

JULY 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)

*In his garden every man may be his own artist without apology or explanation
Here is one spot where each may experience the "romance of possibility." -
Louise Beebe Wilder*

1st WEEK:

Container plants sitting in full sun may be taking a beating in the 100-degree heat. If so, move them to a location where they get a few hours (shade from 3:00 on) less sun. Check the root balls of container plants to make sure they are absorbing water. If the root ball has dried out too much, water will just run down the side. If this happens, soak the plant for 10 to 15 minutes to correct the problem. Monthly feeding (go lightly) with fertilizer encourages growth.

Use netting or Grow-Web to protect succulent fruits such as figs and peaches from BIRDS. It may not keep out squirrels and other mammals.

Recognize CHINCH BUGS in St. Augustine grass by the moth-eaten spots in the hottest part of the yard. If they sweep up when you brush your hand across the grass, treat with *diazinon* granules or *acephate* (chemical name).

If tomatoes are infested with SPIDER MITES, harvest the remaining fruit and pull up and discard the plants to the compost pile.

As temperatures rise, expect some leaves to fall from tree crowns. It is a natural survival tactic.

Water lawns only when grass blades first show signs of wilting in the morning. Apply 1/2" to 5/8" on each of two consecutive mornings to encourage deeper roots. To save water if you have Bermuda, zoysia, or buffalo grass let some of it go dormant until fall. - CF

Enjoy firebush, esperanza, poinciana, salvia, crape myrtle and zinnias blooming all over San Antonio! - EO

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

Seeds from many spring-blooming flowers are mature and can be harvested, stored and then planted later this fall in your landscape. - TAE

July is a good month to prune oaks and avoid OAK WILT threat. Paint pruning wounds immediately to be safe.

As spring-planted vegetable plants play out, add them to your compost pile as long as they are not diseased or pest-infested. - LR

Wild (native/adaptive and "volunteered" plants used in wildscape settings) Gardens should be at their peak!

If you haven't put Christmas lights away yet, dummy (me), leave them for Thanksgiving day lighting - me

There are many common signs when a plant becomes stressed. A wilting plant probably needs water, limp or curling leaves can indicate pests or disease and a plant that is lush and not producing any flowers may be over-fertilized. - TGS

In Our Rose Garden: Since the roses are not growing as rapidly as during the April-May-June period, they do not need as much fertilizer. One-fourth to one-third (depending on rainfall) cup of 10-20-10 scattered on the mulch once a month has seemed to be about right in our garden. In the unlikely event that we get heavy persistent rain (3 inches, "in series", without sufficient drying) more fertilizer will be needed as it leaches out. Normally, supplemental watering (unless we forget it and let it run all night) will not remove as much fertilizer from the bed as will a heavy rain. Yellow leaves (chlorosis) are common in rose gardens during the high stress time of summer. Among the common factors are chemical burns from too strong of concentrations of spray or rose food especially when the bush is not "fully hydrated". Some chemicals are photo-toxic during very warm weather even sprayed during early morning or evening (Please, read and follow directions carefully!). Blackspot and spider mites are the most common cause of yellow leaves during the summer. Damaged old canes many times have yellow leaves on them. Inspect and cut back below the affected cane to an outward leaflet and seal. Lack of available iron or nitrogen in the soil is probably the cause of yellow leaves on new growth with darker leaves lower on the bush. Check the pH, if below 6.0 use dolomite lime to adjust. One type of yellow leaf that is not a symptom of a problem, but the result of a previous cut just above a leaf axil. When new growth appears on that stem it nearly always comes from the axil or base of that top leaflet and that leaflet dies off. It is easily pulled off.

Organic Rose Program - *HG* (see Feb2do List for complete program)

Watering: If possible, save and use rainwater. If not, add 1 tbsp. of natural apple cider vinegar per gallon of water. If all else fails, just use tap water but don't over water. Avoid salty well water.

For best results foliar feed with Garrett Juice every 2 weeks, but as least once a month. When soil is healthy, nothing but Garrett Juice is needed in the spray. During our hot Texas months, try watering and spraying in the morning.

Pest Control Program: Add the following to Garrett Juice and spray as needed.

Garlic teas - 1/4 cup/gal. or label directions for minor insect or disease infestations.

Citrus oil, orange oil, or d-limonene - 1 oz./gall. of water as a spray, 2 oz./gal. of water as a drench.

Potassium bicarbonate - 1 rounded tbsp./gal. for minor diseases.

Liquid biostimulants - Use per label - Agrispon, AgriGro, Medina, Bio-Innoculant or similar product.

Neem - Use per label directions (should not be used when temps. are 85-90 or above) for more serious insect and disease infestations.

Fish emulsion - 2 oz./gal. for additional nutrients (may not be needed when using compost tea).

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

July and August separate the rose growers from those who just planted some roses. Once one has learned to have good roses in mid-summer in our climate he has become a Rosarian and has opened the door to a much greater enjoyment of one of God's great gifts. The statement that, "Roses always look bad in summer" is not true. Only neglected roses look bad in summer.

Roses will tolerate a bit (but not too much) of benign neglect in summer. For example, the tedious chore of cutting spent blooms can be modified to simply snapping off the dead flowers at the peduncle. The rose bed will look just as good and roses probably will be the

better for it. They can use all the leaves possible including those with only three leaflets.

We should not let our roses go too long without water, however. The three-times-a-week routine suggested by some growers is necessary only in very loose sandy soil but a deep watering as the soil begins to dry will be good in any bed. Some varieties, such as FRAGRANT CLOUD and its close relatives are more susceptible to water deprivation than others, and if allowed to get too dry, will defoliate completely.

Another treatment of a heaping tablespoon or two of Epsom salt may stimulate some more much needed basal breaks. We would hope they come sooner rather than later, because breaks after August or September usually are winter damaged too much to be of value at pruning time next February.

Mildew should not be a problem until the end of September. The spores of this disease need cool nights to germinate and we are not likely to get night-time temperatures below 80 degrees for quite a while yet. With routine spraying we should not see it.

Blackspot has already struck some unsprayed or improperly sprayed gardens. Routine weekly application of *Funginex* or *Triforene* normally will keep the garden completely free of this disease, but if it does appear, think back to where you forgot to spray. Get out some *Maneb* (*Dithane m-45* or *Manzate*) and use at 1/2 Tablespoon per gallon along with the *Triforene* for two or three sprayings. Many of us do not like to use *Maneb* unless blackspot appears because it leaves a dusty residue on the leaves and has a tendency to burn. Also it tends to clog the sprayer if it is not very carefully cleaned after each use.

Insects tend to damage only the blooms at this time of the year, so there is more reason than ever to use insecticides sparingly, only on the buds and blooms, and only when the insects are evident. *Marvik* is the best thing we have found for stink bugs and corn ear worms, with *Sevin* also doing a good job. Both are broad spectrum chemicals which kill almost everything that eats them (except spider mites), so many of us try to keep them off everything but the buds. Some of us are beginning to believe that if we do not kill our friendly insects they can help us check the mite and scale population.

Mites have partially defoliated a number of gardens in our area. Plants that have lost their leaves have been very seriously weakened. With control of the mites, plenty of water and light fertilization they will recover and make some fine blooms this fall. However, we must remember they will be especially prone to cold damage this winter and may require extra protection. Miticides are expensive and becoming hard to get, but not as expensive as buying new rose bushes. *Avid* is still giving good results, but *Vendex*, rated the best miticide in some areas, does not do too much damage to our breed of mites. *Kelthane*, which long ago lost its effectiveness, was taken off the market and *Pentac* simply disappeared. *Plictran* was banned because the EPA decided it was hazardous, so that leaves us with only *Avid*, *Vendex* and water.

In Our Herb Garden: This is a maintenance month: continue to avoid drought stress, to check and replace mulch layers, and to pinch back blossoms. * Trim back mints to ensure a continuous supply of young, tender leaves. Continue to cut them back throughout the summer (keep them off the ground!!!). * Do not try to cure heat stress by spraying haphazardly during the mid-day. DO NOT OVERWATER. * Enjoy harvesting dill, cilantro, basil and other annuals that go to seed in the heat. Feed basil after harvesting. * Note on saving seed: ideal storage conditions are 45 Deg. (F) and humidity below 50%. Store freshly harvested seeds in brown paper bags until thoroughly dry. Try not to store for more than 1 year. Parsley seeds especially should be fresh each sowing

season. * Till, compost and prepare fall garden area. - *HERBS: A Resource Guide for San Antonio*

Perhaps you have thought about it but never done it. Now, in July, between our two gardening seasons, is a great time to have your soil tested. Just think, you won't have to guess anymore about what your soil needs. You can obtain testing information from your county extension office or online at <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>. The cost is only \$10 per test. - *TGS*

2nd WEEK:

For hot-weather nematode control, plant Mari-Mum marigolds.

Apply iron sulfate dissolved in water to St. Augustine grass to replenish iron and cure chlorosis.

If dead areas on the lawn pull up like a toupee, or looks moth-eaten, GRUBS probably are the problem. Verify by examining the soil underneath the dead patches. Treat with *Oftanol* or use a beneficial nematode treatment.

Chewing SQUIRRELS, in search of food and moisture, are girdling branches in shade trees, which can cause the whole branch to die. Spray pruning paint on the wounds, where practical, to discourage further chewing.

Lawn clippings left on the lawn decompose to provide nutrients and organic material. Do not waste landfill space by bagging clippings.

Hummingbirds will be bringing their young to sugar-water feeders now. Keep feeders clean, dumping old solution once a week (twice a week if in the sun and the temperatures are in the 90's) into a shallow pan for butterflies. - *CF*

Remove spent crape-myrtle flower heads to encourage more blooms, even through September.

As vegetable beds become vacant, till and cover with a black plastic cover to control weeds and nematodes until fall planting.

Maintain mulch over the root system of young trees to increase growth rate by as much as 50% by controlling the moisture content and temperature of the soil, as well as providing necessary organics. - *EO*

Take a critical look at your landscape and note plants that need replacing, overgrown plants that need to be removed and possible activity areas that can be enjoyed by your family.

This will give you a head start on planning winter projects.

Raise mower height in turfgrass to help provide more shade for roots. - *TAE*

Look for LACE BUG damage on pyracantha, sycamore and Boston ivy. Control with a general-purpose insecticide.

Plant crape myrtles while in bloom to ensure selection of color (also be sure of the variety's mature height).

Mow often to keep grass low and dense (mow at recommended height to promote healthy turf).

Conserve water by buying plants adapted to the area. - *LR*

Now is the time to decide if you can carry your spring-planted tomatoes through for a fall crop. Vines that have been ravaged by early blight (a big problem for a lot of gardeners this year) or are under attack by spider mites should probably be removed and new transplants set out in a different part of the garden. Don't worry, those newly planted seedlings will survive just fine. Just be sure to give them plenty of water, some mulch and a little

afternoon shade until established. If your spring plants appear healthy, then cut them back some, re-apply mulch and they will be productive until the first frost in the fall. - TGS

3rd WEEK:

Don't waste water. Water most plants deeply on the day before they would have wilted. Plant Asters, Firebush, perennial garden Mums, Salvias, Marigolds (spider mites are less problematic in the fall), etc. for fall bloom in sunny sites.

Begin preparing vegetable garden for fall planting; tomatoes look for Surefire, Heatwave and Merced.

Pinch back garden mums for the last time.

Die back in dwarf pittosporum probably is caused by freeze injuries from earlier winters (even a couple of years ago). Check for cracked and peeling bark at the base of the dying branch or branches. Prune out dead material.

A bird bath or other source of water will help birds, bees and other critters survive a drought condition.

Remove suckers from the base of fruit trees. They grow from the root system (stock) and are a different variety than the top, called the scion. Suckers will quickly dominate the scion if left uncut.

Skim the top of lantana and verbena with a string mower every six weeks to keep the plants blooming consistently.

If you need more summer color in your landscape, use periwinkle, moss rose, firebush, lantana and esperanza in sunny spots. Use firespike, coleus, caladiums or impatiens in the shade.

Turk's cap and shrimp plant are good blooming plants that attract hummingbirds and grow in light shade. - CF

Bear with trees and shrubs with yellowing leaves. They are reacting to hot, dry weather and will recover in milder conditions (do not water the base of the tree trunk as this will contribute to more stress, water out at the drip-line).

Trim leggy petunias and impatiens to promote new growth and new flowers.

Spray iron sulfate on plants with chlorotic leaves (yellow leaves with green veins).

Apply *Image* according to label instructions to control nutsedge popping up in established lawns. - EO

Continue to prune fall-blooming perennials through August.

There is still time to set out another planting of annuals such as marigolds, zinnias and periwinkles. They will require extra attention for the first few weeks because of the heat, but the plants should reward you with color from late September until November.

Establish a new compost pile to accommodate the upcoming fall leaf accumulation. - TAE

4th WEEK:

If we want to implant organics such as fish meal or alfalfa into the soil, the last of July or first part of August is the time to give a tremendous boost to the fall bloom. The alfalfa can be spread on the mulch like fertilizer but fish meal needs different treatment. Holes punched in the ground around the drip-line of the bush provides a means of getting the meal out of reach of the neighbors dog (and away from the neighbor's nose). - AJW

If you can find sturdy American hybrid marigold transplants that are not blooming yet, plant now for a spectacular fall display.

It is time to plant your fall vegetable garden (or start in shelter if the temperature is hovering around 100 deg.). Put in a simple drip irrigation system for efficient watering. Kits

are easy to use. A soaker hose is a simple method to install drip irrigation in vegetable gardens and flower beds. But don't turn the faucet on full blast. A quarter turn of the spigot is all you need.

GALLS may be prevalent on oak leaves. The round balls, about the size of BB's, protect eggs of small wasps. They do not harm the trees, and no treatment is necessary.

Brown spots in drought-resistant grasses, such as buffalo, Bermuda and zoysia may be dormant areas over rocks or shallow spots in the soil. If the areas don't respond to extra water, check for **CHINCH BUGS** or **GRUBS**.

A black sooty mold on leaves is evidence of sucking bugs excreting honeydew. Kill those suckers with the least toxic, yet effective insecticide.

Sandburs can be collected by dragging a carpet remnant over the area where they are growing.

Firebush, planted in full sun on a patio, will attract hummingbirds. Use fire spike for shaded areas.

The driest time of the year is the best time to paint and reseal wooden outdoor furniture, decks and fences. - *CF*

Water lawns wisely using the evapotranspiration (the rate which water is taken up through the plant and "exhausted" from the leaves) recommended for your type of lawn grass as a guide. Contact **SAWS** for more information.

Water apple and pear trees weekly.

Spray a chelated iron product mixed with a surfactant on lawns that are yellowing because of iron deficiency (water well before treatment).

Check the moisture level of your compost pile. - *EO*

BERMUDA MITES: You can't see these pests (not true insects) at all. They're much smaller than their cousins (red spider mites) that bother so many of our landscape and garden plants. If you have patches of Bermuda that seem lethargic and dried, and if the runners are especially shortened and clubby looking, you have Bermuda mites. Insecticidal sprays applied with some pressure down into the grass should help control them. - *NS*

Prune dead or diseased wood from trees and shrubs. Hold off on major pruning until midwinter to avoid stimulating tender new growth.

Select and order spring-flowering bulbs so they will arrive in time for planting. Check with the extension service for proper chilling and planting times. - *TEA*

The color of the moon can point to changing weather conditions. A pale moon hints of rain, a red moon suggests a change in the atmosphere and a bright, white moon indicates fair weather.

Did You Know...

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 collections 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 own two-cents worth. - *me*

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

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

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

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

NS - Neil Sperry, Texas horticulturalist, Publisher "Neil Sperry's GARDENS" and contributor to S.A. Express-News. Visit his web site @ www.neilsperry.com.

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

LR - Lyn Rawe, Bexar Co. extension agent for horticultural, Texas Cooperative Extension Service (courtesy S.A. Express-News); visit their web site @ www.bexar-tx.tamu.edu.

me - MG, CR Brian D. Townsend, can be e-mailed at briandt@juno.com.