

## AUGUST GARDEN 2023

By Teresa Gaffner

August is here and brings with it long, hot days and loudly singing katydids at night. The most important garden chore to stay on top of this month is watering, but it needs to be done efficiently to be successful. Water early in the day and again in the evening if needed. Aim the water at the root system or use an irrigation hose. Keep an eye on your potted plants and hanging baskets to prevent them from drying out.

Hot and humid conditions are also conducive to fungus and insect infestations. Keep monitoring your garden for pests and stay on top of removing the 3 D's from your yard; diseased, dead, damaged or dysfunctional.

Leave some flower heads in the garden to die back and dry out so you can collect the seeds later. Store them in paper bags or envelopes labeled with variety and year harvested.

Start thinking about your spring bulb garden. Shop now for spring flowering bulbs that can be planted in the fall.

Stay on top of removing weeds, dead plants and yellowing leaves. Fall cleanup is just around the corner.

Pruning starts to get complicated this month. Don't prune any hedging plants such as boxwoods or hollies after mid-month or any new growth won't be hardened off by the first frost. Spring flowering shrubs should also be left alone, or you will be sacrificing next year's blooms. A link to an online pruning guide from University of Tennessee Ag Extension is included at the bottom of this article.

This is a good time to look at your lawn and fill in any trouble spots. During dry spells cut your lawn on the highest setting to limit any heat damage to your lawn.

Take stock of your perennials and see if any of them need to be divided and replanted. Plan to divide them after they are finished blooming. Be sure to do this in the milder morning temperatures and water well after planting. A link to a guide on dividing perennials from the University of North Carolina is included.

Stay on top of watering during this typically hot month. Young trees and newly planted items are especially vulnerable. Water early in the morning and at the ground level so the water is available to the plant's root system. Many flowering shrubs and fruit trees are setting fruit and flower buds for next season. Adequate water is needed to ensure the buds will make it through to flower and fruit next year.

If you grow peonies, August through September is the time to divide and transplant them. Their 'eyes' must not be buried more than an inch or two below the soil surface.

Roses can be fertilized one last time in August but leave your trees and shrubs alone until after November to avoid the hardening off issues discussed above.

If you like to grow fall flowers now is the time to sow seeds for pansies, violas, and alyssum. Look for mums and marigolds already potted at your local nursery. Check your seed catalogues for more ideas on cool weather flowering annuals and perennials.

Prepare your vegetable beds for cool weather crops by weeding and cleaning out any spent summer vegetables. Amend your soil with some good compost or try worm castings. Worm castings are digested organic materials that supply water soluble micro and macro nutrients into the soil to be taken up by plants. If you would like to learn more about worm castings click on the link from Louisiana State University provided below.

Pruning Guide

[https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_agexgard/48/](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_agexgard/48/)

Dividing Perennials

<https://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/2023/01/dividing-perennials-2/>

Worm castings

<https://www.lsuagcenter.com/articles/page1651169706312>

### **How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*