

July in the Tallahassee Garden

Tips from Katherine LaRosa, Master Gardener

Since July is our wettest month, it's time to Lay off the watering. July is usually our wettest month. You may need to water recently planted container grown plants, newly-sodded lawns and shallow-rooted annuals, but other parts of the landscape typically will need little irrigation this month. Water only when you see signs of wilt such as leaves drooping or plants and lawns turning a bluish gray color.

Shrubs and Trees

- Prune hydrangeas as soon as they finish blooming. This encourages more blooms next year since hydrangeas set buds on new growth. A fairly new cultivar of hydrangea called 'Endless Summer' blooms on new and old wood. If flowers are removed from the plant as soon as they fade, 'Endless Summer' may bloom from June until November.
- You can still plant container-grown trees and shrubs if you water them regularly.
- Plant hydrangeas where they will receive some morning sun but full shade in the afternoon.
- Prune gardenias if needed.

Annuals and Perennials

- Deadhead perennial flowers by removing the dead or dying flowers.
- If you want to plant annuals, choose those that can tolerate heat and humidity.
- In the sun, plant periwinkle (*vinca*), lantana, portulaca, purslane, melampodium, butterfly bush (*buddleia*), zinnia, sunflowers, ornamental sweet potatoes, cockscomb (*celosia*), blue daze (*evovulus*) and sun coleus.
- Pinch back the tips of coleus to discourage flower spikes and encourage more foliage.
- For shade, try impatiens, *angelonia*, *jacobinia*, *torenia* and begonias.
- To try something new, plant the new Dragon Wing begonia, a hybrid cross between angel wing begonia and wax begonia. Create a tropical look planting Dragon Wing begonias with bananas, cannas, gingers and tibouchinas.

Bulbs, Corms, Rhizomes and Tubers

- Thin out cannas and gingers.
- Clean up the foliage on gladiolus. Gladiolus can be planted throughout the summer.
- Remove old buds from daylilies to encourage more flowering for fall.
- Divide and transplant Louisiana iris.
- Plant gingers in sun or part shade. Check the light requirement for the ginger you're planting. Some require more shade than others.

Vegetables

- Transplant tomatoes beginning in mid July.
- Squash and cucumbers can be planted throughout the summer, although pest problems are worse in the hot weather.
- Practice crop rotation in your vegetable garden. Keep track of what was planted where each year. In the following year don't plant vegetables from the same family in the same place. For example, squash and cucumbers are in the same family and tomatoes, peppers and eggplant are in the same family. Learn the families, group them together when planting and rotate by family each season.

Fruit

- Blueberries have a second growth flush in August, so fertilize in late July.
- Use camellia-azalea fertilizer for acid-loving blueberries.
- Be on the lookout for white peach scale (see a picture at <http://woodypest.ifas.ufl.edu/395.htm>). The crawling larvae are out now. The crawler stage is the growth stage when peach scale is most easily controlled with insecticidal oil spray.

Lawn Care

- A well maintained lawn is less susceptible to insect and disease damage.
- Keep the mower blade sharpened.
- Mow St. Augustine grass about three to four inches high and centipede about two inches high.
- Never mow when the grass is wet.
- Establish a new lawn now using sod or plugs. But don't sod your lawn and then go on vacation. You must irrigate while the grass is growing in.

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