

Welcome to the Horticulture Committee's fourth Quarterly Bulletin! We hope you find it helpful. Contents this month:

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Summer Perennial Garden Maintenance, Planting & Pruning

Maintenance

June

- All plants—especially newly planted ones—need 1” of water per week to ensure a deep root system.
- Give perennials fertilizer (5-10-10 formula).
- Weed!

July

- Water deeply early in the morning to reach the root zone and prevent the water evaporation during the hottest days.
- Heavy-feeding perennials may benefit from fertilizing and feeding. Add compost and fertilizer to the base of repeat-blooming plants such as daylilies, roses, perennial salvias, and butterfly bushes; and long-bloomers such as nepetas, kalimeris, and thread-leaf coreopsis.
- Weed!

August

- Water plants deeply once or twice a week, depending on the heat and humidity.
- Fertilize perennials with a 5-10-5 or 5-10-10 product to encourage continued blooming.

Planting

June

- Many varieties of heat-tolerant plants can be planted during summer months as long as they are watered regularly until fall. Potted plants are most likely to succeed if you dig a generous hole, amend it well, fill the hole with water, let it drain, plant the plant, and then water it again.
- Plan to water newly planted plants every day for the first 2 days, every other day for the first week after that, and then, once a week or as needed for the rest of the growing season.
- To replant spring-blooming bulbs to another spot, wait until the foliage has turned yellow. Carefully dig them up and let them dry in a shady spot for a few days. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place until it's time to plant them in fall.

July

- Annuals and perennials can be planted to fill in blank spaces in the garden. Keep plantings moist and shaded.

August

- With care, bearded iris, oriental poppies and peonies can be divided and transplanted.
- Dig up and divide daylilies that have finished blooming.
- Sow seeds of phlox paniculata, digitalis, centaurea, aquilegia and primrose outdoors to grow for next spring.

Pruning

June

- Remove any dead flowers from your perennials to encourage new growth.
- Summer-flowering plants (echinacea, heliopsis, phlox, platycodon, veronicastrum) can be cut back to extend flowering or to create delayed flowering.
- After clematis blooms, you can prune it to 12" to encourage a second growth and flowers. (Or just lightly prune just to shape and to remove damaged and wayward stems. Leave the decorative seed heads.)
- Cut back and shape post-flowered amsonia and baptisia plants toward the end of the month.

July

- Cut back autumn-flowering plants like mums, tall asters, Montauk daisies and helianthus by about one-quarter for height control and more floriferous plants.
- Finish pruning spring-flowering shrubs by mid-month.
- Perennials that bloom a second time (delphinium and digitalis grandiflora) should be cut back to basal foliage.
- Cut back nepeta to one-third. Deadhead perennial salvias and yarrows, which may regrow.
- Keep deadheading.

August

- Continue deadheading and dead-leaving to encourage continuous blooming.
- Asters and mums can be cut back by 4-6 inches to delay bloom.

Sources: www.ladybug.uconn.edu, www.naturework.com, www.almanac.com, "The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques" by Tracy DiSabato-Aust
Provided by Judith Tosiello

Growing Tomatoes

Tomatoes love sun! They must have 6-8 hours of direct sun and grow best in well-drained garden soil rich in organic matter. Raised beds are a great way to grow tomatoes, and large containers can be used if garden space is limited or soil is poor.

The soil pH should be 6-6.8. Soil testing is essential to determine the pH so plan to do it next spring if it wasn't done this year. Too much nitrogen will encourage leaf growth and delay flowering and fruiting.

It's best to plant your tomatoes in different areas of the garden over time. Avoid planting where potatoes, peppers, or eggplant were the previous year. This rotation will help prevent early blight. Also, tomatoes need warm night temperatures (55-75 F.) to produce fruit; otherwise, flowers can fall off and fruit will not form.

Fertilize with an all-purpose, balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) or an organic tomato plant fertilizer. Soil should be treated before planting and when plants start to flower. Once they're established, apply a mulch 2-3 inches thick to hold moisture and reduce weeds.

Water regularly (1-2 inches per week) to avoid blossom end rot and cracking or splitting. Deep watering promotes a strong root system. Best to water in the early morning and avoid overhead watering.

Good companion plants are basil and marigolds. Both help repel garden pests.

There are two varieties of tomatoes.

1. **Determinate** are the bush or compact variety, growing 2-3' tall. They require less pruning and staking but more watering. They're a good choice for containers and flower beds.
2. **Indeterminate** are the "vining" variety. They require staking or cages at planting time. Suckers and lower leaves need to be pinched off as the plant grows, but keep the leaves that shade the fruit to prevent sunscald.

References: Farmers' Almanac and Natureworks

Provided by Judy van Heiningen

Native Shrubs with Summer Appeal

Native plants are those that occur naturally in a region in which they evolved. They are the ecological basis upon which life depends.

Benefits of native plants, shrubs and trees include:

- low maintenance
- less water required
- provide multi-season beauty [such as showy flowers, vibrant fall foliage colors, seeds, berries, interesting bark, and other features]
- combat air pollution and climate change
- provide needed nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, native bees and other beneficial insects; as well as food for birds and other animals.

Here are a few native shrubs to add lovely interest to your landscape during summer:

Ninebark [Physocarpus opulifolius] Full sun; 5-10 ft tall; white to pinkish flowers in June-July; yellow foliage in fall; interesting bark; attracts butterflies and birds.

Carolina Allspice [Calycanthus floridus] Full sun to part shade; 6-9 ft tall; fragrant reddish mahogany flowers in June-July; fragrant foliage; can tolerate wind.

Meadowsweet [Spirea alba] Full sun to part sun; 4 ft tall; multi-stem shrub with long-blooming clusters of small white to pinkish flowers in mid-summer; yellow foliage in fall; attracts songbirds, butterflies and native bees.

Summersweet; aka Sweet Pepperbush [Clethra alnifolia] Full to part sun; 'Compacta' grows 3-4 ft tall or 'Ann's Bouquet' grows 5 ft tall; white spicy-scented fragrant flowers in mid-to-late summer; golden foliage in fall; salt tolerant; attracts hummingbirds, songbirds, butterflies and native bees.

Buttonbush [Cephalanthus occidentalis] Shade; 5-12 ft tall; unusual spherical white flowers June-August; attracts hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators -- described as a 'pollinator powerhouse' by the Native Plant Trust.

Bayberry [Morella caroliniensis; syn. Myrica pensylvanica] Full to part sun; 5-10 ft tall; leaves are aromatic when crushed, berries in fall; dark green foliage turns burgundy to bronze in fall and winter; tolerates dry sandy soil and salt spray.

Provided by Denise Forrest

Fun Flower Facts and Lore

Yarrow has a long history in many countries. In England, it was woven into bridal wreaths. Young girls who wished to dream of a future love would put a sprig under their pillows.

Clematis chinensis has analgesic, antibacterial and anti-rheumatic properties according to *The Complete Medicinal Herbal*.

There were 89,000 **named registered day lilies** in the American Hemerocallis Society as of 2018. Each one is distinct.

Hosta used to be called Funkia. In 1817, the genus was renamed in honor of botanist Heinrich Christian Funk with the belief that "Hosta" was invalid.

Lily-of-the-Valley signifies the "return of happiness" in flower lore.

Provided by Denise Forrest

Fresh Corn Casserole

serves 4-6*

3 cups fresh yellow corn, cut from cob (about 4 ears)

1 Tb flour

1/2 stick butter or margarine, melted

2 Tbs brown sugar (can use white sugar)

1 tsp garlic salt

1 Tbs chopped parsley

1 cup milk

2 beaten eggs

Mix corn with flour, add remaining ingredients and mix well.

Pour into baking dish and bake in 350 degree oven, bake approx 1 hour or until tester comes out clean, mixture will be slightly soft.

* Note: Can easily be doubled for a crowd.

Add some chopped pimento if desired.

I usually buy lots of corn when in season, cut it from cob, and freeze in bags of 3 cups each, (corn freezes very well). Prepare as needed with defrosted corn and bake. Also, good eaten with a spoon right from refrigerator.

Provided by Judy Whitehead

Beneficial Insects – The Good Bugs

Did you know 90% of insects are either good or harmless and many serve as biological controls of “bad bugs”. Encourage beneficial insects by planting perennials that produce a lot of pollen or nectar. Native plants in the daisy family (Compositae), such as species of *Achillea* (yarrow), *Coreopsis* (tickseed), *Eutrochium* (Joe Pye weed), *Solidago* (goldenrod), and *Symphyotrichum* (asters), are especially attractive to them. Parsley family (Apiaceae) members like fennel and dill will also bring in hardworking beneficials, as will many mint family (Lamiaceae) representatives such as native hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*). Here are a few of the beneficial insects and what bad bugs they eat.

Ground Beetle – feast on slugs, snails, cutworms and root maggots. These fast moving beetles take shelter under rocks and logs.

Soldier Beetles – eat caterpillars, aphids and other soft bodied insects. Soldier beetle larva consume the eggs and larva of pests. They do not damage plant foliage. These orange beetles do their part in helping combat pests on your echinacea and heliopsis.

Braconid Wasp – these friendly bees control hornworms, caterpillars, beetles, aphids and stink bugs.

Green Lacewing – the larvae like to eat pests such as aphids, spider mites, thrips and leafhoppers. To keep green lacewings in your garden, plant flowers in the daisy family.

Praying mantis – the praying mantis lays eggs that when hatched produce nymphs that feed on aphids and other small insects.

Ladybug – help control aphids, mites and mealybugs. One ladybug can eat up to 5,000 pests in a lifetime. They are attracted by pollen and nectar.

Sources: The Old Farmer’s Almanac, “Beneficial Insects in The Garden,” by Robin Sweetser, May 4, 2021 www.almanac.com/beneficial-insects-garden

“The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust

Provided by Sue Kelley

More Plants Added to Invasive Plant List(s)

Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District added four more plants to their invasive plant guide:

- Lesser Celandine [not to be confused with the native Marsh Marigold]
- Glossy Buckthorn
- Princess-tree
- Privets

Controlling invasive plants is a challenge. The guide provides identification and control information on the most common invasives, along with recommendations for native alternatives.

The fourth edition of "Invasive Plants in Your Backyard -- A Guide to Their Identification and Control" is available in PDF form from their website:

www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal

Madison is part of the CT River Coastal Conservation District.

Provided by Denise Forrest

NOTE: There are 2 organizations putting out lists of invasives in CT. The state of Connecticut is the official list and is governed by statutes. It can be found at: https://cipwg.uconn.edu/invasive_plant_list

All four of the above invasives are on the state of Connecticut list.

- Lesser celandine is listed as Fig Buttercup.
- Princess Tree's status is "prohibited"
- 3 varieties of Privet are listed, of which one, *Ligustrum obtusifolium* (Border Privet) is prohibited.

"Prohibited" means that it is "prohibited from importation, movement, sale, purchase, transplanting, cultivation and distribution."

Provided by Catherine Ferguson

Invasive Pest - Box Tree Moth



The local press has been commenting on a new threat which has entered the US from Canada and has been found in CT, Michigan and South Carolina.

As the name suggests it has been found on boxwood plants. If you have recently taken delivery of boxwood you need to inspect them to look for the green and black caterpillars and particularly for webbing. These pests also like holly and Euonymus.

The CT Agricultural Experiment Station is asking that anyone who bought a boxwood plant within the last few months inspect it for signs of the box tree moth. The box tree moth is a federally actionable/reportable pest, so please refer any findings to The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at: CAES.StateEntomologist@ct.gov and include a photograph and location.

Useful sites for more information:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/newsroom/stakeholder-info/sa_by_date/sa-2021/sa-05/box-tree-moth

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/DOCUMENTS/Publications/Press_Releases/2021/CAES-Press-Release-Box-Tree-Moth-CT-6-3-21.pdf

Source: UConn Extension Master Gardener Program

Provided by Catherine Ferguson

When to Divide Plants

The easy-to-remember rule of thumb: Spring-flowering plants should be divided in the autumn, and autumn-flowering plants divided in the spring. That said, here's a little more guidance:

- Early spring:
 - Perennials with tough woody roots or taproots should be divided in early spring (before top growth emerges or when growth is approximately 2-3 inches high), such as species of:
 - *Actaea* (black cohosh)
 - *Aruncus* (goats beard)
 - *Asclepias* (butterfly weed)
 - *Echinops* (globe thistle)
 - *Filipendula* (queen-of-the-prairie & queen-of-the-meadow), except for *Filipendula vulgaris* (dropwort meadowsweet), which divides easily.
 - Alternatively, the above can be divided in very early autumn.
- Spring:
 - Autumn-flowering plants should be divided in spring, and this includes most ornamental grasses.
 - Divide early spring-flowering plants right after flowering (April-May). (Plants can be divided in early spring if you don't mind sacrificing flowers that year).
 - Spring division gives plants more time to re-establish before winter vs. dividing them in the autumn.
- Summer:
 - Hosta, daylily and a few other rugged perennials will take summer division. When dividing in the summer and autumn it is best to cut the plants back by ½ to 2/3 to reduce transpiration (water loss by evaporation from leaves and stems). With summer divisions, extra care is needed to keep plants moist and shaded if hot and dry weather is expected.
- August:
 - Most plants do not divide well in the summer. An exception would be the bearded iris which is dormant in the summer and is traditionally divided in August.
- Fall:
 - Spring-flowering plants can be divided in early Autumn if they were not divided after blooming.
 - Divisions should be mulched after the ground freezes.

Source:

"The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques" by Tracy DiSabato-Aust

Provided by Sue Kelley

Cutting Back Plants for Height Control: “Giving Haircuts”

Cutting back generally means removing foliage, even a significant amount, as well as possibly removing flower buds. Cutting back to limit plant height is typically done before flowering. (It is important to note for some perennials, cutting the plants back when the flowers are forming will result in no bud development and consequently no bloom.) Many times, depending on the species, cutting back before flowering will produce smaller but more numerous flowers.

Cutting back can also be used to layer a planting to create interesting gradations in height. Staggering or delaying bloom time, particularly in mass plantings, is a technique often used in public gardens to create different “moments” in the garden by pruning certain plants for special flower or color effects at specific times. This is done to coordinate the bloom times of one species with later blooming species that look good together. Conversely, if you have a color combination you don’t like, try this technique so they don’t bloom at the same time. Prune one back to bloom later.

Selectively pruning to stagger bloom times can be done in several ways:

- Simply pruning separate plants of the same species a week or so apart or pruning only part of a group and leaving the rest unpruned will stagger blooms by delaying the blooms on the pruned plants.
- Many landscapers will prune plants before flowering (by half or even two-thirds) in early to mid-June because this is also the time when many spring-flowering species can be pruned after flowering, thereby completing pruning tasks in one visit. However, perennials can be cut back at different times, or several times, for different effects, but in most cases pruning only once makes sense from a maintenance standpoint.
- An important thing to keep in mind is that often the more of a plant that is cut off or the closer it is pruned to its normal flowering date, the greater the delay in flowering.
- To ease the process, plants can be cut back in stages if desired, but not required.

Cutting back Summer-flowering perennials examples:

- Summer-flowering phlox respond well to cutting back before flowering to reduce height and delay flowering. Phlox maculate ‘Alpha’ for example, cut back by half when in bud in early June, may flower at 18 inches rather than at 2.5 feet about two weeks later than usual.
- Heliopsis can also be pruned by half in early June to flower at 2.5 ft. rather than at 5 ft. with about a 1.5 week delay.
- Balloon flower (*Platycodon grandifloras*) tends to flop. Pruning it back by half in early June can produce plants 1-2 ft. shorter than normal and with a 2-3 week delay in flowering.

Cutting back Autumn-flowering perennials examples:

Cutting back autumn-flowering plants for height control is normally done in mid-to late June, generally when the plants are 12-16 inches tall. Most of the time plants should be cut back by half, but you can prune back two-thirds or more depending on the plant. Pruning later may involve simply removing 4-6 inches from the tips of the plants.

- Asters can be cut back by half or two-thirds when the plants are 12-16 inches tall. The outer stems can be cut lower than the inner ones to create a more rounded habit and reduce the ugly legs usually associated with asters. Once cut back, they usually flower at a sturdy 3 feet or so.
- Sedum Joy can also be cut back by half in the spring when plants are 8 inches tall usually by the first week of June or late May.
- Boneset (*Eutrochium perfoliatum*), great blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), and ironweed (*Vernonia altissima*) can be cut back by half when 4 inches tall and then by half again when 16 inches tall.
- Ironweed can be cut to the ground when 2 feet tall or cut back by 1 or 2 feet when 4 feet tall to stagger and delay flowering.

Cutting back also refers to pruning a plant to renew its appearance or encourage a new flush of growth and flowering. When my beautiful *Tradescantia* (spiderwort) turned to mush, I cut it all the way back to the crown and was so surprised when it grew into a flowering plant again in the fall of the same season! For a more comprehensive overview of pruning perennials, refer to the source for this article which includes an “Encyclopedia of Perennials” with detailed information on the best techniques for each specific plant.

Source:

“The Well-Tended Perennial Garden; The Essential Guide to Planting + Pruning Techniques” by Tracy DiSabato-Aust

Provided by Sue Kelley

Horticulture Challenge Update - Garlic

Growing:

- Two to 4 weeks before bulbs of hardneck garlic are ready to harvest, the plants produce curled scapes or seedheads. To promote the largest bulbs, clip off as soon as they form. Use scapes in stir fries or other dishes where a garlicky touch is appreciated. If plentiful, they can even be made into a pesto.
- Keep plants weeded (weeds detract significantly from cloves’ growth).
- Keep watered (1 inch per week in the summer) until the foliage turns yellow or falls over which indicates bulbs are near maturity. Garlic can double in size during the last month of growth.
- Watering should stop two weeks before harvest to help the plants dry down.

Harvesting:

- Once the bottom leaves turn yellow and brown in midsummer, but a few green leaves remain on the top of the stem, it is time to harvest. Carefully dig a garden fork beneath the plants, pry them loose and pull them out. Try to prevent injury.
- Shake off excess soil and leave most of the stem on, but you can cut back dying/dead leaves and a few inches off the top. Hardneck varieties are often tied loosely in bunches and hung to dry while softnecks are spread out on trays. It’s fine to put the hardnecks in those black plastic trays that annuals come in and move the plants to a well-ventilated, sun-free spot.

- Garlic can be eaten right away, but bulbs that will be stored should be cured. To cure, hang the bare bulbs with their foliage in bundles or spread them out on a table or rack.
- After a few weeks of curing, clean bulbs carefully. Trim the stalks and roots close to the bulb. Rub off the outer layer of skin, and gently brush any soil clinging to the base.
- Properly cured bulbs store longer. If conditions are perfect, your garlic should last until the next batch is harvested. By perfect, the temperature would remain at 50 degrees F with 65 percent humidity. Short of perfect, plan on having garlic at least until the end of the year.
- Save your biggest, most perfect bulbs to replant come late October. Every few years though, you might want to purchase another variety.

Sources: check out www.ladybug.uconn.edu, Natureworks, Old Farmer's Almanac, Growing For Market pdf and Acer Garden Center.

Provided by Sue Kelley

Horticulture Challenge Update - Gourds

HOW TO PLANT GOURDS:

Gourds are slow-growing and take the entire season to mature (75 to 120 days or more). In addition, if you leave them on the vine to dry, you may not harvest them for up to 180 days after planting.

Gourds are a warm-season crop. (Seeds planted in cold, wet soil will probably rot before germinating.) If spring is slow to come, you can get a **head start by starting seeds indoors about four to six weeks before the last frost. Use peat or paper pots to minimize transplant shock.** Transplant them outside in the spring after danger of frost has passed.

Plant ornamental gourds in a similar fashion to squash and pumpkins: in hills of two plants spaced 4 to 5 feet apart, with about 6 to 7 feet between rows of hills. Plant hard shell bottle or birdhouse gourds 12-16 inches apart in a row supported on trellises or fences.

Different varieties will have different growth habits, but most gourd fruits develop best if the plants are raised off the ground onto a trellis or support and the fruits are allowed to hang. They will grow cleaner, straighter and they won't get that discolored spotting that occurs when the fruits touch the ground.

As with other members of the Cucurbitaceae family, gourds can have trouble with pollination. If pollinators are not abundant in the area, you may have to pollinate by hand, by removing the male blossoms and dusting them onto the female blossoms. The female blossoms can be distinguished by the tiny immature fruit at the base of the flower. It is normal for there to be several male blossoms produced before you spot a female blossom. Hard skinned gourds bloom in the evening and at night. Soft skinned gourds bloom during the day.

GOURD CARE:

Light

Plant your gourds in full sun, for the most flowers and the healthiest fruit.

Soil

Gourds require well-draining soil with a neutral pH of about 6.5 to 6.8. The vigorous vines are heavy feeders, and soil rich in organic matter will improve yield. It's really best to prepare the soil a few months in advance with lots of rich organic matter such as compost so that the soil settles down by spring planting.

Water

Give the plants a light watering immediately after planting, then once every two to three days for two to three weeks. After that, water the base of the plant about 1 inch per week. Never water the leaves, as it can damage the plant.

Temperature and Humidity

If starting from seed, start indoors between 60 and 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Outside, ornamental gourds do best in temperatures between 75 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

Fertilizer

You can feed by side-dressing with compost or by applying a balanced fertilizer when the vines start to bloom. The long gourd vines can be self-mulching, but use caution when weeding, since gourds have shallow roots. If you do use a synthetic fertilizer, use a slow-release fertilizer.

Pruning

Cut back the vines once they reach 10 feet to encourage the growth of female blossoms, which produce fruit, on the side stems.

HARVESTING AND CURING GOURDS:

Ornamental soft-shell gourds can be picked when fully mature and the stems dry out and turn brown and tendrils next to them are dry. Harvest before frost. Cut the gourds with a few inches of stem intact. Do not use the stems as handles. Wax or shellac mature fruits for year round decorations.

Hard-shell gourds should be left in the garden on the vine to dry out. They will tolerate light frost so allow them to dry on the vine as long as possible. They can finish curing on a rack in a protected airy space. They are completely dry when you can hear the seeds rattle inside when shaken. The skin will fade and discolor and even show signs of mold. As long as the shell does not rot, it will continue to dry inside. It can take 3 to 6 months for them to dry completely, depending on how thick the shell is. When the gourd is totally dry, drill a hole 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter and a few tiny holes in the bottom for drainage. For a longer lasting birdhouse varnish or shellac.

Luffas should be left on the vine until the stem is dry and the gourds are turning brown at both ends. The seeds will rattle inside when you shake them. Peel off the outer skin and the inner fiber should be tan and dry.

Provided by Sue Kelley

Future Issues

If you would like to submit information for a future Horticulture Bulletin or have a topic you would like us to include in a future Bulletin, please send them to **SUE KELLEY** at kelleys4@gmail.com. Likewise, if you have any comments or questions regarding this Bulletin's contents, please send them to me also.

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