

JUNE TO DO LIST

- Please note, most of the information shared here was obtained from Research-based sources (see contributors acknowledgements below), and from individuals who are considered very knowledgeable on a particular subject. While some little tidbits here may be of interest, they should be taken "with-a-grain-of-salt".

(compiled by MG Brian D. Townsend)

Law of Gardening I:

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed

And not a valuable plant is to pull on it.

If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

1ST WEEK:

Watch for insect pests. Spray for specific ONLY as needed. Avoid general "wipe-out" sprays. Please remember, when you kill beneficial insects, you inherit their job! - me

Inspect Crepe Myrtles weekly for APHIDS (or Black sooty mold) or mildew.

SPIDER MITES can be controlled insecticidal soap, horticultural/ plant oil such as *Neem*, (or a strong spray of water) or *Kelthane* applied under the leaves. The first signs of damage from spider mites will be tiny tan mottling on the leaves. Eventually, the leaves will turn entirely tan, then brown and dead. You may even see webbing, but only once the pests are out of control. To know if spider mites are plaguing your garden, thump a suspected twig over a sheet of white paper. If you see paprika-colored specks that move, you've discovered spider mites! Spray both top and bottom leaf surfaces with the materials listed above. -

AJW

Pull up squash vines if SQUASH VINE BORERS have bored into the stems. Pitch them in the compost pile.

If BIRDS are attacking your tomatoes, try harvesting them when they turn from green to white. They will be nearly as good as vine ripened in a day or two.

Remove spent flower spikes from all salvias.

Feed roses (see "In Our Rose Garden") and other hungry individuals (according to their needs and water availability).

Oaks, magnolias and other trees will drop their leaves if we experience drought and hot weather conditions. No treatment is necessary, but a deep watering on the drip line once a month will minimize the stress.

Control fungal problems in veggies and other susceptible plants with fungicides such as potassium bicarbonate, sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), garlic tea; *Daconil*, if we have had an abundance of wet weather.

Blue salvias, zinnias, vinca and esperanza are good summer blooming plants that the DEER do not eat (when given a choice!!!)

Consider Mexican dwarf petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana* "Katie") as a ground cover for the shade. The flowers are violet-blue. "Bonita" is a pink version of the mounding plant with dark green foliage. - CF

Plant iris, spider lilies, gloriosa lilies and caladiums.

Divide and replant Mexican mint marigold (*Tagetes lucida*) and chrysanthemums so you will have more flowers in fall.

Prune actively growing shrubs, such as elaeagnus and pyracantha, frequently.

Sun-loving flowers such as portulaca (moss rose) and purslane still can be planted. - *EO*

Mulch around trees and shrubs to save water and protect plant roots from the drying sun, replenish as needed to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth.

Consider raising mower height before cutting your turfgrass. Taller grass will shade the soil and protect the root system.

There's still time to plant okra. This vegetable loves the heat and will do well planted even into June. - *TAE*

Plant summer annuals for color. Good candidates for sunny areas are moss rose, firebush, copper plant, celosia and lantana.

Remove flower buds from caladiums, coleus, mums and santolina to keep the plants growing vigorously.

Keep tomatoes evenly moist to prevent blossom-end rot. Mulch with 2 to 3 inches of organic material, being careful not to mulch against the stem of the plant. - *LR*

FIREFLIES lighting up the night! Fireflies in San Antonio are not something that's real common anymore, mainly because of "urban sprawl", insecticides and fire ants. Good weather, the use of pesticides down and fire ants having a bad year, these are perfect conditions for fireflies (and insects in general). Lightning bugs show in South Texas in May and June, primarily in open areas adjacent to woods. - *THL*

YELLOW JACKETS in your hummingbird feeders? They are strongly attracted to the color yellow, change or paint the bee guards and the bees will lose interest. - *B&B*

A recent Consumer Reports poll on lawn care shows that consumers are not taking all the proper precautions before mowing their lawn. In observance of June's National Safety Month, The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute is issuing a list of top safety measures every consumer should make before turning on the lawnmower or edger or trimmer to avoid unintentional injury.

There are some simple steps everyone can take before tending to the lawn and garden to ensure an enjoyable, productive and safe backyard experience. Before turning on equipment, consumers should:

- **Know how to operate the equipment.** Read the operator's manual before using any power equipment. Know where the controls are and what they do. Follow safety instructions.
- **Handle gas carefully.** Fill up before you start and when the engine is cold.
- **Dress properly for yard work.** Wear substantial shoes, long pants and close-fitting clothes.
- **Clear up the area before you mow.** Always remove stones, sticks and other objects from the area so that objects won't fly up and hit anyone. The most common injuries are from flying debris.
- **Wear eye protection** to prevent injury from projectiles.
- **Wear hearing protection** to prevent potentially damaging sounds from reaching your ears without eliminating the sounds you'll *need* to hear.
- **Don't let music distract you** from hearing potentially important calls or seeing important hazards.
- **Clear the area of people and pets.** Keep children indoors under adult supervision.
- **Always start up the mower outdoors.**

- **Do not use alcohol, other controlled substances or medicines** that impair judgment when using outdoor power equipment. - *TGS*

In Our Rose Garden: We're approaching our second cycle of spring bloom, and the (hopefully) timely May rains will have really helped.

- Mulching** - Keep your beds covered with at least a 2 to 3" layer of your favorite mulching material of choice (keep in mind mulch material grown in acid soil regions will break down acidic, materials in alkaline regions will tend to break down more alkaline. - *JP*). Mulch helps keep moisture levels constant and soil temperature cooler. Keep your container-grown roses well mulched and maybe some afternoon shade for the containers (use light colored containers or paint them!). Avoid using anything raw or uncomposted.
- Watering** - Continue to keep your rose beds (in the top 6 to 8", where the important feeder roots are located) moist (not wet!), and be sure to check your container roses because they will dry out quicker. Never water the leaves at night, but if you must, do so 2 hrs. before sundown.
- Bush Grooming** - As old blooms fade (you determine when it's time), cut off to a five leaflet node (small branch) pointing outward away from the center of the bush, to encourage new growth. Remove any inner, spindly growth to open up your bush as much as possible for sunlight, air circulation and expose hiding places for pests.
- Spraying for Diseases** - Keep up a 5 to 7 day spray interval (always follow label directions for portions, but under unusual conditions may change frequency) as long as conditions remain moist. Later in the summer if conditions are on the dry side, you could lengthened out the spray interval to 10 - 12 days. Spray the top and bottom of the foliage using a fungicide containing *triforine* (formerly *Funginex*) at one Tbsp. per gallon of mix (1 Tbsp. of *Manzate*(?) every three days for a total of nine days, can be added if fungus problems already present) or other material listed for blackspot (*spinosad* is effective but, *neem* oil should not be used if daytime temperatures are over 85 to 90 degrees). Mildew should not be a problem at this time.
- Spraying for Pests** - As our weather warms and becomes dry, check for these unwanted garden gremlins: 1) Symptoms of SPIDER MITES include a brown and bronze edging of the foliage white the bottom side of the foliage (lower leaves first) will have a fine, white webbing with a kind of salt-n-pepper background. You can use a bottom side foliage water-wash over a nine day period (washing every 3rd day, for three cycles) to break the mites life cycle (they lose their sex drive after a long march up the plant), or spray with a liquid sea-weed extract (which feeds the plant as well), horticultural/ plant oil such as *neem*, or spray with a listed miticide, such as *Ferti-lome Red Spider Mite Spray w/ pyrethrins* (always follow label directions). Target the bottom side of the foliage (*a good practice to follow is to remove the first two low lying sets of foliage at the bottom of the bush. This will help open up the bush for good air circulation and make it more difficult for the mites to get started. 2) THRIPS - These cycle in and out of our gardens, and there may be times when your flowers may be "thrip-free". When you do have an infestation and you want to keep your flowers clean, mist the buds and flowers using product with "*spinosad*", or *Orthene* liquid (2 Tbsp. per gal., 1 Tbsp. for powder), *Cygon*(?) @ 2 tsp. per gal. of mix. Do this every 3 to 4 days.

- F) **Feeding** - A note first, *before doing any maintenance on your bush, your plants should be well watered - like the day before. 1) Dry Feed - One cup (your favorite synthetic or organic fertilizer, does not have to be "rose food") a month spread around the dripline. Mini's get a half cup. *When feeding container grown roses with a dry feed, cut down on the amount used per bush to prevent root-burning. Remember to water container grown plants more frequently during the hot weather, and keep them well mulched. 2) Liquid or Soluble Feed - Feed every 2 weeks giving each bush 1 gal. poured around the drip line. Mini's get 1 qt. each.
- G) **Odds & Ends** - Usually after the completion of the first or second cycle of blooms, some iron chlorosis problems may appear. Symptoms include foliage that turns yellow while the inner veins of the leaf stay dark green. Many times the iron is in the soil, but just locked up and not available to the plant. A quick tonic would be to use a "soil acidifier" with iron, or an iron chelate (such as *Sprint 330*, or *Ferromec AC*). There are many products containing "ferrous sulfate" that is slower acting, but will last longer in the soil. *Green Sand* is a slow acting organic iron supplement with trace elements.

Organic Rose Program - HG (see Feb to do list for complete program)

- A) **Watering** - If possible, save and use rainwater. If not, add 1 Tbsp. of natural apple cider vinegar and 1 oz. Garrett Juice per gal. of water. If all else fails, just use tap water but, in any case don't over water. Avoid salty well water if possible.
- B) **Feeding Schedule** - Round #2, June 1 - 15: Organic Fertilizer @ 20 lbs. /1,000 sq.ft., Texas greensand @ 40 lbs. / 1,000 sq.ft. or soft rock phosphate at 30 lbs. / 1,000 sq.ft. if in acid soil areas. Liquid biostimulants-such as *Medina*, or similar product (use per label directions).
- C) **Mulching** - Reapply mulch as needed. Use hard tine rake to "stir up" any mulch that has settled around the bushes (- me). Do not pile the mulch up on the stems of the roses.
- D) **Pest Control** - For disease control in general, spray roses with garlic tea or mild vinegar (potassium bicarbonate @ 1 rounded Tbsp. / gal. for minor diseases). For insect pests, spray plant oil products (garlic tea @ $\frac{1}{4}$ cup / gal.; citrus oil, orange oil, or d-limonene @ 1 oz. / gal. of water as a spray, 2 oz. / gal. of water as a drench). Neem oil - use per labeled directions (should not be used when temps. are 85 - 90 or above) for more serious insect and disease infestations. For thrips, apply beneficial nematodes to the soil in early spring.

A YEAR IN THE ROSE GARDEN: by A. J. "Pop" Warner

It is the same song; only let us slow down the tempo a bit. It is time now to relax a bit; the days are long and there is no hurry to get through before dark.

Some things never change, however. Roses need lots of water in hot, windy weather. Unsprayed roses get blackspot. Light colored roses turn brown with thrips if not misted with *Orthene* or *Cygon*(?). Winter damage continued to show up all through May. Weeds love warm weather and are a problem in un-mulched or lightly mulched beds. Some things that make for easier growing are:

- A) **Watering System** - The system can be as simple or as elaborate as we wish; soaker hoses, drip emitters, dram nozzles and automatic sprinklers. Each have their advocates. The key word is "system". We each need a method of watering that is routine and easy for us.

- B) Mulch - The initial effort in establishing good mulch pays off all summer long. It lessens the need for watering, cuts out most of the weeding, keeps the beds cool and provides a continuing source of organic matter. In addition it prevents splashing on to the leaves, minimizes water run-off and helps distribute fertilizer evenly. We recently read in a bulletin from another state, where the writer hated mulches and did not use them. No doubt he had good roses because roses are tolerant plants, but we wager they would be 100% better with good mulch. Besides, he wouldn't have to work nearly as hard.
- C) Spray - early or late in the day. It is easier on the roses and on the rosarian. Wait to spray until the sun is low and the temperature is below 90 degrees to minimize leaf burn for the roses and avoid heat stroke for the rosarian.
- D) Continue to Feed after each bloom cycle begins to wane. Granular fertilizer, such as 12-24-12 sprinkled on the mulch is slowly dissolved by rains and watering and is longer lasting and less likely to burn than the fertilizers applied in solution (Opinions vary on fertilizers and fertilizing methods and no doubt most are good; but this method has worked fine for the writer for the last twenty years.).
- E) If you need Clean Blooms for cutting, mist (buds only) with *Orthene*, *Cygon* (?) or *Marvik* every three days to control bloom-damaging thrips. If cucumber beetles show up, a light application of 10% *Sevin* dust on dry beds will usually control them. For heavy infestations, spraying just the tops of the plants with *Marvik* will control them well. DO NOT spray any insecticide until insects appear. Most insecticides approved for use nowadays have a very short residual, so wait until the guests arrive to feed them.
- F) Watch for Mites - These are not insects but are related to spiders and are as adaptable as a politician. *Vendex*(?) did not work in most gardens this year and *Plictran*(?), for the first time, gave less than good results. *Avid* cleaned them up, this time at least. If one had only a few bushes or does not mind the monotony, washing every third day with water gives more or less satisfactory control. In hot weather the spider mite life cycle speeds up to as little as five days, so a minor infestation can quickly become an explosion.
- G) Review your Spray Chart every time you spray. Memory plays tricks, even on the young and young-at-heart. It is suggest you do not vary from the specified dilution. Leaves are more susceptible to spray burn in hot weather, but there is no reason to believe the pests are.

In Our Herb Garden: Shape plants by pruning gently, pinch back blossoms to save plants from going to seed and cross-pollinating. * Maintaining 2" of mulch is the key to saving water, discouraging weeds and cooling the soil. * Check watering system(s). Drip irrigation is ideal. Water early in the morning and deeply, check on a regular basis. Caution: do not over-water, keep water-thirsty plants separate from more tolerant plants (this makes watering chores much easier). It is easy to kill sage or rosemary by being too kind with water. * During periods of high heat and humidity, check and apply "earth-kind" treatments for pests, such as spider mites, white flies, aphids and mealy bugs. - *HERBS: A Resource Guide for San Antonio*

Garden Maintenance Tips: 1) Planning a new bed? For this fall, pile bags of leaves where you want your new bed. 2) Don't mound compost ingredients- layer them and mulch the top (there's no odor and you've got a compost pile AND a bed that's ready to plant). 3)

Set strawberries in layered beds and you'll never have to cut back runners to keep rows open. Runners fill in the bed so there's no heavy weeding and no watering except in times of drought. 4) Herb growth booster! Most herbs thrive with frequent trimming. If you don't need the clippings for cooking or crafts, just let them drop around the plant to enrich the mulch. 5) Best summer squash! If you prefer tender to timber, pick summer squash when they're young. It keeps the plant producing and puts the best produce on your table. 6) Short on space? Cut a 30-gallon garbage can in half crossways to make two planters. Put soil and seed potatoes in the bottom and fill with mulch. Later, just dump the cans over and pick out your harvest! 7) Butterfly Seasoning! Nectar-seeking adult black swallowtails love flowers . . . but their larvae love - parsley! Provide a little extra for them to chew on and enjoy a summer of flying flowers! 8) Don't put pine needles or wood chips in the compost pile unless you add lime (here in S.A. you can with no problem). Better to use them just as they are - a perfect mulch for blueberries, azaleas and other acid-loving plants. 9) Spice up your roses! To protect roses from black spot fungus, flank them with garlic and parsley. 10) Preventing "Takeovers". Flowers like feverfew are pretty- but they can take over your garden if you allow them to set seed. It is best to cut off most of the flowers as they fade, leaving just a few to self-sow. Keep mints and others from "takeovers", by keeping them containerized or cutting them back to avoid layering. - *NS*

Strawberry Jars Forever- MB

If you are a casual gardener I do not recommend those "pots with pockets," also known as "strawberry jars," unless you have time and patience to carefully make the initial planting. Once planted, they are low maintenance.

A. Purchase a TERRA COTTA (flower pot material) strawberry jar.

B. Choose your plants carefully: mints, thyme, oregano, prostrate rosemary, or any small perennial flowering plant varieties. Line them up in the order in which you want them to be planted in the strawberry jar, bottom to top. The choices are yours to make. If you want to plant annuals (Globe Basil, stivia, chives), you can plant two to four on the top, to finish the jar. Planting them on the top assures the plants in the pockets that they will remain undisturbed.

C. Prepare your soil mix as 1/3 playground sand; 1/3 potting soil (without the water-saving crystals); 1/3 fine compost. Mix thoroughly.

D. Make some ice tea or have a lot of your beverage of choice ready as planting will take some time!

E. To properly plant a "strawberry jar":

(1) Cut a piece of 1" to 2" wide PVC pipe the interior height of the strawberry jar; drill 1/4" holes in it every 2" to 3" along its length. Cap one end of it. This will be the "bottom end."

(2) Soak the pot in water for at least 15 minutes. Totally soak the pot...deep bucket...kitchen sink...bath tub. This is to assure that the pot does not absorb water from the soil on the initial planting and dry out the root system. (**CAUTION:** be certain you are planting the strawberry jar outside, near the garden, because it can get very messy, especially the first couple of times. It is also a good idea to place the strawberry jar where you want it to remain [deck, patio, porch, walkway] as it will get heavy, depending on the size.)

- (3) Place a layer of gravel on the bottom of the pot with a pot-shard over the drain hole to assure that the pot drains and breathes properly.
- (4) Stuff a few pieces of paper toweling in the "top end" of the PVC pipe to form a temporary plug.
- (5) Stand the capped PVC pipe on top of the pot shard ("bottom end" down) and begin to place soil into the pot. (The paper towel is to keep soil from entering the PVC pipe.)
- (6) Fill the strawberry jar with soil until you reach the level of the first (lowest) pocket.
- (7) Un-pot the plant you want to go into that pocket and place it into the hole by reaching into the mouth of the jar and placing the leaves OUTSIDE the pocket, leaving the root ball inside the jar, roots facing the PVC pipe. COVER THE ROOT BALL with soil, but DO NOT PACK THE SOIL DOWN. (Is it getting crowded in the pot?)
- (8) Unplug the PVC pipe briefly to add some water and start the "internal irrigation" system. (DO NOT WATER HEAVILY as you will be watering again and again with each successive pocket.)
- (9) Let the soil around the roots settle, replug the PVC pipe and prepare for the next pocket.
- (10) Plant that second pocket and fill that side of the jar to cover the roots, unplug the PVC pipe, water it and replug the PVC pipe. Then work on the next pocket, then the next pocket and the next pocket working your way to the top with plant - soil - unplug - water - replug - plant - soil - unplug - water - replug - plant - soil - unplug - water - replug (etc.) until you have filled the top-most pocket.
- (11) Bring your soil line up to about 1" below the top of the strawberry jar/PVC pipe level, withdraw the paper towel plug at the top and give it one more watering.
- (12) Now replug the top of the PVC pipe and plant the top level of the pot, careful not to get any soil in the PVC pipe.
- (13) Sprinkle the top planting and add a layer of course sand (contractor sand) or pebble gravel to just below the level of the PVC pipe.
- (14) Unplug the PVC pipe and give it another light filling of water and then just let it sit. Take a picture so you can show it to your friends while the plants are small; they'll grow into their environment.

You are done. Sit back and enjoy the results of your labor. And in a few days, the appreciative plants will respond to your care and you'll have a pot that you can be proud of for a long time to come.

NO HEAVY WATERING! (You could "wash-out the pockets.") When it looks a bit dry (remember the roots are in the middle of the pot), give the pot a "drink" (or two) down the PCV pipe, with a good "sprinkle" to the plants on the top.

You can also "cap" the top of the PVC pipe to keeps snails, slugs, dead leaves and dirt from falling into it, but try not to have it stick up too high above the gravel line. And remember that the plants on top will fill in their space, so the ugly pipe won't show too long.

2nd WEEK:

It is time to compost squash, Brussels sprouts and other vegetable plants that are at the end of their productive life and infected with powdery mildew (if you can find a good "clean cutting" from your old plant, you may be able to root in a pot and prepare it for fall planting - *me*)

If you had a good season with flowering sweet pea, inspect and pull dried seed pods and save for sharing and fall sowing.

Plant southern peas (black eye, purple hull, crowder, etc.) for a summer harvest and soil improvement.

Be careful near brush piles, weedy or overgrown areas and junk accumulations; the AFRICANIZED BEES might lurk there.

Water young (less than two years old) trees and shrubs deeply every two weeks during summer (if there hasn't been at least 1" of rain per week).

Bermuda grass or St. Augustine growing in flower beds can be controlled with contact herbicides such as *Ferti-lome Over-The-Top Grass killer*, *Green Light Grass-Out*, *Ortho Grass-Be-Gone*, or *Ornamec 170 (Vantage, Poast or Fusilade (?))*.

If you're looking for a different summer plant, consider basil for the summer garden.

Many colors, shapes and fragrances (& flavors) are available.

Bougainvillea don't like to be pampered. Let them get rootbound and let them dry out to 1" below the soil line between waterings. Fertilize every 4 weeks with hibiscus food for a bountiful bloom.

As temperatures rise, tomatoes are susceptible to blossom-end rot. It occurs when soils dry out. Use mulch and water regularly to reduce the problem. Tomatoes (depending on variety) may not bloom or set fruit with excessive heat. Once temperatures exceed 85 degrees, don't expect new fruit. - *CF*

Check for insects and diseases and destroy badly infected plants. SPIDER MITES can be especially troublesome if it's hot and dry.

Soak coleus, caladiums and geraniums to a depth of 8" to help them cope with summer heat.

Maintain mulches at a depth of 2 to 6", depending on the material used. - *EO*

Rotate houseplants so each side receives adequate light for even growth and balanced shape.

Pinching back the tips of vigorously growing foliage plants will stimulate new growth and make plants fuller. - *TAE*

Seven tips for bird feeding on a budget

It's no secret that the economy has slowed down in recently months. Gas and grocery prices are up, and we're all looking for ways to save a buck. So what's a backyard bird watcher to do when it's time to refill the bird feeder with expensive seed? Resourceful bird lovers can continue to attract birds without breaking the bank with these tips from National Wildlife Federation's naturalist and backyard wildlife expert David Mizejewski.

- **Plant Natural Feeders** Birds only use feeders to supplement the natural foods they find in the landscape, so focus of your bird-feeding efforts on your plants even in good economic times. Plants feed birds with seeds, berries, nuts, sap and nectar as well as shelter and nesting places. Once planted, they'll provide free bird food for years to come. Get a list of the best plants for your state at <https://secure.nwf.org/backyard/food.cfm>.
- **Say No to Insecticides** Before you reach for the bug killer think about this: 96 percent of bird species in North America feed their babies insects. Most adult birds rely on insects as a source of protein too, but even those that primarily eat plant foods as adults still feed their young insects, including hummingbirds. Make

sure you have plenty of insect life for the birds by going organic and eliminating insecticides. Let the birds control the insects for you.

- **Go Native** Native plants that grow naturally in your area provide birds with the foods they've been eating for thousands of years and thrive in local soils and weather. Many exotic plants don't provide seeds or fruits that birds can eat and those that do have become invasive pests. Native plants also support up to 60 percent more insects than exotics and therefore more birds. Luckily, many natives are ornamental and commercially available (check out www.abnativeplants.com for more information).
- **Attract Birds with Water** Even if you can't provide food, a simple bird bath with clean water will attract plenty of birds to your yard. Replace the water every three days to keep the bath clean and to avoid mosquito problems.
- **Free Food** Make your own suet by recycling bacon grease. Next time you fry up a batch of bacon, pour the grease into a plastic container and freeze it. You can then put it out in a suet cage or mesh onion bags as a high calorie treat for birds such as woodpeckers, jays and chickadees. Saving the plastic packages from store-bought suet and using them again to make your own will save you even more.
- **Buy in Bulk** If you are addicted to watching the constant activity of birds visiting your feeders, consider buying seed in bulk to save some cash. Avoid seed blends which often have "filler" seeds that most birds toss aside and feed black-oil sunflower seed, which all feeder birds relish. Store seed in a metal container with a secure lid to keep moisture and other critters out.
- **Grow Your Own Feeders** Plant sunflowers instead of buying expensive sunflower seed. The flowers look beautiful and also provide nectar for bees and other beneficial insects. In the fall, cut the flower heads and hang them in the yard as home-grown bird feeders.

David Mizejewski is host of the Animal Planet's Backyard Habitat and author of *Attracting Birds, Butterflies and Other Backyard Wildlife*.

Bird lovers can learn more about attracting wildlife and add their gardens to National Wildlife Federation's Certified Wildlife Habitat list at <http://www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife/>.

Water left over from cooking vegetables is perfect for watering houseplants since it contains lots of nutrients. Old water from an aquarium is rich in oxygen and nutrients that are good for most houseplants. - TGS

3rd Week:

"Summer is when the weather is often too nice for doing chores put off earlier because of bad weather!" Honestly, try to finish off all those projects such as weeding (including those delicate flowering vines that aren't a headache yet!), mulching and setting up or repairing those irrigation setups. - me

Apply the first of two treatments, either organic (*beneficial nematodes*, *Milky Spores* (?)), or synthetic chemical *imidacloprid* (*GrubEx*) for GRUBWORM control in lawns and beds.

The white, frothy material that's showing up on stems and foliage could be WOOLLY APHIDS, but it probably is the eggs and protective covering of LEAFHOPPERS. It is not necessary to treat the eggs.

SPIDER MITES are hitting tomatoes hard, but also marigolds, beans, violets, junipers and verbenas (these are primary hosts but, there may be others). Use a hard spray of water on the underside of the leaves, or materials listed earlier, if there is still hope for the plant. In most cases, the crop is almost complete and no spray is required. Harvest the fruit and remove the plants. (* Keep in mind that companion planting can help enhance kitchen flavorings while at the same time discouraging pesky insect population. Plant garlic to deter red spider mites. - *AS*)

Fall WEBWORMS are making their homes in pecans and mulberry trees. Open the webs with a cane pole so wasps can feed on the worms. Other options are to spray *Bt* (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), *carbaryl* (*Sevin*), or *Malathion* on the foliage where they are feeding or to let them run their course without treatment.

Solarize your vegetable garden for the next three or four weeks

Start tomato and pepper seeds now so you can be ready for fall planting.

If container plants such as geraniums are declining despite regular watering, move them to a less sunny spot. Be careful to gradually decrease the amount of light they receive. For dry, sunny beds now is the time to plant vinca for summer bloom. Water in the mornings or use drip irrigation (sprinkling over the top causes fungal dieback). Mulch beds.

If your trees are raining sticky sap onto the patio, driveway and your car, the trees are filled with **APHIDS**. They're small, pear-shaped insects that create sticky messes on all surfaces beneath pecans, oaks, crape myrtles and others. You'll see the varnish-like residue on leaves initially. Spray at that point to stop their quick population surges. Left unchecked, a black sooty mold will grow in the sticky honeydew.

The white, frothy material deposited along stems and leaves may be caused by **SPITTLEBUGS**. Spittlebugs suck the juices from plants but do not usually require spraying.

Spread baits for long-term control of **FIRE ANTS**.

Tour your property to look for new **BEE** colonies. Leave them be if they aren't aggressive (contact the Bexar County Extension Office at 467-6575 for information concerning the Africanized bees), but note where they are so you can avoid them. Bees are very important pollinators, for both ornamental and edible plants. - *CF*

Fertilize flowerbeds lightly every 4 to 6 weeks.

To encourage more flowers on annuals and perennials, remove faded flowers before plants set seed. - *EO*

If weather conditions were favorable, **CHIGGERS** can be found in abundance. Treat the area with wettable dusting sulfur. To protect yourself from chigger bites, spray pants, legs and shoes with insect repellants containing *DEET*.

Pull or hoe weeds before they mature and produce seed.

Pinch back chrysanthemums, Mexican mint marigold, autumn asters and other late summer and fall-blooming annuls. - *TAE*

Plant heat-loving shade plants such as coleus, caladiums and begonias.

Watch for **BAGWORMS** on junipers, arborvitae and other conifers. Remove by hand or use *Bt* or other approved insecticide. - *LR*

Summer's Silent Killer- Summers "officially" begin around June 21 each year. But in some parts of the country, especially Texas, summers can begin in March or April, and last well into September or October.

With summer comes hot weather, an increase in outdoor activities, and an increase in heat-related deaths and illnesses. Fact is, on average more people are killed or succumb to heat-related illnesses each year than by tornadoes and hurricanes combined.

As easy rule-of-thumb to remember this summer, and especially over those long holiday weekends, is "when the temperature goes up, slow down." So, if you're gardening, working in the yard, or enjoying any other outdoor activity, remember these simple safety rules and make your summer more enjoyable.

Slow down. Heed your body's early warnings. Reduce your activities and stay in a cool, shady or air-conditioned place as much as possible.

Don't dry out. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids while the hot spell lasts. Doctors recommend a glucose replacement drink for those who are outside for more than an hour or two. If this is not available, a good substitute is plain water. Remember to hydrate often, even if you're not thirsty.

Dress for hot weather. Wear lightweight, light-colored and loose-fitting clothing to help maintain normal body temperature. A wide-brim hat or cap is a must if outside. Wear sunglasses if prolonged exposure to the sun's rays and glare is anticipated, especially while driving.

Avoid thermal shock. Go slow for those first few hot days. Heatstroke frequently develops swiftly and with little warning. More than half of heatstroke victims become ill less than 24 hours before being hospitalized or found dead.

Get out of the heat. If your residence is not air-conditioned, get to an air-conditioned environment for at least a few hours a day. A shopping mall or theater is an excellent place in which to escape the heat of summer. If this isn't possible, a well-ventilated shady area will do. Today's ceiling fans provide adequate air circulation in non-air-conditioned homes and buildings. If driving, use your car's air conditioner.

Don't get too much sun. Sunburn makes the body's job of heat dissipation more difficult. Besides a hat, sunglasses and proper clothing, a good sun screening agent is recommended, especially for fair-skinned individuals. Car sun visors offer protection from direct sun and glare for both drivers and passengers.

Beware of high humidity. Perspiration is your body's natural way of cooling your skin. When the humidity is low, this evaporation actually "cools" your skin. Air movement, such as with a breeze, fan or air conditioner, acts to evaporate perspiration and cool your body. When the humidity is high, this evaporative cooling process is lost, and the danger of heat-related illness or death is greatly increased.

Check frequently on the elderly and sick. During periods of hot weather, they can be affected, and suffer, the most, especially if they live in non-air-conditioned buildings, urban neighborhoods, or heavily populated downtown areas of our larger cities. A trip to the nearest mall or theater, or a ride in an air-conditioned bus or car, can provide much needed relief from the heat of summer.

Don't forget your pets. They are subject to the same dangers posed by hot weather as we humans. Make sure they have a cool, shady, well-ventilated place in which to rest during the heat of the day, and are provided with a good supply of fresh, cool water. During periods of high temperature coupled with high humidity, National Weather Service Offices will routinely broadcast the "Heat Stress Index" in forecasts, special releases and over NOAA Weather Radio broadcasting on VHF frequencies between 162.400 MHz and 162.550 MHz. Local radio and TV stations, plus The Weather Channel,

CNN and other news/weather channels will also broadcast the "Heat Stress Index," as well as hourly temperatures and relative humidity.

To obtain an "Apparent Temperature Chart" and/or a related summer heat wave brochure, contact the National Weather Service Office nearest you. Or, visit The National Weather Service Web site at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov> or the National Weather Southern Region Web site at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov>.

So, whether you're 6 or 60, follow the safety rules of summer, play it smart, and "Be Cool!" - LP

Most flowers last longer in water if their stems are snipped and squashed. Cut off a tiny bit more every couple of days when you change the water so the stems don't rot.

As your cantaloupe and watermelon crops begin to mature, cut back on water. Too much water during this growing phase will reduce the eating quality. Melons that develop during periods of heavy rainfall are usually tasteless. Spare the hose and sweeten the melon!

Zinc is one of the most important trace minerals and often one that is deficient, particularly in alkaline soils. Highly organic soil usually has sufficient zinc content. By adding compost and organic fertilizer to your soil, you will ensure that it contains adequate amounts of zinc. - TGS

4th WEEK:

Check lawn condition, repair/ replace. Apply a foliar iron spray to chlorotic St. Augustine grass (and other plants) showing signs of chlorosis- yellow leaves with green veins.

Remove faded flowers from zinnias and roses for a longer bloom season. Get the same effect on verbena and lantana by skimming the plants with a string mower/ trimmer every four weeks.

Place firebush in a container to attract hummingbirds to the patio. The plant needs full sun. If you have a shady patio, use firespike instead.

CHINCH BUGS. If your St. Augustine turf looks dry and yellowed, suspect these small black insects with white diamonds on their wings. Look in the interface grass; that is, between dead grass and healthy turf. If you see the insects there, you can treat with a garlic spray (there are several organic materials listed for Chinch bugs), or use *permethrin* (*Green Light*), *cyfluthrin* (*Hi-Yield, Bayer*), *carbaryl* (*Sevin*), or other labeled insecticide (always follow label directions). Chinch bugs will be active only in hot, sunny locations.

GRASSHOPPERS are difficult to control. Consider *Malathion*, *carbaryl* (*Sevin*) or one of the new baits if the insects attack your garden.

If you can reach them and it is practical, remove Crepe Myrtle blooms when half their flowers have lost their color.

Collect seeds from the rain lilies that bloom after a thunderstorm. Plant them in flats or containers to transplant into full sun areas.

Mulch all beds two to four inches deep to keep soil cool, roots healthier, conserve moisture and minimize weed germination. - CF

Periodically prune reblooming salvias, such as cherry sage (*Salvia greggi*) and mealy blue sage (*Salvia farinacea*), for continued blooms.

Fall-blooming perennials such as Mexican mint marigold, chrysanthemums and Mexican bush sage should be pruned during summer to keep them compact and reduce the need for staking. - *EO*

Remove faded flowers from plants before they set seed to encourage plant growth and produce more flowers. A "light" application of fertilizer every 4 to 6 weeks also will help.

Select day lily varieties this month as the plants reach their peak bloom.

Now is the time to plan for next spring. Consider digging and dividing any crowded spring bulbs. Once bulbs have matured and the foliage has turned brown, it is time to spade them up and thin out the stand. Crowded bulbs produce fewer and smaller blooms. They usually need thinning every 3 to 4 years (taller ones need support from each other to stand, so use discretion when dividing). Replant immediately in prepared soils. - *TAE*

Somewhat sedate plants can be as strong as any commercial chemical. The leaves of wood sorrel make a good natural bleach. Boil and allow it to steep for several hours, then reboil and use. Oxalic acid in this common woodland plant is the active working ingredient. Juice from its leaves will remove rust spots from linen or cotton garments. - *TGS*

* In updating this collection of useful tips, I have come across several comments, instructions and chemicals that are being replaced with newer techniques and materials. In some cases, I do not want to change what others have written, but I need to bring "them" up-to-date by putting a "(?)" right behind the point in question and maybe adding my two-cents-worth. - *me*

Many thanks to my contributors for sharing their wisdom so I can learn and share it with you.

AJW- A.J. "pop" Warner (see above).

CF- Calvin Finch, (Past) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News).

EO- Edna Ortiz, (Past) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Agricultural Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News).

TAE- Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Bexar Co. (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

LR - Lynn Rawe, (Past) Bexar Co. extension agent for horticulture, Texas Cooperative Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News). Visit their web site @ www.bexar-tx.tamu.edu.

THL - Tracy Hobson Lehmann, Garden editor, S.A. Express-News.

B&B - Birds & Blooms, bi-monthly family gardening magazine.

TGS- Texas Gardener Seed, an e-news letter from Texas Gardener Mag., visit their website @ www.texasgardener.com .

HG- "John" Howard Garrett, aka the "Dirt Doctor". Visit his web site @ www.dirtdoctor.com.

NS- Neil Sperry, Texas horticulturalist, Publisher "Neil Sperry's GARDENS". Visit his web site @ www.neilsperry.com.

MB- Michael Bettler with Lucias Garden in Houston, Texas

AS - Amanda Spalten with "Schulz Nursery" in Marion, Texas.

LP - Larry Peabody, *CCM*; (article from *TGS* e-newsletter, 5-21-08)