

The July Garden

By Teresa Gaffner, Master Gardener

July is here and it's time to kick back and enjoy all our efforts in this year's garden as it reaches its mid-summer peak. Along with the usual garden tasks of weeding and watering, many vegetable crops will be producing and ready for harvesting.

With the temperature increasing you will need to stay on top of watering. Try watering first thing in the morning so your plants will be prepared to face the day's temperatures, and this will help prevent issues with mold. You can also water again, if needed, in the early evening. Be sure to water the ground surrounding your plants so the moisture can get to the root system and then be distributed systemically back up through the stems to the leaves. It won't hurt to spray your plants foliage on a very hot day too to help cool them down and prevent evaporation, but you do not want to make a habit of this as it could lead to residue buildup on the leaves and possibly fungal issues. Trees and shrubs that are newly planted or are 1 to 3 years old, still need help to establish strong roots. Use a dripping water hose to soak around the tree roots for about an hour every 2 weeks to help establish a strong root system.

If you have any container plants, you will need to check them at least daily to prevent wilting. Wind can also play havoc with hanging baskets by drying them out. They may need watering more than once a day.

When you are not watering, you can continue investigating your garden for unwanted insects and weeds. Remove any before they become an issue.

Deadhead any spent flowers. Deadheading is simply a process of pruning back spent flower heads and old growth to encourage new growth and reflowering. If you're not sure about tackling this chore, you can use this great guide from South Dakota State University. It has detailed instructions and photographs to get you started.

<https://extension.sdstate.edu/enjoy-more-flowers-your-garden-deadheading-regularly>

You may need to stake or support tall flowers and vegetables. 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.

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.

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. Check with your local county extension agent for information on canning classes offered during the summer months. No experience necessary and all materials are provided in these hands-on classes.

If you are not sure about when to harvest your vegetables, check out this link to the University of Tennessee (UT) Agriculture Extension publication about harvesting and storing fruits and vegetables.

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W346-I.pdf>

You can also use this time to start planning your fall garden. Get out your seed catalogues and look for old favorites or that variety you always wanted to try. If you are not sure about how a plant will perform in your garden, you can always check out the UT Extension Garden Trials results for 2022 and benefit from the experience of gardeners from across the state of Tennessee.

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/W1162.pdf>

Enjoying your July garden is simply an exercise in balance. You want to schedule enough time to get the garden chores done and plenty of personal time to enjoy the holiday barbeque and that hammock you've got strung up under your favorite shade tree!

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. 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.