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[Home](#)
HOME

[Themed Gardens](#)
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[Kids Gardening](#)
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[Shop](#)
SHOP ▾

[National Garden Month](#)
NATIONAL GARDEN MONTH

[Research](#)
RESEARCH

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[Regional Reports](#)
[National News](#)

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[How-To Projects](#)
[How-To Videos](#)
[Pest Control Library](#)
[Food Garden Guide](#)
[Plant Care Guides](#)

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[Zone Finder](#)
[Event Calendar](#)
[Calculators](#)
[Public Garden Directory](#)

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National News: July 7, 2005

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[Report Index](#)
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[Resources](#)
[Resources](#)
[Reminders](#)
[Reminders](#)
[National News](#)
[National News](#)

Best Fall-Blooming Anemones

Anemones are great late-season bloomers in the perennial border. They produce 2- to 3-inch-diameter, single or double flowers on 2- to 4-foot-tall plants. The flowers come in a range of colors, from white to carmine red, and bloom from July until frost.

The Chicago Botanic Garden has been trialing various groups of perennial plants for more than 12 years. For the past 6 years they've tested 26 varieties of anemones to find the best ones for their USDA zone 5 climate.



The anemone varieties that performed best in their trial for length of bloom season, growth habit and health, and hardiness were *Anemone hybrida* 'Andre Atkinson', 'Max Vogel', and 'Serenade'. 'Andre Atkinson' is a 3-foot-tall plant with white flowers and a creamy yellow center. 'Max Vogel' and 'Serenade' both produce pink flowers with yellow centers. 'Max Vogel' grows about 4 feet tall, while 'Serenade' grows to 2 feet tall and has a strong, spreading habit as well.

Other anemone varieties that performed well include *Anemone hupehensis* 'Splenden' (2-foot-tall, rose-pink flowers) and *Anemone japonica* 'Prinz Heinrich' (2-foot-tall, double, pink flowers).

For more information, go to: [Chicago Botanic Garden Plant Evaluation Program](#).

Huge, New Fig

The fig crop is ripening in many areas of the county. If you love figs, you'll love this new variety from the Louisiana State University breeding program.

'LSU Gold' features 2-inch-wide, tender, very sweet fruits with bright yellow skin and strawberry-colored pulp. This reliable producer yields fruits up to 50 percent heavier than regular fig varieties.



'LSU Gold' trees resist splitting and are hardy in USDA zones 8 to 10 without protection and in zone 7 with winter protection. The variety is available in garden centers in the southeast.

Figs grow best in full sun on well-drained soil, producing the best crops when they are 3 to 4 years old. Remove the few fruits that form on 1- to 2-year-old trees after planting. Keep trees well watered in summer and pruned in winter. Louisiana-bred fig varieties are self-fertile and don't need insects for pollination to produce fruit, so there is no need to plant more than one tree.

For more on growing figs, go to the: [Louisiana State University](#) Web site.

Smarter Sidewalks

As any gardener knows, the roots from trees growing along sidewalks or paved driveways can eventually cause the sidewalks to crack and heave. Municipalities in California have been experimenting with installing rubberized sidewalks instead of concrete to minimize the cost of maintenance and to protect tree roots.



Rubberized sidewalks are made from 100 percent recycled tires. They are installed like any brick or stone tile, and have a soil-grabbing bubble base that keeps them in place. These sidewalks allow water and oxygen to penetrate into the soil better than concrete sidewalks, and they are more flexible and resilient. The walkways come in a variety of colors that don't fade over time. Rubberized sidewalks are installed in modules that can be lifted and replaced as needed. The flexible material helps keep walkways level, so there's less chance of pedestrians tripping and falling on uneven ground.

Not only are rubberized sidewalks more adaptable and longer lasting than concrete, they are better for trees too. When tree roots crack and overturn a concrete walkway, construction workers invariably tear up the roots when repairing the walk. Under the rubberized sidewalks, tree roots grow slower and tend to branch more, making them easier to prune. Maintenance workers periodically remove the appropriate walkway section, trim the roots while they are still small, and replace the walkway with minimum damage to the tree.

Although mostly used in California, rubberized sidewalks are being tried in northern cities, such as New Rochelle, New York. Homeowners can now purchase rubberized sidewalks to use on their properties as well.

For more information on this new type of walkways, go to: [Rubber Sidewalks](#).

New Clove-Scented Shrub

Finding a shrub that grows well in the shade, produces attractive flowers, and provides interesting foliage is a challenge. A new variegated version of the Florida anise bush (*Illicium floridanum*) is perfect shrub for hot-weather areas, plus it has the added benefit of producing clove-scented flowers in spring.



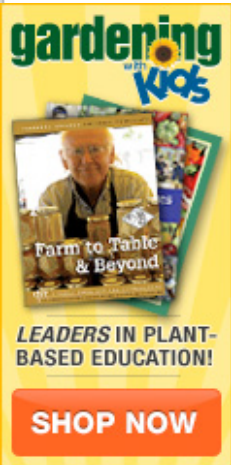
This low-maintenance evergreen grows 6 feet high and 5 feet wide at maturity. It grows in part shade and is hardy in USDA zones 6 to 9. The white edging on the leaves gives the shrub a bright appearance even in low light areas. In mid-spring, small, pink flowers that bloom for weeks provide an alluring clove-like scent.

For more information on the variegated Florida anise bush, go to: [Wayside Gardens](#).

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