

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
“July Garden Maintenance”

July is the time to start the seeds of cool season vegetables for the fall garden. Most vegetables will require two months from seed to the beginning of harvest. Give them plenty of water, keep them weed free, and use shade cloth if necessary. Cool season vegetables are beets, broccoli, cauliflower, collard greens, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard greens, spinach, swiss chard, and turnips. If you prefer to use seedlings rather than seeds, plan to attend the master gardener fall plant sale **September 22** at the Bell County Extension office.

Encourage the wonder and beauty of bees, butterflies and birds to your landscape by providing easily accessible water, and please plant native plants! Many designer plants have limited amounts of nectar and use more water.

Treating fire ant mounds with baits is not as effective during hot summer months. Treat the fire ant mound with organic (spinosad or pyrethrum) or, use chemical insecticides sprinkled on the mound rather than applying baits. Check St. Augustine grass for grub worms--if there are five or more grubs in a square-foot sample, granular insecticide should be applied now.

Lawns and landscape plants need 1 inch of water per week. Plants in containers and hanging baskets require daily watering. Mulching gardens, flowerbeds, and the plants in pots with 3-4 inches of native hardwood mulch will reduce stress and watering needs by 25%. Decomposed granite, river rock, or crushed glass make interesting mulching alternatives.

Keep roses and annuals deadheaded, watered, and fertilized to keep them blooming. Add drought/heat tolerant plants to the landscape such as Pine Muhly, Nolina, Thryallis, Crape Myrtle, Salvia greggii, Flame

Acanthus, Rock Rose, Pride of Barbados, Red Yucca, Turk's Cap, and Blackfoot Daisy. Bougainvillea loves the heat and makes a stunning container plant. Water bougainvillea daily and fertilize with high nitrogen fertilizer (17-7-10) every two weeks. It can also be used in hanging baskets. It is frost sensitive and needs protection from frost.

Bougainvillea is a thorny, woody vine in colors of red, yellow, orange, purple, pink, magenta, and white. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

Bell County master gardeners are taking applications for the next class starting January 2013. Applications can be downloaded from the website or picked up at the AgriLife Extension Office, 1605 North Main, Belton, Texas. [254-933-5305](tel:254-933-5305). The all-inclusive fee is \$250.



In the photo: Bougainvillea makes a stunning, colorful, container plant.