



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – Helpful Hints
August, 2023

August’s heat, humidity and unwanted pests can wreak havoc on our gardens! Don’t give up on your flower beds and vegetable patches! Here are some tips to refresh, replant and revive your gardens to keep them growing at their best through the late summer.

Things to do this month...

Stop fertilizing trees and shrubs with high nitrogen sources by the end of the month.

- Fertilizing in late summer can cause some plants to put out new growth that is susceptible to frost damage. The best times to fertilize trees and shrubs are in spring before growth starts, or mid-summer after shoot growth ceases, because root growth and maximum nutrient uptake happen at these times.
- Put away the pruning tools for now. Late summer pruning may make plants push new growth that is not winter hardy. Roses are particularly susceptible to damage from late season fertilization and pruning. The ideal time to prune most species is in late winter or early spring while plants are still dormant.

Deadhead perennials to extend the blooming season and encourage plants to direct more energy to their root systems.

- Deadheading can even encourage a second bloom later in the season. How to do it properly is determined by a plant’s growth habit and your own preferences.
- Cut spent flowers back to a lateral bud or leaf. Only some plants will re-bloom after deadheading, but most will be better for it regardless.
- Deadheading perennials gives the garden a cleaner, more polished look. Perennials that typically benefit from deadheading include daylily, iris, Hosta, peony, Shasta daisy, coreopsis and dianthus.

Make sure the mower deck is set high, to a height of three inches or more.

- Taller grass is more resilient against insect feeding, weed invasion and drought.
- Mowing high promotes the establishment of a larger and deeper root system, which is more drought tolerant.
- A larger root mass also makes grass more tolerant of grub feeding, reducing the need for insecticide applications. Taller grass also helps provide broadleaf weed and crabgrass control by shading and cooling the soil surface, equating to less herbicide use.

Refresh container plantings

There are few simple things you can do and plants you can add that will give your containers that second wind for getting them through until autumn. Toward the end of summer, containers you planted up in spring may need a refreshing.

- Add unique and dependable plants that will continue to bloom late into the season.
- Consider foliage plants that can be brought indoors. Many tropicals that we commonly think of as simply “houseplants” make great companion plants for outdoor containers. Consider multi-colored crotons, ferns and dracaena. Just be sure to check light requirements before plugging them into pots in full sun.
- Continue daily deadheading for extending the bloom period of annuals. Remember that some annuals, such as petunias and calibrachoa, can be cut back by half for stimulating new growth and flowering.
- Continue feeding plants a water-soluble fertilizer for boosting their blooms—especially if persistent rains have depleted the soil of necessary nutrients.

Divide Perennials

While spring and fall are traditionally the best time to divide, many plants take summer division just fine as long as you follow these tips. There are even some plants, such as bearded iris and Oriental poppies, that do best when divided this time of year.

When dividing perennials in summer...

- Water the plant you want to divide and its future home the day before you dig.
- Before digging, cut the foliage back by half: This way a smaller root system won't have to support lots of foliage in the heat later.
- Shear plants whose leaves go all the way to the base, such as daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp. and hybrids), to within a few inches of the soil line.
- For plants like Coral bells (*Heuchera* spp. and hybrids), you'll need to cut individual leaves in half.
- Dig up the plant & divide by slicing 4 to 6 inches out from the edge of the crown.
- Plant quickly! Get your new plant in the hole quickly so the roots don't dry out. Once the plant is in place, fill the hole halfway with soil and water well. That way the water soaks in and doesn't evaporate or roll off the soil's surface.
- Apply an organic liquid fertilizer when you water to help get plants off to a good start.
- Finish planting and fill the hole the rest of the way with soil and water it again.
- Apply an inch or two of organic mulch to help conserve water.
- Check your plant each day, and if it looks wilted in the morning or late evening, give it a drink of water. You may need to water daily for a few days after planting.

Control Pests

- Watch for **fall webworm** on deciduous landscape trees and shrubs, as well as fruit trees. Fall webworm caterpillars create dirty, loosely woven webs that enclose branches. The caterpillars are very hairy and may be yellow with dark stripes and spots, or a dull blueish black without yellow.
- Webworm damage is typically aesthetic issue, not a threat to plant health.
- Control is worthwhile on very young trees or valuable landscape plants.
- Destroying nests by pruning them out or removing them by hand and discarding in the trash are the best options.
- **Aster yellows disease** causes distorted growth and discoloration of flower petals.
- Aster leafhoppers are thin, wedge-shaped and dull light green. Look for six white spots on the top of the head.
- The aster leafhopper spreads **aster yellows disease** when it feeds on an infected plant, it ingests the disease organism and then injects it into the next plant it feeds on.
- Plants will survive but will serve as a source of infection for other nearby plants. Remove infected plants as soon as you find them to reduce the spread.

Mix up a DIY Weed Killer Recipe

1-gallon vinegar (with 5% acetic acid)

1 oz. dish soap

Plastic spray bottle.

Directions: Mix the vinegar and soap together and pour into a spray bottle and spray onto weeds.

- *Before you apply this weed killer in your garden, here are some guidelines:*
- Vinegar/soap weed killer is non-selective, which means that it will also damage/kill your desirable plants. So be careful when applying to weeds.
- Apply on a sunny day with no wind. The sun helps the vinegar to dry out the weed. You also want to wait for a windless day so that your spray won't inadvertently spray onto other plants.
- Your vinegar weed killer may or may not kill the root of the weed. You may need to reapply it if green growth shows up afterward or pour a little of the weed killer over the root zone to thoroughly kill large weeds.
- Vinegar/soap weed killer will not kill all types of weeds. Experiment in your own garden to see which types of weeds it works on.

Plant vegetables for a second harvest

- Have a second harvest with these 13 veggie picks for fall weather: Arugula, Bok choy, Broccoli, Bush beans, Cabbage, Carrots, Cauliflower, Kale, Leaf lettuce, Radishes, Rutabaga, Spinach, Swiss chard
- Take Proper Care-Sowing seeds in late summer requires a few adjustments to your gardening routine.
- When planting seeds that prefer cooler temps to germinate, sow a little deeper in order to mimic a cool environment. For example, if you normally plant a seed at a depth of twice its diameter in spring, try planting at a depth of three to four times its diameter.
- Be sure the soil is in good condition, so the sprout doesn't have to struggle to break through a layer of summer-hardened top crust. After a hot, dry season, it's sometimes difficult to tell how dry the subsoil is, so it's even more important to water the seeds and continue to do so regularly.
- Try radishes! They mature quickly and can be harvested until the soil freezes. Carrots and peas also are fine with light frost. To make the process easier, start longer-maturity varieties indoors, just as you would for spring transplanting.

Happy Gardening!

Sources:

“Aster Yellows Disease and Other Coneflower Problems” by Melinda Myers, [Birds and Blooms Magazine](#), July 06, 2023

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“Growing Tips to Revive Your Potted Plants” by Kirsten Schrader, [Birds and Blooms Magazine](#), July 13, 2023

“Summer Garden Checklist” by James A. Baggett, [Garden Gate Magazine](#), June 25, 2019