

Can You Dig It?

Forth QTR
2019



HOW ACCURATE ARE EXPIRATION DATES ON SEED PACKETS?

Seeds don't technically go bad. An expiration date tells you the likelihood seeds will be viable. Storing them in a dark, dry, cool spot helps prolong seeds' lifespan. But germination rates usually decline with every year in storage. Some seeds (cucumbers, beans) have high germination rates for five years or more, but others (corn, peppers, spinach) lose vigor after even one year.

If you have harvested seeds from your garden or left over seed packets, place them in a plastic or glass container with a tight-fitting lid and store in your fridge to keep them viable. Try to use the seeds within a year.

Finally, the days are getting shorter and the nights cooler! To many gardeners, it's the perfect time of year. You can relax a bit because the hard work of spring is over; you've survived the heat of summer, and winter is still a little way off. And many plants reach their peak of growth just before they go dormant.

Yes, by fall, many plants are looking better than ever. Those plants that had been waning from summer's heat suddenly turn lush again. Even with all this activity, it's a wistful time; Just when they're at their showest, you can't help but think that these beautiful plants will soon be on their way out.

There are lots of things that need to be done at the end of the season. Here are a few suggestions to help you finish prepping for winter:

- ✓ **Mow** the lawn once more and do end-of season maintenance on the mower.
- ✓ **Put** out the bird feeders.
- ✓ **Harvest** any last produce from the veggie garden. Spread a layer of compost over the garden so it will be ready in the spring.
- ✓ **Bring** houseplants inside before night temps dip into the 50s.

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What's Up With Can You Dig It!

PINEY HILLS MASTER GARDENERS STILL HAVE WORK TO DO!

Even though the year is coming to an end, we have lots of work yet to do. Besides the holidays lurking ahead, this is the time of year when PHLMG preps for a successful closeout of 2019 and a great 2020.

October 19 we, as a group, are to visit Plantation Point once again. We will be digging irises for our plant sale this March. We will need as many members to help as possible! Please plan to join us. Bring your gloves, a spade, a shovel and put on your rubber boots. Pots, and gin trash is provided, we just need laborers to dig, pot and label! It should be a pleasant day and we can car pool. If you have a truck, we can use it! Ofcourse, you are welcome to dig a few for yourself, too.

Don't forget to volunteer to work at Ag Magic during the State Fair Oct 23 – Nov 11 it's always a fun time.

Hope the remainder of the newsletter will inform and entertain you. Grab your garden gloves, trowels and spades cause **YOU CAN DIG IT!**

Submitted by Wanda Medlock-Smith

Piney Hills Chapter
Louisiana Master
Gardeners
Refreshment
Committee 4th Qtr

OCTOBER

Janice Clark, Norma and
Richard White

NOVEMBER

November each member
is to bring "pick up" type
food. This month is
usually set aside for our
silent auction.

DECEMBER

December is Christmas
Party time. The meal is
catered and coordinated
by the Event Committee

The PHLMG
refreshment committee
assist in making the
regular meeting even
more worth attending.
Together they provide
meal to members who
otherwise would miss
dinnertime. It is a valued
part of each meeting for
members and guest
alike!



Fourth Quarter of the Year Gardening Tips

As another growing season
comes to a close, remember
some of your favorite times in
the garden and start plans for
next year.

OCTOBER

Summer bulbs may still be
growing, but don't fertilize them
now. But actively growing
bulbs, such as Louisiana iris,
calla lillies and spider lillies, can
be fertilized lightly.

Purchase and plant
strawberries this month in your
vegetable gardens. You can
even plant them in flower beds
in full sun with good drainage.
Recommended cultivars are
Chandler, Camarosa and
Sweet Charlie.

Fall is an excellent time to plant
herbs into the garden. A few
herb plants provide a lot of
harvest, so don't plant more
than you can use or share.
Herbs to plant now include
parsley, sage, thyme, dill,
cilantro, rosemary, oregano,
borage, fennel, chives, mint,
nasturtium and catnip.

NOVEMBER

Keep your eye out for
decorative seedpods, dried

Flower heads, cones, grass
plumes and other plant material
that could be used in holiday
decorations.

Keep compost piles evenly
moist and turn them every
month, if possible, to speed
decomposition. The compost
will be finished when it has
turned into a crumbly, dark
brown material.

Vegetables to plant in
November include beets,
cabbage, carrots, celery,
collards, garlic, kale, kohlrabi,
leek, lettuce, mustard, onion,
radishes, rutabagas, shallots,
spinach, swiss chard and
turnips.

Plant spring – flowering bulbs,
such as narcissus, Dutch iris,
daffodils, Spanish bluebells,
snowflakes, alliums, freesia,
and ranunculus this month.

DECEMBER

Plant Tulips and hyacinths in
late December after they have
been refridgerated for six to

Weeks.

Add nature's generous bounty of
leaves that is provided this time
of year to your compost piles or
use them to mulch shrubs and
flower beds. Stockpile pine
straw in plastic bags to use to
cover low-growing plants for
freeze protection.

Cultivars of certain shrub, such
as azaleas, nandinas and
junipers, will develop a purplish
or burgandy tint to their foliage
during cold weather. Don't
worry. They will turn green again
in the spring.

Flower seeds that may be sown
this month include alyssum,
poppies, snapdragon, pansy,
viola, dianthus, calendula,
sweet pea, larkspur, cornflower,
delphinium, hollyhock and
annual phlox. Transplants of
these purchased from area
nurseries also could be planted.
Have a wonderful holiday
season! See you next year.



Give Biochar a Try

Have you heard about biochar? It's the carbon left over from burning plants. Soil containing higher amounts of biochar has improved water and nutrient holding capacity and can make soil more alkaline.

You can purchase biochar from biocharsupreme.com or make your own. To make it, you need a kiln—not the kind you make ceramics in but a container that can hold a hot fire. Homemade designs often make use of a metal drum. But you can buy them, too. For beginners, a pan kiln like the photo is recommended.

TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR OWN BIOCHAR

< Use materials from around the yard like branches from common trees and shrubs that are about the same size so they finish at the same time.

< Make sure the wood is dry before you burn it or the added moisture will slow the process, creating more ash. Ash won't harm the soil but doesn't have the revitalizing benefit of charcoal.

< Avoid using a pan kiln when the wind is 5 mph or higher. Start the fire with a small amount of wood at the bottom of the kiln, then add more gradually on the upwind side so you don't smother the fire until you reach the top of kiln.

<When the flames have died out, douse the glowing embers with water from the hose or smother them with a lid. What's left is your biochar. You can expect to get about half the volume or one quarter of the weight of what you put in the kiln.

< Break the biochar up right away using a shovel to crush the cinder

Into a smaller size – around ¼ inch – that's easy to sprinkle around the garden. Charcoal particles are fine so wear a mask when moving biochar around and stay upwind.

One thing that's important to know is that biochar fresh from the kiln has a super pH – 12 to 14, that declines over time. Dousing the fire with water or composting the biochar speeds the natural neutralization process. When it still has the high pH, biochar can help acid soils make nutrients more available to the plants there. But if your soil is neutral or alkline, increasing the soil's pH can cause damage to the plants. In that case, let fresh biochar "season" for 6 months to neutralize its pH before putting it on your soil.

Philip Small, Soil Scientist, owner Land Profile, Inc, Washington

2019 Piney Hills Louisiana Master Gardeners Elected Officers

Meet your 2019 Elected Officers:

President

Marjorie Thomas

Vice President

Wanda Medlock-Smith

Secretary

Tracie Wilder

Treasurer

Richard White

Historian/Parliamentarian

Linda Berry

Members –At-Large

Kelly Williams and
Barbara Sisler

Volunteer Coordinator

Glenda Collums

Local MG Coordinator

John Monzingo

This Month's Q&A Gardening Grows

Q: What can I do to put my raised beds to bed?

After removing all the dead veggies from the raised beds, if they are of average size (about 4X8), here's a good tip for you! Cover your cleaned bed after you have added all your next seasonal admendments with a plastic elasticized table cloth. It fits like a shower cap over the bed and keeps out weed seeds and leaf debris. In the spring when its time to plant, just slip off the cloth. It can be folded up and stored for use again the following autumn. You are able to get right to planting with no extra cleaning necessary.



NORTHWEST LOUISIANA MASTER GARDENERS

2019 Fall Bulb Sale

SATURDAY

October 26, 2019

8 a.m. until Noon

Randle T. Moore Center

3101 Fairfield Avenue

Shreveport, LA

**Thousands of heirloom
bulbs available**

Amaryllis, Oxblood Lily,
Peony, Oriental Lilies
& Lady Jane Tulips. Plus
plenty of Daffodils &
Spider Lilies

For more information contact us at
(318)698-0010 or
www.nwlamg.weebly.com





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Gardeners

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[facebook.com/PHLMG](https://www.facebook.com/PHLMG)

Upcoming Events

- **October 17 – Piney Hills Louisiana Master Gardeners Regular Meeting**

Regular meeting PHLMG at 6:00pm Webster Parish Extension Office. Speaker – Chris Doffitt of LSU, “ Invasive Species in the Garden”

- **October 19 - Piney Hills Master Gardeners Iris Dig, Plantation Point**

This is the scheduled trip to dig and label irises for our plant sale (with a few for personal planting) in March. Bring your trowel, boots and plan to join us!

- **October 23 – Setup for LA State Fair Ag Magic**

PHLMG provides a hands-on-exhibit for children to learn about the important role agriculture plays in daily life. Fair runs from Oct 24-Nov 11.

- **October 26– 2019 Fall Bulb Sale, Shreveport, LA**

8:00am – Noon at the Randle T. Moore Center 3101 Fairfield Avenue, Shreveport, LA

- **November 21 – Piney Hills Louisiana Master Gardeners Regular Meeting**

Regular meeting PHLMG at 6:00pm Webster Parish Extension Office. Speaker on impact of PHLMG on the 4H Club.

- **December 5 – PHLMG Christmas Party**

Catered Annual Christmas Party held at First United Methodist Church 903 Broadway, Minden