

August Gardening Calendar

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Another hot month coming up! Be careful about your health by limiting the time you spend working in the garden during the hot part of the day. Wear a hat and stay hydrated by drinking lots of water.

If you did not pull your spring tomatoes in July do it early in August. Collect all the full-size fruit to ripen in the house and toss the plants in the compost pile unless they have spider mites. If spider mites are evident discard the plants in the garbage can or the City Recycling Can (the green one). Plant fall tomatoes as quickly as possible so the plants can beat the cold weather. Look for Surefire, Roma Surprise, BHN 968, HM1823, Tycoon, Red Deuce, and other determinate heat-setting variety. If you saw evidence of nematodes use a nematode resistant variety such as Valley Cat, Celebrity or Tycoon. A new cherry tomato that fared well in the AgriLife Extension tests, Ruby Crush will also be available. Dr. Jerry Parsons reports that it out produced BHN 968 in the tests. Prepare the soil with 2 inches of compost and 10 cups of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) incorporated into 100 sq. ft. of planting area. Cage the tomatoes and initially water every day by hand. After 10 days be prepared to irrigate with a leaky hose or drip irrigation every other day for an hour.

Some communities are back in drought restrictions after 2 years of good rains. Check the rules in your community and comply with the requirements. If you have Bermuda, buffalo, or zoysia grass and decided to let the lawn go dormant to save water in July, you can continue the practice in August. Sometime after the middle of the month the temperatures at night should become cooler. Nighttime temperatures are more important than daytime temps because depending on the plant temperatures at night must be somewhere under 70degrees for the plant to produce carbohydrates rather than burning them. The longer the night time temps stay high the more the food stores in the plant are depleted.

The purple martins have left their nests to form up at assembly points on their way to South America. To reduce the production of English sparrows, lower the martin houses, clean out the old nests and plug the holes. The key way to assist the birds in your neighborhood in the hot summer is to set-up one or more bird baths in the open at least 6 feet away from cover. Rinse and refill the baths every day. To really draw in the species and individual birds obtain a dripper mechanism to produce moving water. The birds love it. Keep the hummingbird feeders rinsed and refilled with sugar water every week. If the bees show up, welcome them. It is important to support pollinator populations and the hummingbirds manage to obtain their share of the sugar water.

If you planted Dreamland zinnia transplants for cut flowers and as a nectar plant for butterflies they have probably dropped enough seed for a new generation to grow. The progeny of these hybrid plants are not as perfectly shaped or as colorful as the original transplants but the butterflies and hummingbirds seem to like them better as a nectar source. Plant cosmos, Maximillian sunflowers, California Giant zinnias, and Cactus zinnias by seed for more bird and butterfly food sources. The California Giant and Cactus zinnias also provide long stemmed cut flowers.

The flower buds on your peaches and other fruit trees are forming now so make sure the trees are irrigated every 2 weeks if it does not rain.

Water trees and shrubs planted in the last year at the base of the trunk. Sprinkler applications usually do not provide enough water to hydrate the limited root system of a newly planted tree or shrub. Water generously every two weeks if it does not rain.