

June Gardening

By Teresa Gaffner, Master Gardener

June is here bringing the official end of spring and the start of summer. Many consider this a magical gardening month as the garden comes alive and it's a joy just to sit and take it all in. The danger of frost has passed, and you should be able to put plants and seeds directly into the ground now and some fruits and vegetables will be ready for first harvest this month. The warmer weather also brings the pests. Keep checking your garden daily for unwanted insects. There is a great publication from UT Extension entitled 'You Can Control Garden Insects'. This extensive volume is 50 pages long and includes descriptions and drawings of many common pests in Tennessee. There are instructions here for non-chemical as well as traditional chemical applications. There are directions on how to use a sprayer and most importantly, how to handle garden chemicals safely.

There is still a lot of upkeep to do in a summer garden and here is a list to keep you busy when you're not lounging in the shade with your feet up.

- Stay on top of deadheading spent flower blooms. This encourages additional flowering and can extend their growing season.
- Trim the foliage on spent bulbs when they have turned completely brown. This will keep the garden neat and make room for summer annuals.
- When your spring flowering shrubs have finished blooming you can prune them to keep their desired shape. You can refer to UT Extension's Best Pruning Guide for pruning times and appropriate methods. A link is included at the end of this column.

June, with its warm soil, is the time to plant your warm season crops such as pumpkin, corn, squash, cucumbers, and beans. June is the perfect time to plant pumpkins since they take 90 to 120 days to mature. This ensures that you will have a timely harvest for the holiday season. Keep an eye on your perennials, if they get too large or leggy you can divide them and relocate them into other areas of your garden beds. Stake up your leggy plants or provide structure with tomato cages. One of the first tips I learned when moving to this area was to place tomato cages, with the wide end at the top, over the peonies in my flower beds as they started to emerge in early spring. They are well supported and displayed to advantage.

Adjustment of watering is essential. As the spring rains taper off and the weather heats up, you will need to adjust your watering schedule. Consider using soaker hoses to stay on top of watering. They are easy to use and ideal for flower beds.

The mulch in your garden beds should be observed regularly and topped off as needed. Mulch keeps the weeds out and the moisture in.

There is still the never-ending chore of weeding. Stay on top of it now while your garden is getting established, and you will thank yourself later this summer.

Along with controlling unwanted pests, fungus and other diseases should be treated right away before they grow out of control and negatively affect your garden. If you are not sure what you are dealing with, contact your county extension agent and s/he can help you identify the problem and form a plan to eradicate it. It's best to deal with plant disease early before it establishes itself and spreads to the rest of your garden.

Finally, don't forget yourself, it's time to reap the benefits from all your hard work. Grab a cool drink, a good book and put your feet up in your little slice of paradise.

“You Can Control Insects in Your Garden,”

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/Documents/PB595.pdf>

“Best Management Practices for Pruning Landscape Trees, Shrubs and Ground Covers,”

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/publications/documents/PB1619.pdf>

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.