

Year Round Gardening

Gardening in the rain!

Fredricka Bogardus, Colorado Master Gardener

The ground in my garden is saturated, and the weather forecast shows no end to the daily showers. My rain gauge says we have had 7 inches of rain in the last 10 days. I'm not complaining, the moisture is great, but I am trying to figure out how to adapt to our temporary wet conditions. On that note, here are a few suggestions for things to do between the raindrops:

1. Turn off your automatic sprinklers. I hope this is so obvious that you are all rolling your eyes at this suggestion. Don't turn them back on until your garden needs water.
2. Track how much rainfall you are getting with a simple rain gauge. Even the thirstiest grass only requires about 1 inch of water per week to stay healthy, if you know how much rainfall you have received you will be more confident in your decision to hold off on watering when the current rainy weather stops.
3. Try not to mow when your grass is wet. This can be tricky as your grass is probably growing really fast in response to our generous moisture.
4. If you do mow a long or damp lawn, and the highest setting on your mower cuts off more than 1/3 of the length of the grass, consider bagging the cut grass. If the grass has not been treated with herbicides (weed and feeds etc.), use the clippings as a mulch or compost them.
5. Fertilize your lawn, perennials and annuals. Nitrogen is leached out of the soil with all of the rainfall.
6. Don't fertilize evergreens, rapid growth this late in our growing season may subject new growth to damage when it gets cold.
7. Use this wet period to evaluate and record what areas in your garden accumulate water, and which drain quickly. That information can be very helpful for future plant selection decisions. For example, moneywort (*Lysimachia nummularia*) will tolerate flooded conditions, sedums and other succulents will not. When selecting plants, the drainage or lack thereof is useful information.



Moneywort is a ground cover that will tolerate poor drainage

8. If you have perennials that are enthusiastic re-seeders, try to get out and deadhead the flowers to minimize unwanted offspring. Of course, if you want them to re-seed, you can sit back and smile at the great conditions for seed germination.
9. This is a great time to pull weeds, they will come out easily.
10. Avoid stepping in flower or vegetable beds. Soil will really compact when the ground is this wet. If you must go into the garden, step on stepping stones or boards to distribute the weight.
11. Avoid working in vine crops when they are so wet. Disease can easily be spread when foliage is wet.
12. Divide overgrown perennials. Replant them or even better put them in a pot for the community plant swap on August 19 at the CSU Extension office.
13. You may see mushrooms springing up in your garden. Don't eat them. You can knock them over, but don't move them out of the garden, they are a good soil amendment.
14. Enjoy the cool wet weather, curl up with a good gardening book and dream of sunny skies. They will return.

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 CSUmg2@elpasoco.com .

For current garden tips visit www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC

For current classes visit - elpaso.extension.colostate.edu.

Coming up at Extension

Community Plant Swap

Saturday, August 19, 2017 8:00 – 10:00, plant drop off, 10:30 to 11:30 swap.

Free and open to the public. Bring up to 20 plants to exchange with other gardeners.

Preservation through Dehydration

Thursday, August 24, 2017 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Cost \$15

Peach Preservation Workshop

Wednesday, August 30, 2017 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM Cost \$15

Fall Bulbs, Rhizomes, Tubers and Corms

Thursday, September 7, 2017 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM Cost \$15

Go to <http://elpaso.extension.colostate.edu/> or call 719-520-7690 for more information and to register.