

June Gardening Tasks

Published 6/17/19 – image of apple orchard from freevintageillustrations.com

So we are now in the latter half of June and our growing season is well on it's way. There are a variety of tasks a gardener should be considering this month. Because of space restrictions, the following is a less than comprehensive list of jobs to keep in mind.



Thinning vegetable sprouts

Almost every seed package for leafy greens like lettuce and root crops like radish tell you to plant the seeds in a row and then after they germinate thin them to their final growing density. For most gardens, now is the time to thin. As hard as it is to pluck a seed that just performed the miracle of germination, the remaining plants will do so much better because of it. Veggies grow healthy, big, and good tasting only if they are given enough space around them. If you really want to replant the plucked sprouts elsewhere you can try, but it's a lot of work and no where close to all of them will survive.

Thinning fruit trees

For the first year after planting a fruit tree all fruit should be removed so all of the plant's energy is spent on growing and establishing strong roots. But in the years following you should always remove enough fruit so that limbs won't break due to too much fruit weighting them down. But even past that if more than a single fruit is growing in a space as big as your hand, any extra fruit should be removed for the same reasons as thinning vegetable sprouts.

Move houseplants outside

Our weather has finally moved into steady nighttime temperatures above 50 degrees, making it safe for moving house plants outside. When placing them outside, almost every house plant will suffer in direct sun shine and will scald and show signs of burn, even most inside cactus. So put your house plants in full or dappled shade and also realize they might need more frequent waterings now that they are outside. If you decide to give your house plants a change of scenery, realize when they come back in you'll likely have to treat them for insect pests. More on that this fall.

Look for caterpillar on trees and shrubs

Enough of the season has passed that the first wave of moth and butterfly adults have had time to lay eggs and from those eggs come hungry caterpillars. Hungry caterpillars love those tender leaves of so in most cases start eating the youngest leaves and the majority of those are found at the tops of trees. Keep your eyes out because insect eggs are usually laid in bunches and they hatch at the same time, meaning almost overnight lots of caterpillars are suddenly munching away on your prized tree.

Give last nitrogen fertilizer to trees and shrubs

Finally, July 4th is used a general date as the latest to give heavy nitrogen fertilizer to trees and shrubs. This fertilizer is used throughout the summer as the plants continue growing, but as the year fades to fall growth needs to stop and preparation for winter needs to begin. Fertilizer given to trees and shrubs in late July or later will produce a flush of growth, but at a price of maybe not surviving the winter.

Art Smith is a co-owner of East Pierre Landscape and Garden Center, 5400 SD Hwy 34, Pierre