

## July Gardening Calendar

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The summer last year had moderate temperatures and well-timed rains. This year so far has been different. June was very hot and dry. If the trend continues, July could be a challenging time for plants and gardeners. Work in the morning or evening, drink plenty of water, and wear a hat.

For newly planted trees and shrubs to survive the July heat they need to be watered generously. Watering from a lawn sprinkling is usually not enough. The water needs to be applied directly to the root ball with a pail or hose every week. Because the plant is newly planted, the root system is small and is challenged to collect enough water to support the foliage in the heat. Mulch over the root system also helps.

July is the transition month in our two season tomato culture. We pull the spring plants in early July and place new transplants in the garden after mid- July.

If there are no spider mites on the pulled spring plants put them in the compost pile. If your compost pile is close to your garden and the spent plants have spider mites, put them in the green recycling can or garbage can.

For the fall garden it is best to prepare the soil by incorporating at least 2 inches of compost over the planting area and 5 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer for every 50 sq. ft. of bed. Space the plants every 3ft in the garden. Drip irrigation or leaky hoses are the best way to water. I run my drip lines for 60 minutes every other day for tomatoes. Remember that if you use leaky hoses as replacements for drip irrigation barely turn the spigot on. They need to leak the water out at low pressure. For the autumn crop use determinate heat-setting varieties such as Surefire, BHN 968, Roma Surprise, Tycoon, Red Deuce, Valley Cat, and Phoenix. The Rodeo Tomato, HM123, should also do well. It was one of the first plants to set fruit this spring. The issue in the fall is to beat the cold weather.

Peppers, okra, eggplant and southern peas will produce well in July. I have also had good luck with tatuma squash through the summer. Cucumbers and the melons will generally peter out.

If you have martin houses the young have fledged. The adults and youngsters will all aggregate in collection areas before their trip to South America in July. After they leave, lower the houses, clean out the nests and block the nesting holes to prevent another generation of English sparrows from being produced. Refill the bird baths every day and you will be rewarded with lots of bathing and drinking activity.

There won't be any Monarch butterflies until later in the fall but their cousins, the Queens, will be laying eggs on milkweed if you have it. . Let the zinnias reseed. They and the mistflower will be the most popular nectar sources. Other sources will be, duranta, porter weed, flame acanthus, Mexican flame vine, salvias, and lantanas.

Keep the begonias, coleus, caladium, portulaca, and pentas watered. Fertilize the flowers and vegetables every month with slow-release lawn fertilizer. The common 19-5-9 formula works well.

If you had grubs or chinch bugs in the lawn last year it would have been best to apply a soil insecticide in June but if you didn't, apply one early this month. The same product will control both pests. Follow label

instructions. Irrigate St Augustine grass at least every 2 weeks if it doesn't rain. Bermuda, zoysia and buffalo grass can be allowed to go dormant if there are water restrictions or you want to save money on the water bill.