

# Tips for the Landscape and Garden

Tips adapted from Bob Westerfield, State Consumer Horticulturist for the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, and Walter Reeves, Retired Extension agent for DeKalb County and Saturday Morning Gardening Show Host on WSB Radio.



Mosquitoes are in full force and the best individual strategy against mosquitoes will still be eliminating breeding areas by cleaning gutters, replacing the water in birdbaths, dumping flowerpot saucers and removing other standing water. Add biological controls to small ponds or containers difficult to empty.

Last chance to prune your “mop head” Hydrangea macrophylla before they set buds for next year’s flowers. Save any blooms you trim off by hanging them upside down in a dry place until thoroughly dried for use in flower arrangements. Penny McHenry [founder of American Hydrangea Society] used her car trunk.

Hanging baskets tend to dry out faster during our hot months. Try soaking your baskets in a tub of water. This will allow the plant to absorb the water thoroughly and prevent water run off if watering from above the basket.

Keep weeds in beds under control and maintain a layer of mulch under your plants to retain soil moisture.

It is time to inspect your tomato plants for the Tomato Hornworm. Look close for caterpillar droppings, missing stems, and leaves. You may see a large green caterpillar munching happily. If you notice white looking protrusions on its back leave him alone, a parasitic wasp has already set him up for his demise. These egg cases will hatch into larvae and devour him internally and send other beneficial wasps out into your garden. If no protrusions, just pick him off and drop in a can of soapy water.



*Tomato Horn Worm with parasitic Braconid Wasp eggs.*

Keep lawns mowed at the appropriate height. This reduces water loss and helps lower soil temperatures. Leave clippings on the lawn to decompose.

A brown or grayish cast over lawns can be caused by dull or improperly adjusted mower blades that shred grass rather than cut it. Keep mower blades sharpened as well.

If you have been pinching back your mums this summer, mid-July is the time to stop so they will be able to develop flower buds for the fall.

Many plants are easily propagated by layering. Verbenas, euonymus, pachysandra, daphne, and climbing roses are some examples that will root if stems

are fastened down on soft earth with a wire and covered with some soil.

After harvesting your strawberries, remove excess runners and any unhealthy crowns.

Divide and transplant bearded iris using the vigorous ends of the rhizomes. Discard the old center portion or any soft sections. Leaves do not need to be cut back unless torn or damaged. More green leaf surface equals faster recovery from being transplanted.

Get a second bloom from faded annuals by cutting them back to approximately half their height, then fertilize them with ½ cup of 5-10-10 per square yard of planted area and apply a generous layer of mulch.

Allow peaches and plums to ripen on the tree. Harvest them just as they begin to soften.

Cucumbers develop a bitter taste if the soil is not kept consistently moist. Harvest for pickling whole when 2 to 4 inches; for table use, when longer than 5 inches. Remove any overripe cucumbers to encourage continuous production. Plant some seeds to start a new group of vines for fall harvest. Pull up unproductive vines.

Fire blight on apple and pear trees (including ornamental varieties) can be identified by looking for blackened twigs and branches. The disease will spread and kill the tree if not controlled. Remove all blighted twigs, cutting eight inches below the infected area. Disinfect pruning tools after each cut to prevent spreading the disease. Dip the blades in a solution of one part household bleach and nine parts water. Dispose of twigs in trash.

Keep a sharp edge on spades, hoes, and other cutting tools. This makes cutting through weed roots and sod much easier.

Remember to protect yourself from sun and mosquitoes when working outside.

A piece of corrugated cardboard, such as the side from a box, forms an effective and portable barrier to use when spraying a non-selective herbicide next to desired plants. By changing the angle of the cardboard, it is easy to spray weeds growing right up to the base of a desirable plant while shielding the stems, branches, and leaves. Since some herbicide will get on the shield, the

same side should always face the sprayer when moved from one location to another.

Time to plan out your fall and winter cool season crops for your vegetable garden. Beans, cauliflower, lima beans, cucumber, bell peppers, turnips, and eggplant are some varieties that can be planted this month. You can still get in a second planting of summer vegetables.

If using chemicals follow all directions on the packaging and wear long sleeve shirts and pants as well as eye protection and gloves. Follow all clean up directions so pesticide run-off does not enter streams and ponds.

Consider garden plans that support a more sustainable approach to gardening. Avoiding pesticides and including more pollinator and bird friendly plants leads to a healthy yard and supports the environment.

Be sure to pick ripening fruits and vegetable consistently. Overripe fruit and vegetables tell the plant to stop producing more flowers and fruit.

Bermuda grass, zoysia grass, and centipede grass sod can be planted now successfully if there are bare spots in the lawn or a new lawn is needed. Water enough so that the top half-inch of soil stays moist but not soggy. Reduce water as roots take hold and sod will not come up when tugged. Most grasses need about one inch of water per week, once established, to stay healthy. Remember to water early, check local watering restrictions, and follow all requirements.

Check any spring planted trees and shrubs especially as temperatures climb. These will need about two gallons of water a week to stay healthy. Water nearer the stem as roots probably have not grown too far away from the trunk yet. Add mulch out from the trunk to help keep ground moist and soft and encourage roots to expand. Keep mulch off the trunk.

Cut back dahlias to half their height. Fertilize, mulch, and water plants for a fall crop of flowers.

Prune fig trees lightly now. Any tall shoots or unwanted directions of shoots can be removed now.

House plants living outside for the summer are using all that extra sunlight to really grow. Plants may need a boost of fertilizer now to support all the extra growth.

Do not automatically reach for fungicides if you suspect a disease on your plants. Identify the problem correctly first- there might be another cause. Contact your local Extension office for advice.

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