



August Garden Tips 2016

by Thea Fiskin, UC Master Gardener

August is the month to use wise-watering practices to keep your plants alive during the long, hot days. It's also a great time to start planning your winter vegetable garden. Seed catalogs will start filling your mailbox and are also readily available on-line, so take a moment to sit in the shade and plan a garden project for the cooler weather.

WATER WISELY: This is your primary concern for August. Follow drought restrictions on watering, but be sure to water trees and shrubs deeply at least once a month. Deep watering will induce roots to grow deeper in the soil where they are less likely to dry out. Light watering actually wastes water because it doesn't reach the root zone. The best way to check is to take a trowel or shovel and dig down six to eight inches and check soil moisture. The soil should be slightly damp--if the ground is so hard you can't dig down, water is not reaching the roots. Drought resistant trees and shrubs don't need to be watered as often, but the principle of deep watering still applies.

WHAT TO PLANT: It's time to plan a winter vegetable garden while you are relaxing from the summer heat. Our local nurseries have a great variety of seeds, but also check out catalogs and the internet for new, unusual, or heritage seed varieties. Try something not available at the local supermarket like purple, yellow, red or white carrots. Seeds of cole crops like bok choy, broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower are usually seeded in small pots and later planted into the garden. Root crops such as beets, carrots, parsnips and turnips are seeded directly into the planting beds. Some seeds, such as carrots and onions, come in seed tapes which makes it much easier to get the proper spacing.



Because of the heat and drought, it is a poor time to do any other planting. Wait until September or October.

MAINTENANCE: Prune hybrid tea roses in late August to promote a new flush of blooms in October. This is not the severe pruning of winter, so be gentle. Remove spent flowers, lanky growth, and any suckers from the base of the plant.

Rejuvenate your summer-blooming annuals and perennials. Remove faded blooms, pinch back any leggy growth, then lightly fertilize and water. This works wonders on geraniums, marigolds, salvias, verbenas and zinnias.

August is also the month to divide German iris. Lift the entire clump with a spading fork or shovel and discard the oldest, bloomed out rhizomes. Remove any disfigured leaves and rotted portions. Then trim the leaves to about six inches. Set the exposed sections in the sun to dry and form a callus over any cut sections. Prepare the

area you are going to replant with extra compost or fertilizer. Plant the rhizomes just below the surface, water well and mulch.

Remember to keep harvesting your summer veggies, hopefully they will keep producing till the frost in November.

FRUIT TREES: Support heavily laden fruit branches to keep them from breaking. Dispose of any fallen fruit, as they will harbor pests. Apricots and olives should be pruned now rather than in the winter to prevent fungal disease problems.



WEEDS: Control of weeds is always very important. Weeds in the garden rob your plants of water and nutrients, harbor insects and viruses, and sometimes grow tall enough to shade your flowers and shrubs. On top of that, weeds are not aesthetically pleasing in front yards of neighborhoods and can drive down the value of homes. So even if you have ditched your lawn in order to save water, please mow down your weeds and tidy up your front yards. Be diligent and take pride in where you live!

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