

## **July Garden Activities from Your Master Gardener Extension Volunteers**

**Trees and Shrubs** - Water trees to keep them alive during the dry summer months. Water the ground at the base of the trunk and out as far as the limb canopy reaches.

Trees and shrubs may need to be lightly trimmed in the summer months to maintain a desired shape but save all major pruning jobs for the late winter.

Avoid wetting the foliage of roses when watering them as this encourages leaf disease.

For better health of your creeping juniper, prune out old, dead foliage underneath the plants.

**Vegetables** - If you have not planted your tomatoes, corn, beans and okra, do so by mid July to allow time for them to mature before cool weather.

Water early in the day or late in the evening for the best results. Much of the water will evaporate if you water in the middle of the day. For more efficient watering, water at the root zone with soaker hoses.

Cut back by half herbs like basil and oregano to promote leaves and to prevent them from producing seed.

Look for and remove hornworms (big green caterpillars camouflaged among the stems) on your tomato and pepper plants.

Mulch your garden to retain moisture, lower the temperature, reduce the number of weeds and prevent the soil surface from compacting.

Japanese beetles are hard to control. Hand pick if you can but you may need to apply an insecticide. Always follow label directions.

Remove vegetable plants from your garden once they have finished bearing to prevent disease/insect buildup.

Plant pumpkin seeds now for pumpkins in October.

Remove tomato suckers (a shoot growing between the main stem and a branch) and root them for new plants. Select 5 – 6" long suckers and root in water and then plant in your garden.

Pick squash, cucumbers and okra regularly to keep the plants producing.

A big rotten spot on the end of a ripe tomato means it has blossom end rot. Purchase a product from your garden center that specifically treats this and apply lime to your garden soil in the fall to decrease susceptibility next growing season.

Extreme heat can cause tomatoes and peppers to stop setting fruit. This is a temporary condition, and they will continue to set fruit once temperatures drop.

Dig Irish potatoes and harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow and shrivel up.

Remove water-robbing weeds from your garden. One weed that goes to seed this year makes many weeds next year.

**Flowerbeds** - If your annuals and perennials need to be rejuvenated, cut one-third of the existing growth, water and fertilize. In about ten days, your annuals will bloom again with a fuller, healthier appearance and in September, your perennials will be more compact and less likely to topple over or split in high winds.

It is not too late to sow seeds of quick growing annuals such as marigolds and zinnias.

Cut back dahlias to half their height after they bloom for fall flowers.

Divide crowded bearded iris clumps making sure each root has a healthy fan of leaves.

In addition to summer annuals, coleus and caladium, two plants with beautiful foliage color, can be planted for long-lasting summer color.

Cut back tall overgrown chrysanthemums in early July for compact growth. Then allow the plant to grow for fall blooms.

Cut purple coneflower and black-eyed Susan for a nice bouquet. This will help the plants continue to bloom for a longer period and give you much pleasure.

Hanging baskets continually exposed to sun, wind and high temperatures may need to be watered every day.

Stake tall plants.

Remove faded flowers from annuals and perennials to encourage more blooms.

**Houseplants** - Remove standing water from flowerpot saucers and watering cans where mosquitoes can breed.

Treat mealy bugs on coleus and African violets with a cotton swab saturated with rubbing alcohol.

**Miscellaneous** - Fireflies are fun to watch and are beneficial. The larvae eat mites, snails, slugs and other soft-bodied insects.

To help keep your compost pile from drying out, make the top of your pile concave so rainfall is directed to the center.

Make sure your mower blades are sharp. A ragged cut causes grass to use more water.

Keep shovel blades sharp with a file or grinder. A sharp blade makes digging hard soil easier.

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