



# LOUISIANA MAYHAW ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

Louisiana Mayhaw Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 382

Jackson, LA 70748

### **The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Mayhaw Conference Johnny Smith, LMA President**

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Mayhaw Conference will be held on April 12, 2014 at the C. Woodrow DeWitt Livestock Facility south of LSU-A, on Hwy. 71 south of Alexandria LA. This year LMA will be teaming up with LSU-AG as they host the 2014 Central Louisiana Garden Expo April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> from 9am - 5pm each day. The Mayhaw Conference will be held next door in the DeWitt Facility from 8am- 12pm on April 12<sup>th</sup>. We have a fantastic line-up of speakers scheduled with topics ranging from starting trees as seedlings, planning and starting an orchard, to maintaining the orchard and optimizing production. Weed control and pest management will be covered, as well as all the do's and don'ts of growing mayhaws. There will be experts to answer your questions and share the latest developments in new varieties, new markets and new ideas. It should be a great time. I'm looking forward to seeing you there. Visit our booth at the Expo!

Conference Agenda:

8am – 9am - Registration

9:00 am – 9:10 am – Welcome and Presentation of the Warren Award by President Johnny Smith

9:10 am – 9:30 am – Mr. Randy Rentz Forestry Reforestation Branch Chief with Louisiana Department of Forestry speaking on growing mayhaw and other hardwood seedlings

9:30 am – 10:00 am – Mr. Bobby Talbert (LMA Pioneer) - Starting and Maintaining a Mayhaw Orchard

10:00 am – 10:30 am – Dr. John Pyzner – Weed and Pest Control

10:30 am – 10:50 am – Cooking Contest Winners announced and Break

10:50 am – 11:20 am – Frank Richter- Experiences of a new mayhaw grower

11:20 am - 11:45 am – Q & A with the Panel of Experts – Bobby Talbert, Dr. John Pyzner, Randy Rentz and Frank Richter

11:45 am – 12:00 pm – LMA Business Meeting

12:00pm – Closing comments

### Map and Lodging info

Best Western 2720 West MacArthur Dr.

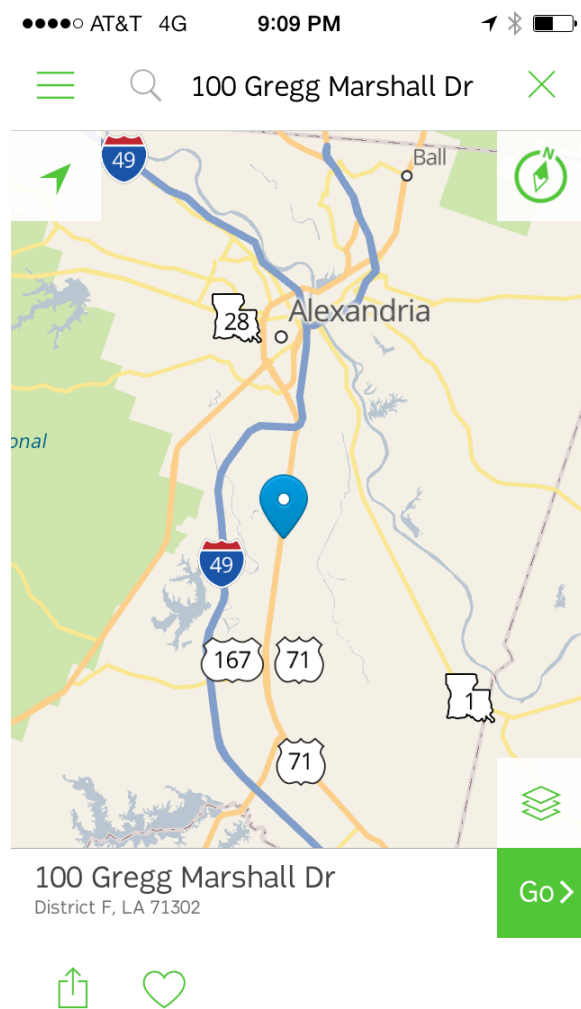
America's Best Value 1146 MacArthur Dr.

Ramada Alexandria 742 MacArthur Dr.

Quality Inn 3010 North MacArthur Dr.

From any of these motels, take MacArthur Drive south to Hwy 71 and on south to 100 Gregg Marshall Drive south of LSU-A campus. Other motels are available, but these are a few suggestions.

### Map



### Diversify with Mayhaws

**Billy R. Craft**

The word diversify is a common word used in financial circles. If you listen to CNBC or Fox Business Channel, this word comes up frequently. The financial experts being interviewed will stress the importance of diversification of asset classes. They recommend that individual investors do not put all their investment money in one asset class, such as stocks, but use a broader approach of stocks, bonds, money market funds, mutual funds, etc. Their reasoning for this is that different asset classes perform differently over a long period of time. Since individual investors can't "out-guess" these trends, it's best to diversify.

The mayhaw industry is currently seeing this played out with farmers and others interested in growing mayhaws. Farmers in Louisiana have learned that it is best to diversify their operations over a long period of time. Why? Because weather patterns vary from year to year. This may favor the production of corn one year and the production of soybeans, cotton, or sugarcane in another year. It is the old adage, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." Also, farmers are facing fluctuating prices for corn, soybeans, cotton, etc. So, if the bottom falls out on corn or soybeans, other crops can still allow the farmer to have a profitable year. The uncertainty of the "Farm Bill" is another major factor that farmers have to evaluate. Technical and financial assistance provided by USDA agencies is greatly linked to funding found in the farm bill approved by Congress. This is just another factor that makes diversification so important. (continued page 3)

In Louisiana, the Office of Forestry grows one year old mayhaw seedlings which can be purchased for about 50 cents, or less, each. This is a big help for mayhaw growers who are using these seedlings for grafting. One drawback to this situation is the fact that a high percentage of these one year old seedlings are not big enough to graft. Therefore, the seedlings have to be placed in containers and grown an additional year to be large enough to graft. If the Mayhaw Association could work with the Office of Forestry and determine if they would be willing to grow a certain percentage of 2 year old seedlings, this would really speed up the availability of superior grafted mayhaw plants.

I graft and sell grafted mayhaw trees. I have, over the last several months, had three farmers purchase mayhaw trees for the purpose of diversifying by adding mayhaws to their mix of crops. These three farmers grow crops varying from soybeans, corn, pecans and Christmas trees. They have family farms and want to sell mayhaw fruit and jelly. For jelly, it's usually the wife or daughter that has this interest. The margin of profit is usually better for "jelly making" compared to other sales. Of course, this is variable.

The diversification by row crop farmers to include mayhaws is a great "fit" into their operations. They have the spray equipment used for other crops already. Therefore, this doesn't require additional monetary outlays to handle spraying the mayhaws. They have knowledge already acquired in growing plants and all the factors that have to be considered. Farmers understand soil related requirements and the need for using fertilize, lime and pesticides. Farmers have years of experience in marketing their crops, so this would be an easy

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addition. Also, very important to this equation, farmers have the work ethic required to be successful.

The interest by row crop farmers to diversify will greatly increase in the future. The market for mayhaw products, such as juice, wine, ice cream and other products, some unknown at this time, looks very promising.

The current interest in mayhaws and mayhaw products is higher than ever before. This past year was a bad year for fruit production. The low availability of fruit really intensified the market and will have a positive effect on the industry for the future. Small jelly makers have come to the realization that planting your own trees and having fruit available is important.

Significant progress has been made in recent years in "mayhaw varieties" (selections) to plant. Production has increased, late blooming selections are available, selections that hold their fruit so the grower can have leeway in harvesting, more disease resistant selections, etc. Growers putting in orchards at present have far superior selections compared to 20 years ago. This technology of selections will continue and other improvements in pesticides will evolve. Harvesting equipment has made good strides and will improve over time.

So, the future looks good for the mayhaw industry. The mayhaw plant, fruit and products are unique. Happy mayhawing!

Billy R. Craft



My ice orchard on March 4, 2014. Notice the blooms encased in ice.

## Time For Spring

### Johnny Smith

Yes, it's transition time. Time to put away jackets and warm garments (but not too far away) and get out and go to work. The above photo was a beautiful, but scary scene to my wife and I a little over a week ago. It looked like the early bloomers were doomed. Today, it's near 70 degrees and, we are blessed not a bloom was lost due to the ice storm. Now it's time to mow, move trees out of the greenhouse and seriously start thinking about getting the back fields ready to plant melons and corn. We were late starting our spray schedule this year, due to the lingering cold, wet weather. I'm now half through that cycle since the ice storm last week.

Change is rapid this time of year. Growers have to watch the weather, plan ahead and always have plans B, C and D ready- just in case. The forecast calls for warmer temperatures for the next week. For me, that means mowing, spraying, training young trees, grafting in the field, pruning suckers, cross-pollinating for possible new selections and monitoring my plants inside and

outside the greenhouse. Normally, I begin my spray schedule somewhere

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from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of February. It varies due to weather conditions. This year was much later. I spray 3 to 4 times, 5 days apart, using Rally to prevent cedar rust, Rampart to prevent fire blight and various insecticides to control bugs.

During this time, I look at each tree in the orchard for any issues I can correct. I'll perform minor pruning, training limbs on some, removing suckers (sprouts from the rootstock), and begin battling fire ants. Addressing these inevitable issues quickly and consistently prevents a lot of major problems from developing. Removing pruned limbs or dead limbs from the orchard and burning them prevents a lot of bug problems. Cuttings left out attract bugs like bees to honey.

Yes, it's time for Spring, and welcome it is! It looks like a great year for mayhaws, perhaps a record harvest. With the current demand, I think we need it.



Mayhaw tree at James Eaves' "Mayhaw Patch" two days after the thaw. No blooms lost from the freeze. Note: This tree is ungrafted and has never been pruned. It deserves further attention.