



*The Source for Beautiful,
Unusual, Exotic, and
Native Plants*



The Scoop on Almost Eden's 2014 Fall Open House

Dr. Charles M. Allen will be doing a presentation on **Wildflowers of Louisiana** on Sunday, September 21, 2014 at 2pm at Almost Eden. He will bring along a variety of native wildflowers to exhibit and describe so bring your friends to learn about these important natives many of which are suitable garden plants, useful for roadside wildflower meadows, or worthy of enjoyment simply in their native habitat. While you're here, you can buy an autographed copy of his latest book **Louisiana Wildflower Guide** and shop at Almost Eden.

For a change up this year instead of doing a talk Jeff will man a **Plant Question and Answer Desk** for both **Saturday** and **Sunday** from **9am-4pm**. Bring your plant problems and questions and to the best of his ability he will help to get you growing. (Some are secretly hoping that you will stump him). You can bring high quality images on removable media such as USB thumb drives, CDs, DVDs, or SD cards and ".JPEG" is the preferred file format. The higher quality and more detailed the images the better. Insect samples (preferably dead – use rubbing alcohol and collect the adult stages), leaf samples (a representative sample is best), and soil samples can be brought in clean, sealed, clear, disposable, plastic containers. We do not have a good way to test soils on site but we can tell some things about structure and composition just by looking at it. Read more below about getting your soils tested.

Keep in mind that if you have a problem plant or area, or an area that you are about to begin landscaping then you will need to gather as much evidence as possible so that we can best assess the extent of your particular issue. Our advice is free but we will do our best to provide respectable resources to help you further before we are through. Due to time constraints, we will not be able to do actual landscape design but we can surely help give you some ideas on how to get started. We'll start with a few questions below that you should answer before you leave home:

Light – Is it close to a particular side of the house if outdoors or window if indoors – North, South, East, or West?

Indoor

Direct sunlight – hours per day?

Indirect sunlight – intensity – low, medium, high? In high light you likely wouldn't need a flash to take a clear picture, in medium you might, and in low light you would.

Outdoors

Direct sunlight – hours per day?

Indirect sunlight (think reflected light as in under a porch, patio, or Live Oak) – hours per day?

Planted under or near a tree or large shrub? What kind? Juniper, Cedar, Pecan, Hickory, Walnut?

Soil – [LSU Agcenter](#) says to use testing instead of guessing and its only \$10 for Louisianians. That's cheaper than most bags of fertilize and you may not even need fertilize, thus more money for plants... You can pick up a soil sample testing kit at your local Cooperative Extension office and at several of the feed stores and garden centers in our area and across the state. [Click here to find your cooperative extension office](#) or for Louisianians just go to [LSU Agcenter.com](#).

Obviously you do not have time to get this done before you show up but you can bring a representative sample with you as described above and we can look at things like structure and composition or if it is potting soil you can often tell if the plant was staying too wet, etc... Where you live matters as well. If you live near a large river the soil pH can be quite high/alkaline whereas in the uplands of the pineywoods it can be very low or acidic. You can use the USDA's [Web Soil](#)

[Survey](#) to learn your basic soil type and yes there's even an app for that! Called **SoilWeb** and it works for [android](#) or [iphones](#), it uses your GPS location and using the NRCS data tells you your soil type at various scales.

Structure & Composition – Is your soil compacted or loose and friable? Are you growing moss or grass?

Organic material – this is what holds moisture and nutrients in the root zone where the plants can access it. Do you add this at planting time? Do you need to?

Moisture levels & drainage – How frequently do you water? Do you use saucers under your container plants?

Does water stand in that area for more than a day after a rain?

Fertility & pH – When was the last time you fertilized? With what and how much did you use? Is it planted close to concrete or mortar that might leach lime?

Mulch – Do you use a mulch? If so what type of mulch do you use and how thick is it?

Climate – Northern, southern, eastern, or western exposures?

Air circulation – Yes, believe it or not it does matter, come by and I'll explain why.

Temperature extremes – Is there reflected heat from asphalt, buildings, concrete, etc...?

Other questions you may want to ask yourself:

What colors would I like? Fragrant or no? What seasons do I most want flowers in?

Are foliage color, plant form, and overall texture important?

How high and wide can it grow at maturity?

Do I want an herbaceous perennial, shrub, tree form, vine, ground cover?

Evergreen or deciduous? Fall color? Colorful berries?

Deer resistant or attracts wildlife? Attracts pollinators?

Is it cold hardy or do I want to grow it as a container plant?

Salt tolerant? Tolerates wet feet or periodic flooding? Drought? Mowing? Fire?

Not sure where to begin on a new landscape? Someone once said that you should just sit down with a bunch of gardening books and magazines at the library (or on the internet) and look at garden pictures. Just find the ones that appeal to you. Ignore the words or locations. None of that really matters, your garden should fit you. It should invoke feelings that you want to feel. For myself, I want to feel calm and relaxed but to still be invited, excited, and invigorated by what I see, hear, feel, smell, and even taste in the garden. I want it to tug at all of those senses and to pull me through it gently like a butterfly drifting on a warm summer breeze. And the butterflies, bees, and birds should always be present when it's their season. The seasons too, should be obvious. Spring should spring to life with fresh colorful newness. Summer should be all about the sunflower family and the warm welcoming fragrances of Souvenir de la Malmaison Rose, Evergreen Wisteria, and Four O'clocks in the evening. Fall should set the Maples ablaze with color while Old Man Winter shows us how showy the form and colors of bark, stems, and berries can be. Admittedly our garden is a menagerie (someone once described it as whimsical) and yet it is a choreography with winter growing bulbs dying back in spring while summer perennials pop back up to take their place. We can pick ripe fruit almost any time of year as well as a bouquet of flowers. Our pollinators are practically never without and our bird population is quite healthy, so much so that John, my dad, says they are flying pigs! So we may never make it onto the cover of a Rolling

Stones magazine but we are pretty happy with our little piece of heaven here at Almost Eden and that's what gardening is really all about – you and your health and happiness which we all should know by now go hand in hand.

So while you are flipping through the pages, try to find the images that entice you, that tempt you, that tug at you. You don't have to use the same species or cultivars, there are ways around that if you use your imagination and do a little research. Your outdoor spaces should be as much about you as your indoor spaces so that you will use them. Your garden could be as simple as a native wildflower meadow that gets mowed once a year with a walking path down the center if that's what you like and your neighbors will tolerate it. The pollinators would probably certainly approve.

So feel free to bring your plant problems and your plant questions and we'll do what we can to help get you growing ☺

If you really want to learn more about plants and gardening, there may not be a better way for the average person than to become a Master Gardener in your state. The Beauregard Parish Master Gardener program is considered to be one of the top programs in the state of Louisiana. The college level classes are in depth, informative, and down to earth and there is so much to learn with this great group of volunteers. If you want to learn more about the program, taught by professors and specialists, in Beauregard Parish talk to [Keith Hawkins](#) and he will be happy to get you moving in the right direction. To find other Master Gardener programs in Louisiana [click here](#). Stick with it, and you could even become an Advanced Master Gardener!

Our [2014 Sizzling Summer Sale](#) will still be going on through our upcoming Open House assuming supplies hold out. Some things are just selling out that fast. We have over 350 plants on sale! We will have a nice selection of 1 gallon plants including but not limited to Japanese Maples, mixed Plumerias, Variegated Double Pink Oleanders, Sweet Olives, Confederate Jasmine, Gardenias, Crinum Lilies, and a few select specialty items (you'll just have to be here to see) that will be marked down to **\$5.00** each for onsite purchase only, while supplies last, and it's on a first come first serve basis. No pushing and shoving, please. For directions and a Google map [click here](#).

What's That Bug?

We've had an interesting discovery this week in finding this unusual looking hornworm happily devouring leaves of our Sweet Olive. Not all hornworms eat tomatoes, by the way, and many are quite specific so they are not all 'bad'. Admittedly we may not want them eating the Sweet Olive but we did carefully collect this beautiful caterpillar to watch him go through metamorphosis. These caterpillars can be found on a variety of plants including: Grancy Graybeard or Fringe Tree, Jasmine, and other members of the Olive family or Oleaceae, Verbenaceae, Bignoniaceae, and Boraginaceae. This same week a large adult, their wing span can reach nearly 6", appeared at the porch light for our viewing pleasure. The adult Rustic Sphinx moth is an important pollinator and will feed on nectar from almost any night blooming flower like Four O'clocks, Moonflower, Morning Glory, Angel's Trumpets, Evening Primrose, and a variety of other plants. They are often called hummingbird moths and may be mistaken for hummingbirds at times. To learn more about gardening for moths you should read Dr. Charles Allen's article on [Making a Moon-Moth Garden](#) at the State-by-State Gardening website.

If you know someone who you think would like to sign up for our periodic newsletter they can sign up by [clicking here](#) or at the following link:

<http://almostedenplants.com/shopping/shopcontent.asp?type=Email>



Thank You & Good Growing,
John, Bonnie, & Jeff McMillian
And the Crew at [Almost Eden](#)
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