

Gardening in July

To quote Neil Sperry recently, "This year has been weird." The extended forecast still calls for a cooler and wetter summer, so the silver lining to all this may be some really beautiful lawns, flowers and gardens all summer long. The bad news is that we will have to mow all summer.

Plant:

- It's time to start that fall garden. Plant tomatoes and pumpkins early in the month. You can still plant black-eyed peas. Plant peppers in the last two weeks of the month.
- Trees, shrubs and groundcovers planted this month should be watered by hand every day or two for the rest of the summer. Deep-root watering rods are not necessary since most roots are within the top 12 inches of the soil.
- Bermuda and St. Augustine planted this month should be watered twice a day for short periods for about two weeks.

Prune:

- Remove dead or dying annuals and replace with heat-tolerant annuals such as copper plant or moss rose.
- Remove spent flowers and seed stalks from spring perennials. Plants such as salvias and celosias will aggressively reseed themselves next spring so remove their spent flower heads to reduce the amount of seed. Place some of the spent flower heads in a paper bag to collect seed to plant where you want.
- Remove spring-fruiting blackberry canes. Tip the new canes to encourage branching and compact growth to provide plenty of berries next year.

Fertilize:

- For lawns, fertilize with an all-nitrogen fertilizer for clay soils and a high-nitrogen fertilizer for sandy soils. Water deeply after applying the fertilizer.

Garden Tips

- Fall garden: To determine when to plant or what variety of a vegetable to plant:
 1. Average first frost date: November 15
 2. Determine days from transplant or from planting seed to beginning of harvest.
 3. Allow at least two months after beginning of harvest to first frost
 4. Calculate -- Subtract the number of days from planting to end of harvest from November 15.

Based on the above formula, if a tomato variety takes 90 days from transplant to beginning of harvest and you want to be able to harvest for at least another month (120 days total), then subtract 120 from November 15 and that puts us at July 19 specifically, but the first of July is better to allow for longer harvest or for those dreaded early frosts.

- Not too early to begin planning the fall and winter garden. We enjoy a 12-month growing season with careful planning. Begin preparing a bed that can be protected for your winter greens including spinach, lettuce, chard, beets, turnips, kale, etc.
- Consider a square-foot gardening type bed which is small and easy to cover.

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