

July in the Tallahassee Garden

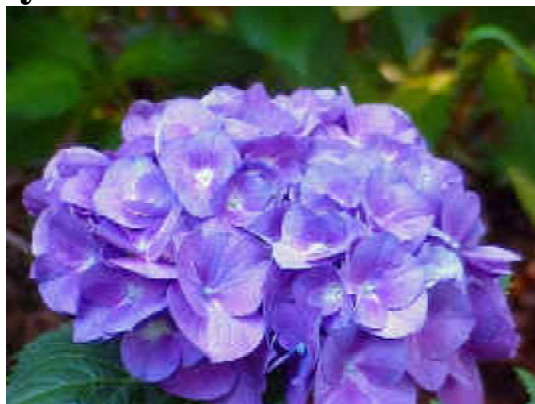


Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Prune hydrangea stems as the flowers fade so as to make the bush fuller for next year. If you wait too late to prune, you'll remove buds that would have formed next year's flowers.

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Summer weather is fickle. For a while it may seem that we are having rain once a day and then we realize that we have been without rain for several days. Try to keep track. Hot July temperature can dry the soil quickly. If its been three or four days since the last rainfall, it's time to start watering those plants that need it, including vegetable gardens, container plants, sunny lawns, and shrubs, trees and other plants planted within the last year. Water deeply and only as needed. This encourages deeper root systems that can reach moisture deep in the soil. Frequent light sprinklings encourage plant roots to grow near the surface of the soil where they are easily stressed by extreme heat and drought.

Trees and Shrubs: Prune hydrangeas right after bloom. Cut the faded flowers from each stem. Flower buds are formed in late summer and early fall so prune promptly to avoid removing next year's flowers. To root cuttings remove leaves from the bottom of the stem, cut off any flowers, keep two pair of leaves and stick in potting soil. Keep moist.

Bulbs, Rhizomes, Corms and Tubers: Dig and divide crowded spring-blooming bulbs once the foliage has turned brown. Divide daffodils, daylilies and iris and replant the best clumps. Discard the diseased or damaged material. Groom caladiums, removing any old or damaged looking foliage and any flowers that form. Thin out cannas and gingers. Cut canna stalks after bloom and fertilize. Remove old buds and stems from daylilies to encourage re-bloom.

Flowers: The nighttime heat of summer is one of the main reasons for the decline of annual bedding plants. Some warm season bedding plants that were planted in the spring may not be able to make it all the way through the summer. Replace these with more heat loving annuals or tropical flowers. Try coleus, butterfly bush (*Buddleia*), zinnia, sunflowers, ornamental sweet potatoes, celosia (cockscomb), firebush (*Hamelia*), Mexican heather, and pentas. Finish pinching the tips of chrysanthemums and feed them with a balanced fertilizer. Continue deadheading annuals and perennials. Cut back the leggy growth on annuals such as impatiens or begonias and fertilize to encourage new growth.

Lawn care: Inspect your lawn frequently so that problems can be identified and managed early. Spittlebugs (only in centipede), and chinch bugs or gray leaf spot fungus in St. Augustine are common problems in

July in the

midsummer. Slime molds, grayish powdery growth on the grass surface, can be common in rainy weather. They are harmless to the grass and can be removed with a hard spray of water. Avoid applications of weed control products to St. Augustine and centipede grass in July and August. Wait until the cooler weather of fall to limit stress.

Vegetables, Fruits and Herbs: Plant eggplant and tomatoes toward the end of the month for a fall harvest. Choose a heat tolerant tomato. Do not plant the same vegetable type in the same spot year after year. Other vegetables that can be planted this month include eggplant, peppers, Lima beans, southern peas, pumpkin, squash and melons. Begin seeding tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, cauliflower, cabbage, and broccoli for transplanting later into the fall garden. Blueberries frequently have their second growth flush in the summer months. Fertilize with a fertilizer for acid loving plants. Remember that blueberries prefer a soil pH of 5.0-5.5. Keep herbs cut back to encourage new growth. Many herbs can be frozen, dried or used to make flavored vinegars.

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