

Plant for Heat, Look for Pests



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Agapanthus is one of the perennials that handles the heat and humidity of summer well.

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June is when our summer heat begins in earnest. June is also usually when our summer rainfall pattern of frequent thunderstorms begins. Some plants thrive in the heat and humidity of summer. Others will wilt in it. Learn the difference and grow only those plants that will tolerate the hot and humid Florida summers.

We can still have some dry periods in June though. When we do, most plants in your landscape will benefit from an application of three quarters of an inch of water every week. When temperatures are in the 90's, plants that have been recently planted need more frequent waterings. If we go several weeks without rain, even well-established plants and shrubs will wilt.

Shrubs and Trees: Fertilize blackberries and figs, and fertilize citrus if you did not do so in May. Figs like mulch and water to produce a good crop. Fertilize crape myrtle this month. When using ultra-fine horticulture oil to control aphids, scale, mites and whiteflies, be sure to carefully follow label directions. The oil should dry on the leaves before the bright sunlight shines on them to avoid burning the foliage.

Lawn Care: Be on the alert for chinch bugs and gray leaf spot fungus in St. Augustinegrass lawns. Only treat your lawn if there are signs of damage from pests or disease. Follow label directions carefully and only treat affected areas and a narrow band of their perimeter. Excessive or careless use of pesticides can pollute our waterways and ultimately our drinking water.

Annuals: Annuals that tolerate the hot, muggy weather include celosia, coleus, impatiens, ornamental peppers, torenia, vinca, and zinnia. Zinnias can be seeded throughout the summer for continual color in sunny spots. For the most pleasing effects, mass plantings of no more than two complimentary or analogous colors. An example of a complimentary color scheme would be using blue or purple trailing torenia with yellow or gold narrow-leaf zinnias (*Zinnia angustifolia*). For more information on “Color in the Landscape”, visit the UF-IFAS webpage, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep425>

Perennials: Perennials are generally less work than annuals and ultimately less expensive. Some heat tolerant perennials are agapanthus, black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* ‘Goldsturm’), purple coneflowers, cannas, butterfly bush, daylilies, lantana, pentas, and perennial salvias.

Bulbs and Tubers: Gladiolas can be planted in June and will bloom in about nine weeks. Amaryllis, crinums, daylilies, Easter lilies and other bulbs need a complete fertilizer now. Do not cut foliage from these plants until it dies completely.

Vegetables and Herbs: There is still time to plant some of the more heat tolerant vegetables including lima beans, okra, pole beans, peanuts, pumpkins and southern peas. Also, you can still set out plants of eggplant, peppers, and sweet potatoes. One of the most common tomato disorders is blossom end rot. This is not a disease but a problem caused by a lack of calcium and fluctuating soil moisture. Keep the soil evenly moist and mulch to conserve moisture. Blossom end rot usually affects the first tomatoes to ripen. Cut back overgrown herbs like basil, oregano, and lemon balm to stimulate new lush growth.

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