



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – July Helpful Hints

2022

Things to do in the garden this month...

It may seem like midsummer is a slow gardening season, but there are plenty of tasks gardeners can attend to in July to ensure a productive, healthy harvest and beautiful flowerbeds even during the hottest summer days.

July is the perfect time to...

- **Water Young Trees**
Any trees that have been recently planted or are less than three years old should still have dedicated watering throughout July to ensure they do not dry out and the roots can continue to establish. Use a soaker hose around trees for an hour to water them sufficiently.
- **Monitor Containers Closely**
All containers, including hanging flower baskets, need more water during hot July days. Smaller baskets may need to be watered twice, particularly on windy days that can dry plants out more quickly.
- **Keep Weeding**
Weeding is a never-ending garden task. During hot July days it is essential to remove unwanted plants that compete for water and soil nutrients. Weeds will be easier to pull when the soil is damp, so it can be better to weed immediately after watering the garden.
- **Stake Tall Plants**
As different flowers, vines and plants grow taller in July, it is important to stake and support them appropriately so they do not fall or break. When staking plants, however, keep ties loose so the plants are not choked as they continue to grow.

- **Tend Compost**
Turning and aerating compost in July will help speed the decomposition process and minimize unpleasant odors, and if necessary, the pile should be moistened carefully to provide beneficial bacteria with suitable moisture, but it should not be dripping wet.
- **Replenish Mulch**
Keep mulch replenished to conserve water, cool root zones, and decrease weeds.
- **Deadhead Flowers**
Both annual and perennial flowers can be deadheaded in July. For late spring flowers, this may encourage one last blooming, while perennial flowers will continue to bloom profusely for several weeks if they are properly tended.
- **Propagate Plants**
July is the perfect time to propagate shrubs, herbs and spring perennials to spread plants to other parts of the garden or to share with friends and neighbors. Choose only the healthiest plants for propagation, however, and care for them well to encourage growth.
- **Prune Trees**
July is a good time to carefully prune trees to eliminate damaged branches that could be dangerous during thunderstorms, or to help trees keep their desired heights and shapes. Pruning will also permit better light and air circulation for fruit trees or shade gardens.
- **Plant Late Harvest Vegetables and Blooms**
While most planting is complete by July, planting late autumn produce can extend the growing season and provide a more bountiful harvest. Lettuce, cabbage, beets, broccoli, radishes, turnips, zinnias and pansies can all be planted in July.
- **Start Harvesting and Canning**
By July, some fruits and vegetables are ready to harvest and it is time to start canning or preserving produce to maximize the garden's productivity. Onions, garlic and peaches can all be harvested in July, and young cucumbers can be made into delicious pickles.
- **Start Planning for Next Year**
By midsummer it is possible to see what is and what isn't working in the garden. Keep a detailed notebook of plans, ideas and tips for next year, and start considering what changes to make to keep the garden at its best.

Be Water-Wise

Summer heat is picking up in July, stressing plants and making adequate water a priority. Ideally, gardens should be watered early in the day when less water will be lost to evaporation. Drip systems are the best options to minimize water loss and direct the water to the roots of the plant.

Here are 13 tips to help ensure your plants survive the heat of summer:

1. Test the soil with your finger. Poke down a few inches near the stem to check the root zone. Even if the surface seems dry, there may still be moisture below. If not, get the hose!
2. Watering in the morning is best. This will allow the water to soak in before it evaporates from heat and dry wind, allows the leaves time to dry out if they get splashed, and plants will have the moisture to draw from during the heat of the day. Late afternoon is second best, just be sure the foliage will dry out before nighttime. Avoid watering in the heat of the day because water will evaporate much faster and any overspray on the leaves can cause them to burn.
3. Water at the base of the plant with a watering wand, long-neck watering can, soaker hose or drip system. Avoid getting the leaves, fruits, or vegetables wet to help prevent diseases that thrive on moisture.
4. Wind dries out plants quickly from moisture lost through the foliage—the larger the leaves, the more moisture lost (think squash, cucumber, coral bells, etc.). Protect plants with barriers, such as or locate such plants out of wind-prone areas.
5. Fruits and vegetables need consistent water to produce well. Don't let them go completely dry before watering them again because this can cause problems like blossom end rot or cracked tomatoes.
6. Containers dry out much faster than the ground and will need more frequent watering, especially if they are placed in full sun or exposed to wind.
7. Apply a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch, such as bark, pine needles, or shredded leaves. This will help hold moisture in the soil.
8. If water puddles on top of the soil, apply a small amount to soften the surface. Come back a few minutes later and add more to make sure it soaks in thoroughly.

9. Brown leaf edges and/or yellow leaves can signal over-watering. Make sure you're checking before adding more!
10. Plants benefit much more from a slow and deep watering than a quick splash. Make sure you're watering deep enough to reach the roots. Water mature trees at the drip line, not the trunk
11. If summer vacation is going to keep you away for more than a day or two, setting up an automatic timer worth the effort.
12. Recycle plastic bottles as a deep watering system. Poke holes in the bottle and bury next to plants with the top opening exposed. Add water to the bottle through the top and the water will leach out deeper into the soil.
13. Unglazed clay pots are more porous than glazed or plastic pots and allow water to evaporate faster. This may be good during wetter times of the year by allowing the soil to drain better and not get soggy, but keep an extra eye on them during drought or hotter weather.

Keep Cool and Happy Gardening!