

AUGUST 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)

Effort is only troublesome when you are bored. - Christopher Lloyd

1st WEEK:

Test sprinkler output with a shallow container such as a tuna can or cake pan. Run the sprinkler for 15 minutes and measure the amount of water collected. The goal is to apply 1/2 to 3/4" per week to sunny areas and 1/2 to 3/4" in shaded areas for most lawn grasses to maintain root system health (with 100 degree days it is hard and wasteful to keep grass green), subtract if we receive any rain.

Fertilize summer-blooming perennials lightly with 16-8-8 or 15-5-10. They will need water afterwards. Feed roses lightly also according to rainfall (water before and after feeding; see notes in "In the Rose Garden").

Water raised beds and plantings weekly (according to rainfall, soil & plant conditions). Make sure you keep the top 6-8 inches of soil moist so that the feeder roots can pick up nourishment and water. Container roses and plants should be watered probably every other day if they are in all sun. Use the "old moisture meter" . . . your finger, to check the soil dampness. Use moisture-absorbing crystals when potting a plant; adding extra fertilizer to container plants will not help bloom and may cause problems. When it is 100 degrees day after day, many plants will not bloom. Keep them watered and be patient.

If spring and early summer produced moist, relatively cool weather; it may encourage rust fungus on peaches and plums. If so, treat with wettable sulfur or a labeled fungicide so the plant does not defoliate.

July/August is usually dry in San Antonio and vincas prosper. You may observe the vincas are "melting" because of aerial phytophthora, a fungal disease. There is no fungal treatment. Discard infected plants. Water plants at ground level and avoid splashing water on the foliage. Use of mulch helps greatly.

Use the intense heat and sunny days to solarize the veg. garden by applying clear (black plastic will only heat the top couple of inches of soil) plastic over tilled soil.

Order wildflower seeds for planting this month or next.

Add compost to the vegetable gardens before planting tomatoes, peppers, okra and southern peas this month. Spread 2 inches of compost and till to a depth of 6 to 8 inches.

Harvest okra every two days to maintain a crop of tender pods. Discard large, tough pods.

If part of your garden is infested with NEMATODES, forgo a fall crop of vegetables in favor of African or American marigolds. The marigolds are beautiful; they will make for a great fall showing, and will help to reduce population of root-damaging pests. Buy them as sturdy transplants without blooms. Plant the flowers every 8 to 12 inches.

July/August is an ideal time to seed buffalo grass and Bermuda when water is available.

If you must put down sod now, water as you lay the sod. A delay as short as 2 to 3 hours in watering could result in dormant grass. - CF

Perennial plants should be cut back during the stress of the hot days. Allowing leggy, old growth to remain is doing a disservice to them, as this old growth uses up moisture. If the plant is showing new growth at its base, the plant should be cut back to that point. Mints, as an example, should be cut back to only several inches in height. The plants (all) should be mulched to conserve moisture.

The best tomato plants to grow here are Sunmaster, Tomato 444 (Healthy Surprise), Celebrity, Amelia and Merced (*JP*); also try Solar Fire, Sunpride, Top Gun and Surefire (*DR*). A good tomato for containers is Patio. For the former, buy the tallest, lankiest plants you can find and bury in 1-gallon containers all the way up to the first set of leaves (if these leaves are withering, take off and plant at next set of leaves). Roots will form all along the buried stem and produce a good root mass. For Patio tomatoes, buy the shortest plants. You might want to provide some shade to tomatoes planted now. Covering the upper half of tomato cages with *Grow-Web* can help the tomatoes survive a hot August. - *EW*

Tomato, eggplant and pepper plants can be transplanted into the fall garden now, but the tender plants will need protection from scorching sunlight and pests. Use special fabric products designed for the garden.

Many trees and shrubs are dropping yellow leaves in a natural response to normal heat and dry conditions. - *EO*

Apply iron sulfate to landscape and garden plants showing iron deficiency. Use iron products carefully because they will stain sidewalks and brick. Also water before and after application.

Plant heat-loving plants such as lantana, bougainvillea, allamanda, hibiscus, mandevilla, copper plant, zinnia, portulaca and salvia.

Look for CHINCH BUGS in St. Augustine grass. Inspect dry, burned-looking grass, irregular-shaped dead areas in the lawn exposed to hot sun. Chinch bugs are about 1/6 of an inch long with a triangular black mark on the wing. Cut out both sides of a coffee can and push about 1 inch into a suspected area and fill with water, chinch bugs will float to the top. Treat with carabaryl, cyfluthrin, fluvalinate, permethrin or acephate (chemical names).

Mow lawns weekly (at least every other week if we are in a drought situation), you should be removing no more than 1/3 of grass blade height and leave clippings on the lawn. Both lawn and soil will benefit. Mowing your lawn often will help prevent weed seeds from germinating. Vary direction of mowing to avoid developing a grain (blades growing/leaning in one direction) to your lawn. - *LR*

In Our Rose Garden: *"Don't be in a hurry to use new insecticides; wait until they get all the bugs out."* - *HW* Anything that can be done to reduce stress will build a better bush and provide the basis for the best flowers of the year in October.

Watering every day is advisable and water-washing 2 or 3 times a week around 7:00 pm (just as the sun is going down, but enough time to allow leaves to dry) can be used to supplement the water needs and provide mite protection. Whatever your schedule permits, the roses will respond to just about any extra water you can give them (remember to mulch them, see below).

Flowers will be small during this period, but with frequent small amounts of additional organics (fish meal, kelp, blood meal) and additional chemical fertilizers (cut normal amounts at least in half, but keep up the watering), the bushes should continue to maintain or even grow bigger and occasional basal breaks may appear. Mid to late August is the ideal time to apply the organics for the fall bloom cycle. The work outside during these dog days can be

hazardous, but it doesn't have to be done all in one day. Stretch it out, but most important take care of yourself!

Late August is also the time when bushes can be cleaned out. Small, twiggy growth and blind shoots should be removed to provide sunlight, airflow, and spray materials to penetrate throughout the bush. This cleaning out process can include some shaping of the bush, eliminating the weaker of two canes where they fork. The biggest flower in October will come from basal breaks or a single flower coming from one large cane. Remember, if it is not size that you want, and if you want as many flowers as possible, do less thinning or cleaning out of the bush.

A. Mulching- Keep the thickness at a 2 to 3 inch depth.

B. Watering- As the summer sun bears down; keep the top 6 to 8 inches of soil moist by watering early in the morning (5:30 to 8:00 AM allows more time to penetrate). Also, a good rose practice to follow at least once or twice a month is to water wash your bushes. It's best to do this in the early morning on the tops and bottoms of the foliage. Try to coordinate water washing with your spray program. The day before you spray, do your water washing routine. This water washing will help refresh your bushes and maintain active bush growth. Either use a pistol nozzle or some other water-washing device you have rigged up. Also, remember that container-grown roses need water more during the hot summer months.

C. Feeding- See 4th week of this month.

D. Spraying- Use Funginex (1 Tbsp.) per gal. of spray mixture. Spray both the tops and bottoms of your foliage on a weekly schedule. If the hot and dry conditions continue you can lengthen your spray interval to 7 - 10 days. (Mildew and blackspot spores should be completely dormant in this heat unless you are trying to grow roses in the shade. *Please remember to make sure your rose beds are well watered before spraying and feeding.*

E. Summer Pests- 1) Spider Mites- They are here, you better believe it. Check the bottom side of your rose foliage for fine, white webbing while the topside and edges of the leaves will show a rusty coloration. If you have followed a good bush-grooming program and kept them cleaned out from cluttered and spindly growth, it will make your job much easier in keeping your bushes spider mite clean. If you have mites, either spray with *Greenlight* mite spray (2 tsp. per gal. of spray) or water wash the bottom side of the foliage for 9 days at 3 day intervals. 2) Thrips- If you want to keep blooms clean; just mist the buds and flowers. Thrips will migrate from pastures, fields or other host plants in the area like honeysuckle, oleanders, magnolias, etc. Use Orthene at 2 tsp. (powder), or 2 Tbsp. (liquid) per gallon of mix. * Visit the San Antonio Rose Society's web site @ www.sarosesociety.org.

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 at 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./gal. 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

Many good rosarians apply organics such as fishmeal, alfalfa meal, cottonseed meal, manure and blood meal to promote better fall bloom. If used, they need to be applied very early this month to give them time to break down and become available to the roses. If applied too late we do not get the full benefit from them before the fall shows (and some will say an extra spurt of growth in November will make the roses more vulnerable to freeze damage.)

Blackspot control becomes more critical as the year passes mid-summer. A badly infected bush in August has less time to repair itself with good hard canes before winter. Most beds that have had regular weekly spraying with *Funginex* (Triforine) are free of blackspot, but even those that have been neglected or sprayed improperly and have become infected can be cured by good care the rest of the year. Adding 1/2 Tablespoon *Dithane M-45* or *Manzate* per gallon to the *Funginex* mixture and spraying religiously once a week will almost guarantee wiping out the infection in 3 to 5 weeks. *Dithane M-45*, used alone at one Tablespoon per gallon also is very effective, but somewhat less so than the mixed fungicides.

Adequate water becomes more important at this time. In (Big if here in S.A.!) spite of the monsoon rains we have had the first half of the year the beds can dry out in a hurry, resulting in wilting and stunting of new growth. We still have time for a drought. One week without rain in August becomes a drought!

It takes longer to water beds properly that have heavy soil than those with loose sandy soil. On the other hand, the loose beds dry out quicker, so we have to use a little judgment as to how often and how long to water. A good way to check is to probe the bed with a sharp stick and note the resistance.

Most good rosarians will continue monthly or bi-monthly fertilization with their favorite materials, but they should not over-do it. More roses do poorly in summer from over fertilization than too little. Beds rich in humus can tolerate (and benefit from) more inorganic fertilizers than those lacking this life-giving substance.

Check the mulch and, if it has become packed, stir it for better aeration to the soil and for better insulation. Add to it if it has become thin. An organic mulch added at any time of the year is never wasted.

START YOUR NEW BEDS NOW!

In Our Herb Garden: Seed frost tolerant herb perennials indoors for later transplanting.

* Start indoor cuttings of perennial herb to promote fall plantings. * Use mornings to prepare garden soil for fall herb garden by adding and spading in manure, peat moss, compost, coarse sand, or a combination of these (Gardenville and Fertile Gardens provide several mixes). * Preserve your herbs by drying them in the air, refrigerator, or microwave, freeze in ice cube trays or as an oil paste; make herb flavored vinegars, jellies, butters, oils, honeys, pickles, relishes or mustards. - *HERBS: A Resource Guide for San Antonio*

2nd WEEK:

Keep an eye out for the Perseids Meteor Showers. Check with weather service or the planetarium when it's due. - *THMag*

Be on the lookout for "clearances" and "closeouts" of garden supplies and stuff! - *me*
SCALE insects on euonymus, hollies and other shrubs can be controlled with horticultural oil. Follow label instructions.

Don't let your fall garden transplants wilt; keep them watered and mulched to establish vigorous root systems.

Harvest some of your Southern peas in the green stage. Use them as you would green beans. You don't have to shell them.

Cut back Poinsettias and pinch back subsequent growth.

Pinch shoot tips on Mums and Asters.

Cut back 'Texas Gold' columbines if they are looking ratty. They will put on new foliage next month.

Endure August heat and consider these plants for colorful fall: Marigolds (Discovery Gold & Discovery Yellow); Zinnias; Celosias (Cockscombs); Joseph's Coat; Mexican Bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*); Fall aster (Blue); Chrysanthemums (garden-type); Spider lilies (reds); Belladonna lilies; Fall crocus (*Sternbergia lutea*); Sweet autumn clematis; Coral vine or Queen's wreath.

Use mulch over the root system.

If your pecan trees are loaded with nuts, one deep watering per month in the absence of rain will help fill out the nuts. The squirrels will thank you.

Magnolias and other trees will drop their leaves because of the heat. Fertilizer will not help and may increase the problem. Water deeply every 2 weeks to slow leaf drop. - *CF*

Trim lantana and verbena with a string trimmer for consistent blooms.

Southern peas, pumpkin and winter squash seeds can be planted now for harvest in fall. - *EO*

Mulch plants not only to conserve water, but also to keep the roots of plants cool and to reduce weeds around trees, shrubs and in flower beds.

Control nutsedge (nutgrass) with Image or Manage. DSMA or MSMA can be used but not on St. Augustine grass. Read chemical labels carefully before applying.

Look for APHIDS on crape myrtles and treat with an insecticide. If left untreated, the honeydew from the aphids will cause black sooty mold to develop. - *LR*

c. - *JG & TG*

BINDWEED (*Convolvulus arvensis*) aggressively strangles other plants and was known for centuries as the thunder flower. Pulling it was supposed to cause thunder before the end of the day. This idea probably came about to discourage children from picking the plants and causing damage to the host plants. - *TGS*

3rd WEEK:

Even if you see Pansies for sale, please resist; they should not be planted until mid-October.

Bougainvilleas are spectacular patio plants. Place in full sun, water only when the soil dries, feed every 2 weeks, let them get rootbound and prune the tips to encourage blooms.

Garden in the morning or in the evening when it is cool. Drink plenty of fluids and wear a hat. Gardening should be fun and not a threat to your health.

Control WEBWORMS with Bt (Spinosad is available also), malathion or Sevin or spray opened webs with *Orthene*, *Pipel* or *Thuricide* spray (you can control by piercing webbing with a pole to let wasps and other predatory insects in if infestation is not too great).

STINK BUGS can be killed with *malathion* or *carbaryl* (*Sevin*). They are prone to attacking

vegetables with an unusual ferocity when spring and summer conditions are favorable. Recognize SPIDER MITES by the dusty, speckled look of the foliage and small webs. Control them with frequent water sprays or *Red Spider Mite Killer (kelthane)*. Hummingbirds are everywhere this summer. Attract them to your yard with a sugar-water feeder. Use four parts water and one part sugar (no honey or sugar substitutes). Languishing spring-blooming perennials may be cut back and divided. Replant immediately and water them in. - CF

This is a good time to plant windmill palm, Mexican fan palm and sabal palm in the landscape.

* If we are still locked in a dry spell withhold transplanting for a week or two.

Trim leggy petunias and impatiens to encourage new blooms.

Plant beans, lima beans, cucumbers, sweet corn and black-eyed peas for the fall harvest.

Trim cherry sage (*Salvia greggii*) and mealy blue sage (*Salvia farinacea*) for more blooms.

Cut spent blooms and a few inches of stems.

Caladiums need plenty of water during drought-like conditions to remain active and lush until fall. Also apply 1/3 to 1/2 lbs. of a 21-0-0 fertilizer per sq. ft. of caladium bed. Water in thoroughly. - EO

Apply borer-prevention spray to trunks of fruit trees such as peaches, plums and other stone fruit. BORERS create holes in an irregular pattern on trunks and sometimes on branches. If the holes appear in a straight line on the tree trunk, woodpeckers are the culprits.

Now is a good time to choose crape myrtles for your landscape. They are blooming, so you can be certain of the color of the blooms. - LR

Consider replacing areas of your lawn with low-water use plantings. - DP

Goldenrod (*Solidago*spp.) is often blamed as a primary cause of hay fever. Since hay fever is caused by airborne pollen, goldenrod can't be to blame since it is pollinated by insects rather than the wind. Goldenrod blooms in the fall when the real culprit, ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*), a less showy member of the same family, also blooms.

Systemic pesticides are absorbed by the plant so that any part of the plant — leaves, roots, stems contain lethal amounts of the pesticide — enough to effectively control the targeted pest. Consequently, plants that are treated with systemic pesticides should not be consumed by humans. Systemics should never be applied to vegetable, fruit or nut crops or any plant that may be consumed by humans. - TGS

Late August through the Middle of October is RAGWEED season! - SB

4th WEEK:

You can do a simple soil test to see if your soil is alkaline or acid. Place a pinch of garden soil into a bottle or glass of vinegar. If the vinegar starts to bubble, your soil is alkaline. If it doesn't bubble, then it is acid. With the exception of east Texas and a few other locations, Texas soils are generally alkaline. - TGS

*** Feeding Roses now for show stopping fall blooms: 1) Organic Boost - In late August give your roses a mix of equal parts of fishmeal, cottonseed meal, and alfalfa meal. To this mixture add blood meal. Divide by 1/4 the total of the first three ingredients. For example, if you used 10 lbs. of the first three, then you would add 7 1/2 lbs. of blood meal to complete the mix. Give each bush at least two cups of this mix. For minis, give about 1/2 cup per plant. Water in. 2) Liquid Feed - A feed such as 20-20-20 can be applied every two weeks through September into mid-October. Using a 32 gal. garbage can, mix two cups of 20-20-20, one cup fish emulsion and one cup of chelated iron (Sprint). Give each bush one

gallon of this mix while miniatures need only about one quart. **3) Dry feed** - If you prefer to dry feed with a granular dry fertilizer of your choice, give each bush one cup. Miniatures should get only 1/2 cup per plant. - *AJW* (Be sure to see notes in "A Year in the Rose Garden".)

Start sowing flowering winter annuals, such as Alyssum, Calendula, Larkspur, Poppy and Stock.

Cut back mallow hibiscus plants to 8 inches to encourage a second bloom this fall.

Once your bougainvillea is root bound, fertilize with hibiscus food every 4 weeks or use a soluble fertilizer in your water can every week for maximum bloom.

Pittosporums may be showing dieback symptoms. In some cases, the problem is caused by a previous winter's freeze. Recognize freeze damage by cracked bark at the base of the plant. Prune the dead wood out. If undamaged wood remains, the plants may fill in. If pittosporum leaves turn brown, make sure water is penetrating to the roots. Aerate with a turning fork and water deeply.

Leaves are falling from many trees (especially trees planted in the spring) as the plants adjust leaf load between a cool, wet spring and a hot, dry summer. It is normal and doesn't require special treatment. Fungicides aren't necessary. Also you may find several small, dead areas and broken branches in shade trees. Drought, squirrels and storms with turbulent winds are the culprits.

Tomatoes planted in the past few weeks may not have grown much with excessive heat. Mulch the plants and keep them watered so the roots will be established and plants can grow when temperatures fall in September. With rains and cooler weather, the fall vegetable should be starting shortly.

Cooler temperatures - in the low 90's, as opposed to over 100 - will prompt blooms on hibiscus, lantana, mandevilla, allamanda, bougainvillea and other warm-weather plants. Don't forget to fertilize.

It's time to apply pre-emergent herbicides to control winter weeds. Read the label closely to match your weed problem with the proper pre-emergent.

Migrating ruby-throat and rufous hummingbirds have begun to arrive in San Antonio. Keep feeders clean and full of sugar water (3 parts water to 1 parts sugar).

Mulches are essential to keep the soil cool, conserve water and reduce weeds. Replenish mulch this week. Consider cocoa shell mulch, pecan shells or cedar for a more decorative look. - *CF*

Pecan trees may drop pecans in response to the heat and extended dry weather. Water trees deeply out at drip line, once a month.

Include Mari-mum marigolds and shasta daisy transplants in the landscape for bright blooms through October.

Continue to protect young vegetable transplants from scorching afternoon sun.

Keep birdbaths full, and make sure the water is clean. (Most birds prefer water in a birdbath to be no more than 2 1/2 inches deep - *B&B*) - *EO*

LEAF ROLLERS attacking cannas leave a horizontal line of holes on the leaves. Control the pests with *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt).

Prune autumn sage to encourage a fall bloom.

Develop a landscape plan now so you can take advantage of autumn planting weather.

Keep lawn mower blades sharp. Jagged cuts on grass blades are entry points for disease.

For best selection, order bulbs from catalogs now.

Fertilize flowering plants. Use a foliar spray to give leaves a boost. Apply in the morning or evening to prevent burning. - *LR*

Prune summer-blooming shrubs and vines as they finish flowering.

Clean up iris beds and thin out clumps if crowded (showing small, poor blooms). They can be transplanted and divided from now until October. - *me*

* 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.

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SB - Steve Browne,

HW - Howard Walters, the Rambling Rosarian

AJW - A.J. "Pop" Warner, from his book "A Year in the Rose Garden"

NS - Neil Sperry, Texas horticulturalist, Publisher "Neil Sperry's GARDENS"

HG - John Howard Garrett, aka the "Dirt Doctor".

THMag - Texas Highway Magazine

JG & TG - Joe Graedon and Teresa Graedon, Ph.D.; The People's Pharmacy (courtesy S.A. Express-News)

TGS - Texas Gardener Seeds; visit their web site @ www.texasgardener.com.

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