

Time for a Mid-summer Refresh (published 2025-07-26)

By Kate O'Lenic, Master Gardener

Hit the Pause button and refresh yourself after all your efforts in your gardens. Stop to listen to the birds, watch the butterflies flit around, listen to the bees humming, smell the flowers, and savor the taste of your vegetables and fruit. Take a look around at your accomplishments and smile.

Your garden could use a bit of a refresh, too. You read about deadheading a couple of weeks ago. Maybe a plant or shrub needs a branch or stem removed or some weeds are popping up. Weeds love the hot summer weather. Watching for and tending to these things promptly makes it much easier to handle and keeps your landscape looking fresh.

Maybe a spot here or there needs a bit more mulch. If one of your vegetable crops is finished, add compost to replace nutrients. Think about planting something else for a fall harvest as discussed last week. There's almost always time to plant something to keep the soil working for you. Or you can plant a cover crop or mulch the soil. Doing so will prevent erosion and cover crops can attract beneficial insects.

If you want more color in your flower beds, consider removing plants that are past their prime and replacing them with fresh annuals. Scatter them throughout the flower beds for a fun accent and something new for you to enjoy.

Another way to add interest to your ornamental gardens or even your veggie patch is to add garden art. I have all sorts of fun art objects in my gardens, including a 15-inch dog paw that I made with a form and quick-set cement. I also have some framed stained glass, gazing globes and more. Adding colorful flowerpots here and there with or without plants is another way to add interest.

Make sure your container plants are watered regularly and fertilized as needed. That will keep them and you happy with their appearance. Slow-release fertilizers are a great way to keep the goodness in the soil.

The summer heat means that watering deeply is important. Using soaker hoses or drip methods are best to put the water where it's needed and keep leaves dry. These techniques also use less water than overhead sprinklers to achieve the same deep watering result.

The summer heat also makes gardening in the morning much more enjoyable than later in the day. Cloudy days are also nice for getting outside in the garden. Evening can also be more comfortable temperature-wise, but mosquitos could be annoying.

Keep an eye out for pests. Just like weeds, pests are happy to feast on your plants during the hot summer months. Integrated Pest Management is the best way to deal with pests safely and effectively.

High temperatures can stress your lawn. Set the mower to 3 to 4 inches high and mow in different directions each time. Most people alternate mowing north to south, then east to west. Not my husband. He likes to do patterns like curvy waves, chevrons, circles, and sometimes straight lines.

The last suggestion today is to relax and think about next year's landscape ideas. Maybe you need more shade trees. What bulbs do you want to plant for spring flowers? Do you have shrubs or perennials that are fading with age and need to be replaced? If you grow vegetables, what produced well, what was disappointing? Planning now is a great way to relax and think of the pleasure next year's gardens will bring.

Resources

"Gardener's Checklist – Mid-summer," <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-news/gardeners-checklist-mid-summer>

"Midsummer Vegetable Garden Checklist," <https://scotland.ces.ncsu.edu/2024/07/midsummer-vegetable-garden-checklist/>

"Things to Do in the Garden in July and August," <https://transylvania.ces.ncsu.edu/things-to-do-in-the-garden-in-july-and-august/>

"Integrated Pest Management (IPM)," <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook/8-integrated-pest-management-ipm>

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IkIH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

Or Washington County's YouTube site: <https://www.youtube.com/@utextensionwashingtoncounty>

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.