

July in the Garden

By Diane Gofferman-Asato

With all of the recent heat we've been experiencing, the plants need help in reducing heat stress. The most important help we can give is proper watering along with about three inches of mulch to keep the root run comfortable and moist.

Be sure to move potted plants to a shaded area. Keep an eye on those Japanese maples to guard against leaf scorching. Flushing the root zone to remove built-up salts can be accomplished with one cup of vinegar to two gallons of water.

You can still plant summer heat-loving annuals, although they will have a shorter bloom season. Planting of melons, tropicals, palms and summer vegetables and fruits can also be done. And, bougainvilleas do best when planted in the summer!

Continue to deadhead flowering plants so they will continue to bloom. Harvest the vegetables every day and thin fruit on the fruit trees. It's a good idea to prune fruit trees at this time to reduce size by lopping.

Don't let citrus and avocado trees dry out; they will drop a good deal of fruit. Water deeply two or three times a month depending upon soil type. Water roses two to three times per week. Control rose pests and diseases and fertilize. Discontinue disbudding roses now. Prune climbing roses that bloom only once per season.

Cymbidiums need fertilization, filtered shade and regular water so the roots will not dry out. Tuberous begonias should be in full bloom and need to be fed every week with a balanced food. Don't overwater. Let them dry out a little between waterings.

Keep impatiens from becoming leggy by progressive pruning. Each time you feed them, select the two longest shoots on opposite sides of the plant. Cut off two-thirds of their length. The plants will remain full, well branched and bushy.

After hydrangea flowers have faded to brown or green, cut back each stalk that has bloomed, leaving only two buds or leaf scars. New wood will grow from this to bloom next spring. Feed for growth.

Continue to prune, water and fertilize hibiscus. Also release beneficials and wash the plants off with water to control giant whitefly. Feed camellias and azaleas for the third and last time about four to six weeks after their last feeding.

Divide bearded iris. You can dig up and store dry-dormant bulbs.

With vegetables, watering and either cultivating or mulching (as well as harvesting) are the most important tasks in July. Vegetables are not drought resistant; they need a steady supply of water.

We may think that July is a month to kick back and relax as far as gardening goes. Although it's hot, we need to do the tasks early in the morning before it gets too hot to work. This is also a good time to assess our gardens and plan for the future. What do we want to see more of? What plants just aren't working to our satisfaction? Check out the seed and plant catalogues for ideas of what to do when fall comes. Keep cool and enjoy the blooms of summer!

Sources: [52 Weeks in the Garden](#) by Robert Smaus,
[Southern California Gardening](#) by Pat Welsh,
[July Garden Guide](#), OC Register, by Cindy McNatt.