Well, it’s hot. What else is there to say? Remember last January if that helps. Get to work! You will need your hand pruners this month.

I like to cut back tall, bushy, fall-blooming perennials now. Many of the salvias fall into this category – Mexican bush sage, rosebud salvia, forsythia salvia, limelight salvia and pineapple sage. Even the earlier blooming types like ‘Indigo Spires’ and the many cultivars of blue Salvia guaranitica can be rejuvenated by trimming them by one third to one half.

While you are out there with your pruners, trim the spring flowering shrubs such as azalea, deutzia, serissa and spirea. Evergreen shrubs which may need a haircut can also be done now – boxwood, pittosporum, tea olive, viburnum, ligustrum, wax myrtle and camellia. Wait on the hydrangeas until they are done blooming. Dead and diseased wood can be trimmed any time of the year.

Spruce up those annuals with some deadheading and a little fertilizer. Don’t forget to water if we go for a week or so without rain. Choose annuals that require less water as an alternative to water-hogging impatiens. For shade and part shade buy begonias, caladiums, jacobinia, kalanchoe and torenia. For sun try blanket flower, celosia, cosmos, globe amaranth, pentas, portulaca, salvia, and tithonia. Blanket flower now comes in new shades of yellow and orange with cool names like ‘Oranges and Lemons’ and ‘Mesa Yellow’. I bought ‘Oranges and Lemons’ last year and it came back again this year in a full sun location. It also makes a good cut flower, although the stems are not very long.
At this time of year and in this heat I like to watch the grass from my screened porch. If you spot, from the cool of the porch, problems such as spittlebugs feasting on the centipede or dead patches where chinch bugs have sucked the sap out of the St Augustine grass, you may want to rush off to one of our fine local nurseries where knowledgeable employees can help you select the right product so that this “problem” does not grow into a “disaster”. I personally prefer to wait on the porch and trust (hope?) that Mother Nature will take care of it. Like I said, I like to watch the grass and that’s about all. I don’t worry too much about lawn problems myself.

Keep harvesting the squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers until it gets too hot for them to fruit. There aren’t many things you can plant right now except for southern peas, okra, lima beans and sweet potatoes. The weeds will be growing as fast as the vegetables this month, so you might consider using some mulch on your beds. Mulch will enrich the soil with organic matter in the long run and in the short run mulch will cut down on germinating weeds while keeping the soil cool and moist for longer. I grow flowers for cutting in with the vegetables - zinnias, gomphrena, sunflowers, cosmos, and marigolds. Gladiola bulbs can be planting now and you will have beautiful bouquets in August. If you are overrun with flowers you can always take neighbors and friends the surplus. Unlike with extra zucchini and eggplant they will not run away when they see you coming!

It seems we have a bumper crop of weeds this year, including poison ivy. Weeding, unfortunately, can be done at any time of year. So if you are all caught up on your pruning, planting, deadheading and harvesting you can always weed. I, for one, have other more important things to do. You guessed it, sitting on the porch and drinking cold iced tea.

###