Master Gardener Newspaper Articles

Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties

Gardening Tips for June 2008

by Thea Fiskin, UC Master Gardener

June is not usually a month for major planting, but you do want to get the chores done before the real heat sets in for the summer. You do need to maintain container plants, harvest herbs, fruits, vegetables, and of course keep the lawn mowed. There are some flowers and vegetables that can still be planted. Because this is the start of summer it's important to avoid overexposure to the sun. Avoid gardening between 11am and 4 pm and be sure to wear a large brimmed hat, long sleeve shirts, use sunscreen, and drink plenty of water.

WHAT TO PLANT

Annual color: Plenty of flowers can take the heat of our summer, such as ageratum, begonias, coleus, cosmos, gerbera daisy, impatiens, marigolds, petunias, salvias, spider flower (cleome), sunflowers, verbena, vinca, and zinnia.

Vegetables: Seed beans, corn, cucumber, gourds, melons, and squash. Eggplant, peppers and tomatoes should be planted using seedlings. Don't forget, late June is the time to plant pumpkins to harvest for Halloween.

Container plants: Roses are on brilliant display in nurseries and can be chosen for their blossoms.

LAWNS

All lawns should be watered deeply and infrequently to promote deeper root growth and to prevent crabgrass. Avoid watering in the late evening; leaves that don't dry during the warm evenings are prone to fungal diseases. Also try not to mow in the same direction all the time; vary your path so you don't form ruts.

Warm season lawns like bermuda, St. Augustine and zoysiagrass will benefit from fertilizer in June, July and August. You can also plant, patch and reseed these heat lovers all summer long. Fertilize cool season lawns like tall fescue and perennial rye in June, then don't fertilize again until September.

WEED CONTROL

Crabgrass - This annual weed thrives in lawns that are watered too often in summer. Mowing your lawn a little higher and watering less often will discourage seed germination. It is more effective to apply a preemergence herbicide in winter than to selectively try to remove crabgrass from your lawn with a postemergence herbicide. If you do use an herbicide, be sure to follow directions carefully; don't just throw this stuff on by handfuls.

Nutsedge - Wet, waterlogged conditions favor the growth of nutsedge, so improve drainage and keep the area as dry as possible. Nutsedge is one tough weed so be diligent with hand pulling, hoeing, and spraying to get rid of it. An effective postemergence herbicide for use in lawns and around the base of established shrubs is SedgeHammer. Apply with a pump sprayer, and be sure to use a surfactant like Herbicide Helper.

Spurge- This is the flat creeping weed with a red spot on the leaves. When you pull it, sticky sap gets on your hands. Ants love it. Hand pull or hoe spurge plants before they set seeds and remove them from the site. In flowerbeds spot treat with Roundup, apply a preemergence herbicide and add a thick layer of mulch to prevent seed germination. To discourage spurge infestations in lawns, mow fescue at 3 inches to shade seedlings and fertilize bermudagrass to keep it actively growing.

CRITTERS

Spider mites - Signs of these tiny little critters are mottled leaves and ultra fine webs; plants along dusty roads are particularly susceptible. Wash off with plain water, use insecticidal soap if necessary.

Tomato hornworms - These big green guys can strip a tomato plant of leaves and deposit large black droppings. Handpick or use BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) sometimes called Caterpillar Killer.

Tobacco budworm - If your geraniums, petunias or roses have stopped blooming the culprit may be the tobacco budworm. The night flying moth lays its eggs in the flower buds and the hatching larva feeds on the bud then travels down the stem. Try spraying BT or a rose systemic, however do not use rose systemic near any plants you plan to eat.

GARDEN CHORES

1. Check sprinkler systems for leaks or clogged emitters and fix them.
2. Deep water ground covers, lawns, shrubs and trees. Deep watering your stone fruit trees will help prevent Siamese twin fruit next spring.
3. Divide bearded iris. First carefully dig up plants and discard old rhizome and any diseased or rotted sections. Replant the young, healthy rhizomes, making sure to plant shallowly. Just barely cover with soil, then water.
4. After harvest, it's time to clean up those berry vines. Cut this year's fruiting canes back to the ground and then tie up the new green canes to take their place. It's also a good time to spread some compost or fertilizer in the bed, then deep water.
5. Prune apricot trees in summer. Beware of pruning too much, since bark that has normally been in the shade can burn.
6. Pinch asters, chrysanthemums, and sedum autumn joy, to encourage branching and more blooms in the fall. Lightly cut back any perennials or herbs that might be getting leggy.
7. Check container plants often. Small containers and clay pots dry out quickly and may need to be watered twice a day.
8. Fertilize and snip spent flowers from summer blooming annual and perennials to keep them blooming.

Have a great summer!

May 29, 2008