

YEAR ROUND GARDENING

AUGUST GARDENING CALENDAR

By Eileen Tully, Colorado Master Gardener

In praise of August --

As gardeners, we enter a slower, more easy-going phase in the garden process. There's always something to do in the garden but we don't need to keep up the frenetic pace of planting-mulching-weeding that April and May demand. June's blooms may have faded, but with proper pruning some may make a reappearance in August. July's heat is over and there's still a lot of summer left.

In August harvesting our gardening efforts has begun, but we can take time to do it right, even enjoy the process.

If we pay attention, August presents a wisdom not available any other time of year. The garden is maturing now. We can see our mistakes, our successes, and the intrusions on our efforts that nature presents on her own. What happened to

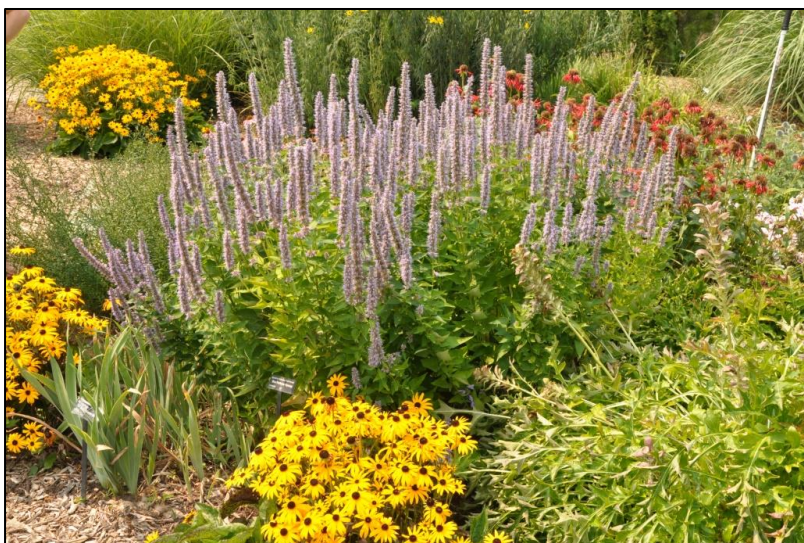


Photo courtesy of Freddie Bogardus

my sugar snap peas? I asked in June. Even though I planted at the recommended time, the variable weather in May interrupted the normal growing cycle. Only two plants showed up. In August I can start another planting and reap a harvest of my favorite vegetable later this year. In August there's time to look around and appreciate the garden...and then get back to work.

Major chores for August --

Vegetables:

- Plant spinach and lettuce mid-month for a fall harvest.
- Harvest cucumbers intended for slicing when they are 6 to 8 inches.
- Onions are ready to harvest when their green tops fall over. Lift the bulbs and brush off loose soil. Bring them to a protected area like a porch or covered shed. Lay them out in a single layer on a surface that permits ventilation top and bottom. An old screen propped up by bricks along the edge can work. Proper 'curing' can take two to three weeks. Do not store any onions that are still wet.

When the outer skins have turned papery place them in a mesh bag or old panty hose and place them in a dark and cool place.

- Peppers can be harvested anytime they achieve the size you need or want.
- Water tomatoes regularly until late August. After that, fruit will ripen more quickly when water is withheld.
- After harvesting and areas become empty sow cover crops, like annual rye grass, often called green manure, to build garden soil.

Lawn:

- Starting mid-month and continuing through fall, begin lawn renovation and repair. Build up low areas with garden soil and over-seed areas that are thin or bare.
- Attack persistent weeds like bindweed with a 2, 4-D product. But the ultimate goal is to grow a thick healthy turf that will choke out weeds.

Garden:

- Newly planted perennials, trees and shrubs need consistent watering to get established.
- Fertilize roses for the last time around August 15th. Fertilizing later may stimulate new succulent growth that could damage the plant if there is an early frost.
- Divide spring blooming perennials if they need it. One way to tell if a perennial needs to be divided is if the plant has a 'hole' in the middle and doesn't look as attractive as it used to or if blooms decrease or stop altogether. Also, if the plant is crowding out neighboring plants, it's time to divide.
- Some plants that benefit from dividing in late summer are: Basket of Gold (*Aurinia saxatilis*) Daylily (*Hemerocallis* species), Hardy Geranium (*Geranium* species), Hosta (*Hosta* species), Coral Bells (*Heuchera* species), Coreopsis (*Coreopsis* species), Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) and Speedwell (*Veronica* species).
- Powdery Mildew is a fungal disease that appears as patches of white or gray powdery 'stuff.' It will most likely attack where plants are crowded and kept damp. Some susceptible plants are garden phlox, bee balm, Virginia creeper vine and roses. In the vegetable family squash and cucumbers can succumb to powdery mildew. To avoid the disease avoid overhead watering where these plants grow and space plants farther apart to encourage air circulation. Sulfur products sprayed during the growing season may help control powdery mildew.

Take advantage of plant sales. Usually starting mid-to-late-August and into September many nurseries will have plants sales with prices as much as 50% off.

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions by keying in ask.extension.org. any time day or night. Monday to Thursday from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. you can phone 520-7684 or emailing CSUmig2@elpasoco.com.

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