

LSU AgCenter's  
**Ornamental Horticulture**  
**E-Mail Update**  
**October 4, 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 October 4, 2010 – Orange Flower  
Form of *Tecoma* (from  
Allen Owings)**



*Tecoma stans elata* is the scientific name of the orange-flowering form of this great plant with a lot of potential in Louisiana. These plants are also called esperanza, and yellow flower forms are more available. This plant has loose clusters of orange, trumpet-like flowers. Bloom time is mid-summer until first killing frost. The plant has a woody growth habit and is slightly taller than wide. Heights of 5-6 feet are common with widths of 4 feet. Mulch well going into winter. Plants will normally return in hardiness zones 8B.

**Louisiana Super Plants – Amazon Dianthus is Debut Winner (from Dan Gill, Regina Bracy and Allen Owings)** (note: We have discussed Louisiana Super Plants in previous e-mail updates. The article here is the consumer promotional article on Amazon dianthus.)

The Amazon dianthus series is a Louisiana Super Plants selection for fall 2010. This outstanding, cool-season bedding plant comes in three outstanding varieties – Amazon Neon Purple, Amazon Neon Cherry and Amazon Rose Magic.

The two primary species of dianthus in Louisiana gardens are *Dianthus chinensis*, Chinese dianthus or pinks, and *Dianthus barbatus*, sweet William.

Pinks have always been more popular than sweet William because they bloom more reliably over a long season. Planted in fall, they bloom from then until late spring/early summer. They are generally shorter, bushy plants that produce profusions of flowers in shades of scarlet, rose, pink and white.

Sweet William plants are fairly low and bushy, but they produce their flowers in large clusters on long stems that look like lollipops. The main issue is they're biennials. Planted in fall, they must go through the winter cold before they are triggered to bloom in spring. So, from a fall planting there are no flowers until spring. And as many gardeners have discovered, spring-planted transplants that have not been exposed to winter cold often fail to bloom.

The Amazon dianthus series was created by breeding together these two species – called an interspecific hybrid – and was developed by PanAmerican Seed Company. The results are nothing short of outstanding. Louisiana Super Plants selections are plants with exceptional characteristics and performance in Louisiana growing conditions, and the Amazon dianthus really deserve this tribute.

The foliage is an unusually rich, deep green, and the narrow leaves form a mound at the base. Even out of bloom, the foliage provides a verdant green color in the winter landscape.

When the plants bloom, the flower stalks are very similar to sweet Williams. The stocky flower stalks are clothed in narrow green foliage, rising about 2 feet above the base growth and producing large clusters of colorful flowers. Unlike sweet Williams, however, Amazon dianthus do not have to go through winter cold to trigger flowering.

Purchase and plant these blooming plants this fall, and they will bloom through fall and intermittently during winter and then put on a traffic-stopping display of colorful flowers from late February or March through late May or early June. Excellent heat tolerance means they generally bloom reliably well into early summer.

During the flowering period you should remove faded flower stalks. When all of the flowers in a cluster have faded, cut the stalk back to the lower foliage. Removing faded flowers is called deadheading, and it will keep your plants looking fresh and attractive and encourage them to continue to bloom.

The three colors included in the Amazon series – Neon Purple, Neon Cherry and Rose Magic – are brilliant and eye-catching. Neon Purple and Neon Cherry practically glow,

their colors are so intense and vivid. Planted together, the colors seem to vibrate visually. You can buy each color separately and plant them together or buy them in a combination called Neon Duo. Everyone will notice a planting of these colors, either individually or together.

Because the Neon Purple and Neon Cherry produce such colorfully dominate flowers, you can combine them with other flowers with strong colors such as deep purple, gold or burgundy. Or you can tone them down with shades of blue, lavender, pale yellow, silver or white.

Amazon Rose Magic is a favorite. The large clusters of flowers go through a remarkable, even “magical,” transformation as they bloom. The flowers open a bright white, age to a soft pink and finally finish up an intense rose. All three colors appear simultaneously in each cluster of flowers. Combine Rose Magic with other flowers of blue, lavender, pink, silver and white for an elegant effect in the garden or in containers.

Although at 2 feet they are relatively tall, full-grown plants are not leggy. The flowers form an almost-solid layer over the plants, and flower stalks at the edge of a group tend to bend over creating a full appearance. For this reason, Amazon dianthus is versatile and can be used in front of taller-growing, cool-season bedding plants, such as tall snapdragons, foxgloves or delphiniums. Or they can be used in the middle or back of a bed with shorter-growing bedding plants like alyssum, pansy, viola or dwarf snapdragons.

As with other cool-season bedding plants, best performance of Amazon dianthus depends on proper planting and care. Select a site in full sun with good drainage. Prepare the bed by working 3 to 4 inches of organic matter (such as compost) into the upper 6 to 8 inches of soil. Space plants 10 to 14 inches apart, and plant them at the same depth they were growing in the container. When planting is finished, mulch the bed with an inch or two of your favorite mulch to reduce weed problems, and water everything in.

Fall planting is much preferred because it will provide the longest flowering in your gardens as well as more spectacular blooming plants in the spring. These plants are hardy to temperatures in the teens and will not be bothered by average Louisiana winter temperatures. But you can plant them as late as March and expect good results.

Look for Amazon dianthus in your local nurseries. Because these plants are Louisiana Super Plants selections, signs showing the logo, pictures of the plants and growing information will be placed in nurseries and garden centers around the state to help shoppers find and choose Louisiana Super Plants.

## **Economic Factors for the Turfgrass Industry (from Roger Hinson and Laura Amrinto)**

*(This article is reprinted from the recent edition of the Louisiana Turfgrass Association with the permission of the authors and LTA editor Ron Strahan.)*

This column has addressed factors that affect production and sales opportunities for the turf industry with a focus on the big changes in the economic arena in the years since 2007. Enormous bubbles emerged in the housing and the stock markets from incentives provided by the Federal government for expanded home ownership. Responses of many segments of the business world were to push beyond the bounds of prudence to profit from home ownership incentives. The bubbles burst as mortgage-backed securities declined in value because homeowners defaulted on their loans at significantly higher-than-expected rates. It became clear that the risk of these mortgage-backed securities was much higher than buyers had been led to believe. These events relieved almost all of us of lots of wealth and in the process changed our view of the future.

Over the past year or so, the economy appeared to be recovering. Now, however, many feel it is declining again. The Federal Reserve Bank warned in early August that the economy had weakened, as indicated by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in the second quarter at a rate of 2.4 percent, compared with 3.7 percent in the first quarter. The Fed indicated that it would act to drive down long-term interest rates by buying Treasury bonds.

### ***The primary drivers of GDP growth***

*Consumption and investment:* On the consumption side, *personal spending* has kept pace with the economy over the past three years. It had been steady at about 70 percent of GDP before and during the recession of 2008-09. But consumption's share was lower in the past. It was relatively stable at about 63 percent of GDP from the 1950s to the 1980s. Reasons for the increase included growing wealth, government programs like social security that reduced incentives to save and the widespread acceptance of credit cards. *Debt* is a resource that supports spending. Consumer debt reached new, higher levels prior to 2008, and has declined. According to the Fed, total U.S. debt excluding the financial sector is about twice the 10-year-ago level, at \$35 trillion, and has fallen only 3 percent from last year's all-time peak. Revolving credit is a little different. In June, credit card balances fell by \$4.5 billion, or 6 percent, the 21st consecutive month of decline. Consumers are not optimistic. They are worried about jobs, are spending less and are saving more. We shouldn't expect consumer spending to be the short-term driver of growth.

*Consumer confidence:* Several organizations track confidence in the general economy. Recently, Investor Business Daily and the polling unit of TechnoMetrica Market Intelligence (TIPP) reported that its *business* index fell to 43.6, down 5.1 points since May to a five-month low. Readings below 50 signal pessimism. Its six-month outlook rose 2.3 points from a 16-month low to 45.1. The *personal financial* outlook gauge fell

1.7 points to 49.2, showing pessimism for the first time since June 2008. The index of confidence in federal economic policies and the Presidential Leadership Index fell. These indicate pessimism. Nor are *small businesses* optimistic. The National Federation of Independent Business' small business optimism index fell in July for the second month. Fewer of smaller companies expected the economy to improve in the next six months. Only 2 percent planned to add staff. So, added jobs in the small-business sector don't seem ready to provide the support a recovery needs.

*Jobs:* The "official" unemployment rate is about 9.5 percent. It was that high in the early 1980s when Reagan and Volker tackled inflation. But the official estimate doesn't count those who have given up and aren't looking for work, and many of those still working right now can only find part-time work. The Labor Department reported that private payrolls are growing slowly (71,000 in July). This pace would take years to absorb those who lost jobs during the recession and new entrants into the workforce.

*Housing:* Foreclosures are rising – specialist RealtyTrac reported 93,000 homes foreclosed in July, up 9 percent from June and essentially the same as May's record. Because the foreclosure process is slow, observers believe there are many more in the foreclosure pipeline. The ripples affect all homeowners by driving down home prices and wealth. Many analysts suggest that market-clearing prices for housing are somewhere below current levels. *New home sales* peaked in April at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 422,000, their highest level since September 2008, then fell to 267,000 with the expiration of stimulus incentives. The inventory of new homes fell to 232,000 in June, lowest since 1968. In April, sales of *existing single-family homes* declined by 1.6 percent to 4.98 million in May and by 5.6 percent to 4.7 million in June. There has been some overall improvement in the past couple of months, and the National Association of Home Builders is forecasting "further improvement in coming months as mortgage rates remain low, house prices level out and job growth continues."

*Investment:* The investment part of GDP had the steeper decline in the recession. While spending by companies has risen since 2009, the level still is below the pre-recession rate. During the latest quarter, investment made up 12.7 percent of GDP, compared with 15 percent during the same period in 2008. Investment in non-residential construction for 2010 is forecasted to decline by about 20 percent but to rebound to slightly positive values for 2011.

### ***The outlook***

Reports speak of an abundance of caution among consumers and businesses that some unexpected shock could trigger a double-dip pattern of decline and recovery. Perhaps it wouldn't even take a shock. Economist Robert Shiller, of Yale University, believes the probability of another dip is more than 50-50. He pointed to high unemployment as a root cause of lingering economic woes, a concern that the Federal Reserve may not have enough tools to fight a second recession, and that Congress needs to join the battle and focus on putting people back to work. Overall, keep in mind that that the most recent GDP estimate was positive even though it was only about 65

percent of the previous month's value. The direction of the trend, and pessimism among consumers and businesses, are the concerns.

### **Louisiana**

Much of what ails the U.S. economy, particularly housing and job losses, is centered in a few states. Louisiana didn't have the housing bubbles, but investments in mortgage-backed securities and their derivatives reduced wealth for almost everyone. For Louisiana, problems can be expected from reduced fisheries catch from the oil spill, from the drilling moratorium, from closure of a few businesses in other sectors that were important employers and from regional impacts from state and local budget shortfalls. At this time these are serious threats, but the degree of impact and whether they will be mitigated by compensation from sources such as BP or additional stimulus from the federal government is unknown. As we noted in the last issue, these are conditions under which conservative businessmen would be well advised to over-extend themselves on service to existing customers to preserve those relationships. Those who are a little more aggressive and in good fiscal shape might, after careful analysis, pursue more customers or larger market share, taking advantages of businesses whose recession strategy is to reduce costs by lowering customer service. In the meantime, we should be watching the indicators discussed above – consumer and investment spending, confidence levels, and construction forecasts.

### **Sustainable Landscape News Articles (from Kyle Huffstickler, Dan Gill and Allen Owings)**

Garden Mums – October 1

[http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news\\_archive/2010/october/news\\_you\\_can\\_use/its-time-for-garden-mums.htm](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news_archive/2010/october/news_you_can_use/its-time-for-garden-mums.htm)

### **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.*

#### **October 6, 2010**

La. Irrigation Association Annual Meeting  
Ralph and Kacoo's  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com)

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#### **October 6, 2010**

La. Irrigation Association Re-Certification Meeting and Annual Meeting  
Ralph and Kacoo's

#### **October 6, 2010**

BR Landscape Association Meeting  
Chelsea's  
Baton Rouge, La.

**October 6-7, 2010**

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

**October 8, 2010**

SELNA Trade Show  
Castine Center  
Mandeville, La.  
Contact Annie Coco at  
[acoco@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:acoco@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**October 9-13, 2010**

IPPS-Southern Region Conference  
Raleigh, N.C.  
[www.ipps.org/SouthernNA/](http://www.ipps.org/SouthernNA/)

**October 20, 2010**

Rose Research Open House  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**October 28, 2010**

Louisiana Green Industry Research and  
Scholarship Foundation Gala  
LSU Rural Life Museum's Visitor Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Allen Owings at  
[aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**November 3-4, 2010**

La. Irrigation Association Re-Certification  
and Certification Testing Meeting  
Ralph and Kacoo's  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com)

**November 5-6, 2010**

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

**November 6, 2010**

SE Louisiana Nursery Assoc Meeting  
Mike's Catfish Inn

Amite, La.

Contact Annie Coco at  
[acoco@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:acoco@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**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  
American Rose Center  
Shreveport, La.  
Contact Severn Doughty at  
[scd357@cmaaccess.com](mailto:scd357@cmaaccess.com)

**January 6, 2011**

LA Turfgrass Assoc. Annual Conference  
Lawton Room at Tiger Stadium  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Ron Strahan at  
[rstrahan@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:rstrahan@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**January 12, 2011**

Louisiana State Horticulture Society  
Annual Conference  
Burden Center  
Baton Rouge, La.  
Contact Stuart Gauthier at  
[sgauthier@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:sgauthier@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**January 19-21, 2011**

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

**February 3, 2011**

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

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

**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)

**October 15-16, 2010**

Southern Garden Symposium  
St. Francisville, La.

[www.southerngardensymposium.org](http://www.southerngardensymposium.org)

**October 16-17, 2010**

Fall Garden Festival  
City Park Botanical Gardens  
New Orleans, La.

Contact Brent Jeansonne at

[bjeansonne@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:bjeansonne@agcenter.lsu.edu)

**Reflections in the Garden Held at Burden Center**

[www.burdenhorticulturesociety.com](http://www.burdenhorticulturesociety.com)

November 1 – Strawberries

Charlie Johnson

December 6 – Holiday Decorating

Barbara Quirk and Jeanne Clements

**American Rose Society / American Rose Center Events in Shreveport**

Contact Ellen Trice at [Ellen@ars-hq.org](mailto:Ellen@ars-hq.org)

October 21

ARC University Day from 11 a.m. until 3 pm

**LA House Lunch and Learn Horticulture Held at LaHouse in Baton Rouge**

Contact Kyle Huffstickler at

[khuffstickler@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:khuffstickler@agcenter.lsu.edu)

October 8 – Cool-season Annuals and Herbs

Dan Gill

November 12 – Fruit Tree Culture in the Home Orchard

Charlie Johnson

December 10 – Poinsettias

Jeff Kuehny

**Arborist Workshops – 2010**

Contact Hallie Dozier at

[hdozier@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:hdozier@agcenter.lsu.edu)

November 12, 2010 – Pollock

Tree Detectives

January 14, 2011 – Baton Rouge

Trees, People and the Law