The current recommendation is to return the soil that came from the planting hole back into the planting hole. Do not amend backfill soil with pine bark, compost or similar materials. A change in the soil texture from the planting hole to the surrounding soil will occur and water from the surrounding soil migrates to the planting hole and saturation of the root system occurs (“soup bowl” effect).
- ✓ Water properly. Newly planted trees need to be sufficiently watered in. This eliminates air pockets in the soil that dry out the root system. Apply water at the edge of the original root ball and outward. Do not apply water next to the main stems.
- ✓ Do not prune significantly at planting. The only pruning of shoot growth that should be done at planting is to remove any dead, broken branches, suckers, etc. Leave some branches on the lower part of the trunk for a year or so – this encourages trunk development. Excessive pruning of shoots at planting also can promote additional shoot growth at a time when root growth is desired.
- ✓ Soil pH and nutrient content are important. How many of us actually have a soil analysis done prior to planting? Knowing your soil pH is important. A soil test also provides status of other nutrients. If potassium and phosphorus readings are “high” on a soil test, fertilizing with 8-24-24 or a similar material probably is not needed. But if these values are “low,” fertilization would probably be of value.

## **Nursery Crop Outlook – 2010 (Roger Hinson and Allen Owings)**

### *National Situation and Outlook*

Last year’s economic recession in the United States was relatively short but very intense. Its impact on sales of green industry products could be significant over the longer term. Some estimates of current impacts are presented in the second section of this article.

A recession is a decline in output of goods and services as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This measure changed from negative to a positive value of about 2.8% in the third quarter of 2009 and further increased to 5.7% in the fourth quarter, indicating the recession's end. Typical growth rates are in the 2% to 3% range, so the fourth quarter number is not expected to be sustained. In addition, it is reported that the fourth quarter 2009 GDP report was fueled by larger private inventories.

There were other specific impacts from the recession. The financial sector, which stumbled substantially in 2008 and 2009, is more stable now because of actions in fiscal and monetary policy. Other particularly important areas are jobs and consumer confidence. Unemployment currently is about 10%, and those who have stopped searching for jobs are estimated to be almost as many as those counted as unemployed. Reduction of unemployment is expected to be slow and costly. Hiring practices in which employers delay hiring and rely on the existing workforce lead to productivity gains and provide revenue for other uses such as investments in new equipment. However, until employers become confident that recovery is assured, new job creation will be slow. Unemployment and reports of its extent also discourage consumer confidence and spending patterns – the kinds and quantities of goods and services purchased. Reduced spending leads to slower growth rates and lower likelihood of a resumption in hiring.

In this situation, both individuals and businesses have incentives to be conservative. Consumer confidence has recovered to an extent. The rates of new home construction and sales of existing homes seem stable but at reduced levels. At the end of 2009, sales of new homes rose to the highest level in more than a year. Southern U.S. markets were relatively higher and offset declines in other sections of the country. At the end of November 2009, sales were up 6.2% from September to a seasonally adjusted rate of 430,000. This is taken as a sign that "builders will need to start swinging their hammers again soon."

Spending by individuals and households is the major portion of GDP. Households lost large amounts of wealth with the collapse of housing and stock prices. Purchasing power declined. In the latter part of the year, savings has been increasing and is expected to grow gradually. Because of increased savings, spending will grow more slowly than income, in contrast to the past few years when use of credit had allowed spending to exceed income and when consumer confidence was high. Cutbacks in spending suggest that consumers might not have the same attitude toward spending and consumption they had before the recession. This is being called the new normal.

If consumer behavior has changed and spending does not rebound with recovery, there are significant implications for the entire nursery products supply chain. For example, current production and sales levels, or even further reduced levels, might be the new normal. A contrasting view is that consumers are frugal now, but they have images of consumption and behaviors for themselves and their families that encourage them to move toward the higher consumption levels of the recent past. Consumer confidence has risen to nearly twice its value at the low point of the trough. As a whole, these

considerations suggest that the spending patterns of the boom may be moderated, but neither will frugality dominate the consumer psyche. These factors are important. They have direct and indirect impacts for the ornamental plants industry, from wholesale growers to retailers. Cooperation through the supply chain to create value and contain costs may be a strategy that resonates in this economy.

### *Louisiana Situation and Outlook*

Production and sales of nursery-grown ornamentals have significantly declined over the past two years. Farm gate value decreased 27% in 2009 compared to 2008. A significant farm-gate-value production decline also occurred from 2008 to 2007 (10%). These declines are only the third and fourth times in the last 40 years sales have decreased from one year to the next. Wholesale production in Louisiana the last few years has been slightly less than \$100 million with an additional \$75-\$100 million in plant inventory. Plant inventory for future sales has slightly decreased the past few years. Some growers feel these values are under-reported. Nursery crop sales in 2009 continued to suffer because of fewer residential and commercial landscape installation projects.

*Woody Ornamentals:* Woody ornamentals account for the vast majority of the wholesale farm-gate value of commercial nursery crops in Louisiana. LSU AgCenter estimates place the wholesale value of woody ornamental sales in Louisiana at \$60-\$70 million annually. A recovery from the sales decline in 2008 was predicted to occur by fall 2009-spring 2010. This reversal of sales decline has not yet occurred, but growers are more optimistic for 2010 than for 2009. Container production acreage has increased significantly in the last five years while acreage in field production has been stagnant or decreased slightly. The major container crops are azaleas, hollies, crape myrtles, Indian hawthorns, groundcovers and shade/flowering tree species. The number of acres in bigger container sizes is up significantly. Several woody-ornamental growers have gone out of business in the past year.

*Floriculture/Bedding Plants:* Floriculture/bedding plants typically represent about 30 percent of Louisiana's nursery crop production. At the wholesale level, about 40 percent of bedding plant/floriculture crop sales occur in late winter and early spring. Floricultural-crop and bedding-plant production (includes poinsettias, hibiscus, garden mums, lantana, impatiens, petunias and vinca, begonias) have experienced little growth in Louisiana in the past three to five years. Profit margins in floriculture-crop production are shrinking because of energy price increases, transportation cost, fertilizer expenses and other factors. Floriculture and bedding-plant producers need to take advantage of the new Louisiana Super Plant promotion and marketing program planned for fall 2010.

*Foliage Plants:* Foliage plant production in Louisiana has slowed. Most foliage sold at the retail level now is imported from Florida or brought in from Florida by wholesale growers and brokers. In some cases, these imports are grown in Louisiana for several months prior to wholesale sale. Interest in wholesale production of tropical plants, however, has increased recently in Louisiana. Although this category could fall into the

floriculture/bedding plant category, outdoor tropical plants such as esperanza, gingers, cannas, bird of paradise, etc. have increased sales potential. Many greenhouse growers have profitable markets for these products. Cold weather this past winter damaged many outdoor foliage plants, and replacement plants need to be marketed this spring.

*Fruit/Nut Trees:* Fruit/nut tree production is stable in Louisiana at the wholesale level. A slight increase has occurred in the last several years. Container citrus production has rebounded from the damage incurred from hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. However, the discovery of the Asian citrus psyllid and citrus greening in Louisiana has caused economic loss in the container-citrus industry. Availability of container-grown, improved pecan cultivars is significantly below market demand, and opportunities to grow these cultivars for wholesale or retail sales are considerable. Also, many new fruit cultivars could be grown to increase market potential. Citrus, figs, pecans, peaches, muscadines, blueberries, apples and pears represented the vast majority of wholesale production of container-grown fruit and nut trees. LSU AgCenter fruit tree releases are popular with consumers and are under-produced in the state.

## **Commercial Ornamental Horticulture Events Upcoming**

*The LSU AgCenter and affiliated groups offer numerous educational opportunities for green industry professionals. In addition, many garden shows and related events for home gardeners are offered continually throughout the year. Some educational programs having multi-state impact and attendance are also listed. Be sure to check with the contact person listed for more specific information on each event.*

### **February 23, 2010**

Landscape Pest Management Workshop  
Hammond Research Station  
Hammond, La.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

### **February 25, 2010**

NW La Nursery Association Meeting  
Keeling Irrigation  
Shreveport, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com)

### **March 2, 2010**

Mid South Agricultural Labor Seminar  
Holiday Inn  
Lafayette, La.  
Contact Jessica Lange, La Farm Bureau  
Federation, at 225.922.6243

### **March 9-10, 2010**

Greenhouse Tomato Short Course  
Eagle Ridge Conference Center  
Raymond, Miss.  
[www.greenhousetomatosc.com](http://www.greenhousetomatosc.com)  
Contact Rick Snyder at  
[ricks@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:ricks@ra.msstate.edu)

### **March 10, 2010**

Baton Rouge Landscape Assoc Meeting  
Clegg's Nursery  
Siegen Lane  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Darnell Doucet at  
[cniddouc@bellsouth.net](mailto:cniddouc@bellsouth.net)

### **March 11, 2010**

High Tunnel Field Day  
Truck Crop Experiment Station  
Crystal Springs, Miss.  
Contact Mengmeng Gu at  
[mgu@pss.msstate.edu](mailto:mgu@pss.msstate.edu)  
<http://msucares.com/crops/hightunnels/news.html>

**March 11-12, 2010**

Certified Nursery Professional Training  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com) or Dan Gill at  
[dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 14-17, 2010**

Azalea Society of America  
National Convention  
New Orleans, La  
Contact Regina Bracy at  
[rbracy@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:rbracy@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 20, 2010**

Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research  
Annual Meeting and Plant Release  
Ira Nelson Horticulture Center  
Lafayette, La.

**March 23-24, 2010**

Ornamental and Turfgrass Pesticide  
Applicator Re-certification and Certification  
Testing  
Bossier City, La.  
[www.lpca.org](http://www.lpca.org)

**May 11, 2010**

Landscape Pest Management Workshop  
Hammond Research Station  
Hammond, La.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**May 13, 2010**

Landscape Horticulture Field Day  
Hammond Research Station  
Hammond, La.  
Contact Regina Bracy at  
[rbracy@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:rbracy@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**May 25-27, 2010**

La State Horticulture Society Tour  
Lower Miss./Mobile, Ala./Milton, Fla.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**June 4, 2010**

Nursery and Landscape Golf Shootout  
LSU Golf Course  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**June 17-18, 2010**

Certified Nursery Professional Training  
ULL Horticulture Center  
Lafayette, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com) or Dan Gill at  
[dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**June 18-19, 2010**

Landscape Short Course  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Jeff Kuehny at  
[jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu) or Allen Owings  
at [aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**July 21-22, 2010**

Mid South Green Industry Conference  
Eagle Ridge Conference Center  
Raymond, Miss.  
[www.msnla.org](http://www.msnla.org)

**August 19-22, 2010**

Nursery/Landscape Expo  
San Antonio, Texas  
[www.txnla.org](http://www.txnla.org)

**September 2, 2010**

NW La Nursery Association Meeting  
ArkLaTex Gardens  
Shreveport, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com)

**September 16-17, 2010**

Certified Nursery Professional Training  
City Park Botanical Garden  
New Orleans, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com) or Dan Gill at  
[dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:dgill@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**October 6-7, 2010**

Ornamental and Turfgrass Pesticide  
Applicator Re-certification and Certification  
Testing  
Lafayette, La.  
[www.lpca.org](http://www.lpca.org)

**November 5-6, 2010**

AgriSouth Horticulture Expo  
AgriCenter International  
Memphis, Tenn.  
[www.agrisouthexpo.com](http://www.agrisouthexpo.com)

**November 17-18, 2010**

Ornamental and Turfgrass Pesticide  
Applicator Re-certification and Certification  
Testing  
Kenner, La.  
[www.lpca.org](http://www.lpca.org)

**November 18, 2010**

NW La Nursery Association Meeting  
Location TBA  
Shreveport, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaccess.com)

**January 19-21, 2011**

Gulf States Horticultural Expo  
Arthur Outlaw Convention Center  
Mobile, Ala.  
[www.qshe.org](http://www.qshe.org)

**February 26, 2011**

NW La Nursery Association Tour  
SFA Arboretum  
Nacogdoches, Texas  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaccess.com)

**Spring / Fall Garden Shows and Related  
Consumer Events – 2010**

**February 27, 2010**

Camellia Tutorium  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Jeff Kuehny at  
[jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 7, 2010**

**(possibly changed to March 21)**  
Azalea Stroll at Windrush Gardens  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Jeff Kuehny at  
[jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 13, 2010**

Spring Garden Day  
Hammond, La.  
Contact Sandra Benjamin at  
[sbenjamin@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:sbenjamin@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 19-21, 2010**

Louisiana Nursery Festival  
Forest Hill, La.  
[www.louisiananurseryfestival.com](http://www.louisiananurseryfestival.com)

**March 20-21, 2010**

Northshore Garden Show  
Fairgrounds  
Covington, La.  
Contact Rusty Batty at  
[rbatty@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:rbatty@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 27-28, 2010**

11th Annual SW LA Garden Fest  
Burton Coliseum  
Lake Charles, La.  
[www.gardenfest.org](http://www.gardenfest.org)  
Contact Robert Turley at  
[rturley@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:rturley@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**March 27-28, 2010**

Baton Rouge Spring Garden Show  
Parker Coliseum  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact David Himelrick at  
[dhimelrick@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:dhimelrick@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**April 10-11, 2010**

New Orleans Spring Garden Show  
Botanical Garden at City Park  
New Orleans, La.  
Contact Brent Jeansonne at  
[bjeansonne@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:bjeansonne@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**April 18, 2010**

Afternoon of Roses  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Jeff Kuehny at  
[jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:jkuehny@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**May 1, 2010**

Bonne Terre Garden Fair  
TARC  
Houma, La.  
Contact Barton Joffrion at  
[bjoffrion@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:bjoffrion@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**May 8, 2010**

21st Annual Festival des Fleurs  
ULL – Blackham Coliseum  
Lafayette, La.  
Contact Billy Welsh at [welsh@louisiana.edu](mailto:welsh@louisiana.edu)

**May 15, 2010**

Master Gardener Spring Stroll  
St Francisville, La.  
Contact Andre Brock at  
[abrock@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:abrock@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**June 5, 2010**

Daylily Festival  
Abbeville, La.  
Contact Stuart Gauthier at  
[sgauthier@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:sgauthier@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**October 15-16, 2010**

Fall Flower & Garden Fest  
Truck Crops Experiment Station  
Crystal Springs, Miss.  
<http://msucares.com/fallfest>  
Contact Rick Snyder at  
[ricks@ra.msstate.edu](mailto:ricks@ra.msstate.edu)

**Arborist Workshops – 2010**

Contact Hallie Dozier at  
[hdozier@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:hdozier@agcenter.lsu.edu)

April 16, 2010 – Shreveport  
Aerial Lift Safety

May 7, 2010 – Farmerville  
Hazard/Danger Tree Cutting and Felling

July 30, 2010 – New Orleans  
Bringing Business Your Way

August 6, 2010 – Shreveport  
Tree Roots: Structures and Remediation

September 10, 2010 – Hammond  
High Angle and Emergency Response

October 1, 2010 – New Orleans  
Tree Climbing, Fall Protection

November 12, 2010 – Pollock  
Tree Detectives

January 14, 2011 – Baton Rouge  
Trees, People and the Law