June Isn’t for Sissies

Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Black-eyed Susans (Rudbeckia fulgida) are among good summer-blooming perennials.

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Hot and hotter are the words for June. It is best not to bring new plants into the garden this month. But don’t take my advice; I never do! After all, there are plants which exist to revel in the torrid heat of a Tallahassee summer. Why deny them the opportunity to show off? Celosia, coleus, gomphrena, portulaca, vinca, and zinnia are a few annuals that will do well now. You will need to steal out in the early morning or late afternoon hours to water whatever you plant this month. Remember that annuals also need frequent deadheading and regular fertilizing to keep them blooming.

If you are into less work and saving money, perennials might be your best bet. Some heat-lovers to try are agapanthus, black-eyed susans, four o’clocks, phlox, purple coneflowers, daylilies, lantana, pentas, and perennial salvias. The initial cost is more but perennials will bloom for years to come. They do not bloom for as long as annuals do, although some will re-bloom if deadheaded. Cut back perennials like ironweed, rosebud salvia, forsythia salvia and other tall fall-bloomers now if you want to keep them shorter.

Azaleas and other spring blooming shrubs can be pruned through the end of the month. Most evergreens - podocarpus, holly, boxwood, ligustrum, and wax myrtle can be pruned at any time. It is better to prune often and lightly than seldom and heavily. Heavy pruning causes excessive growth of suckers which, in turn, leads to more and more and more and more and more pruning. You get the idea. Broken, dead and diseased branches can be removed at any time.

Keep a watchful eye on the grass. If this June is dry, you may need to water. Water thoroughly, one half to three quarters of an inch, and only when the grass shows signs of distress. Grass is in need of water when leaf blades turn blue grey or fold in half. You can measure the amount of water with a rain gauge or empty soup or tuna cans. If there is a lot of rain, you will need to watch for disease and treat early.
Most of the spring vegetables will begin to slow down this month. Keep harvesting the squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers until they refuse to fruit. Okra and southern peas are two vegetables which can stand the high humidity and heat. Lima beans and soy beans also flourish in June. Add sweet potato plants to the garden early in the month as they take four to five months to mature. Add spice to your garden with basil, Mexican tarragon and rosemary.

The light and fragrance in the garden are especially compelling in the late afternoon hours of summer. Take time to stroll or sit in the garden and enjoy the fruits of your labor. Read a book on the porch while you listen to the sound of the birds and catch the scent of coming rain.

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