



Tools and Tips to Care for the Gardener in Summer

by Anne Skinner, UC Master Gardener

Now that it's summer and the garden is planted, let's take time to focus on the gardener.

I find taking a morning walk before starting garden chores is a pleasant start to the day and loosens up my muscles before picking up that heavy watering can. I like to look at my neighbors' front yards to see which plants work well in our area and get new garden ideas. Another great place to see gardens of roses, flowers, vegetables, and fruits is at Bravo Lake Botanical Garden in Woodlake. Planting is best left until fall, when the days are cooler, but the soil is still warm enough to encourage growth.

A daily check on the water status of your garden is essential in this weather, especially potted plants which dry out quickly in the heat. If you have automated drippers or sprinklers, a weekly check will find leaks or plugged emitters.

Summer is a great time to plan for fall planting by getting your garden tools ready. Cleaning and sharpening hand pruners are routine tasks that will make them easier and safer to use, last longer and make cleaner cuts on the plant stems. A sharpening stone from the hardware store lasts for years. I clean the pruner with alcohol, then oil the pivot area.

Creating a tool kit to take out into the garden saves steps and time. I have a canvas bag from a thrift store for the home rose garden. It came with pockets for pruners, a spray bottle of alcohol to clean the pruner between plants, garden gloves, a trowel and a water bottle for the gardener.

For the Tulare County Courthouse rose garden, I have a tool box which doubles as a seat to prune shorter plants. When pruning many rose bushes, it is especially important to have a sharpening stone handy. If the pruner makes ragged cuts on the canes they don't heal properly, allowing diseases to enter. Also in the box are a kneeler pad, a larger pruning tool for thicker stems, alcohol for cleaning, and again, water for the gardener. The Master Gardeners



work at the Courthouse rose garden the third Wednesday morning of the month in warm weather. We are always ready to explain what we are doing and work with the public who want to learn by doing.

There are many tools available to make garden tasks easier. Long handled trowels, weed diggers and small rakes are very handy. A dustpan on a handle is a great help with cleanup. Some companies make garden gloves in sizes with rubberized fingers. Look for hose nozzles with on/off buttons to save on hand fatigue and water. Hand pruners and tools such as trowels come with cushioned and ergonomically designed handles to reduce the strain on the hand and wrist.

If you are prone to allergies or are dust sensitive, wearing a mask when mowing the lawn or clearing brush is essential. In addition to a shower to clean up after gardening, shampooing to remove pollen from your hair will reduce allergy symptoms.

Check with your Doctor or Pharmacist if any of your medications can make you more sensitive to the sun or heat. Another important question for your Doctor is a check if your Tetanus immunization is up to date. The bacteria which cause tetanus live in the soil and can enter the body through a puncture or cut while working in the garden.

Summer is a time to enjoy the work you have put into your garden and start to think about your fall plantings. For summer reading, the Master Gardener's website <http://cetulare.ucdavis.edu> has an archive of newspaper articles, an excellent section on trees and UCCE information on maintaining a healthy garden and coping with pests.

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