

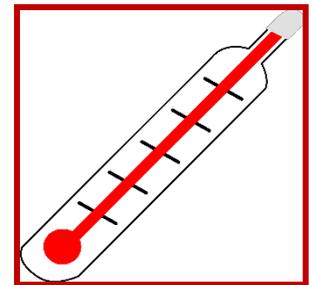


Garden Tips for July 2017

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

By now water schedules are in summer mode, which means two days per week for watering in most districts. Finally, we have a summer where it appears water storage and supply will be sufficient for most of us, but only if we continue to be water-efficient and use common sense that conserves water.

July is predictable in Tulare and Kings Counties—it will be hot. Just as we slow down the outdoor projects (if we can), so too should we allow our plants a bit of a rest during daytime triple digit temperatures, nights that don't cool off, and hot winds. This is especially true with the best of our water-conserving plants and California natives, many of which prefer to be dormant or semi-dormant in summer. So, slow down, go with the flow, and don't do any big planting projects this month. Sit back and enjoy all the hard work you have done earlier in the year, let your heat-lovers in the garden show off their stuff, and let the others take a vacation.



Watering:

Water trees and shrubs deeply to insure roots will grow down rather than along the soil surface. You may need water in several short watering cycles if you have clay soil, to avoid water running along the surface and not penetrating. If you are not sure how well water is absorbing, dig with a trowel or shovel six to eight inches into the soil to check soil moisture. Vegetables and most fruit trees are not drought resistant; they need a steady supply of water. If you have recently planted low-water-use plants, they need a little extra water the first year or two to become established.

What to plant:

If you absolutely need some color to fill an empty spot, then be sure to plant something that loves the heat and can tolerate summer watering. Some examples are many sage varieties, sunflowers, verbena, zinnia, and California goldenrod.



Garden Chores

- Continue deadheading summer blooming annuals, this keeps them blooming.
- Dead head roses and daylilies as they finish blooming.
- If you are able to water it in deeply, fertilize your roses. Fertilizer can burn the plant if it sits on the surface, instead of down by the roots. Keep in mind that fertilization encourages more new growth, which is a problem if your ability to water is restricted. It's fine to skip this summer feeding.
- Cut back hydrangea flowers that have faded; cutting back each stem to leave only two or three leaf buds. Fertilize and deep water to encourage new growth to bloom next year.
- Containers dry out quickly this month so check them daily. It doesn't hurt to give them a little diluted fertilizer every few months, along with a thorough watering to leech excess salts.

- House plants can be moved outside to a shaded spot for a little vacation. Be sure and check them for pests before bringing them back indoors, though!
- Weeding is the never-ending chore. Even in July it is essential to remove unwanted plants that compete for water. Cool mornings or evenings are best.
- Do a summer check of all irrigation systems and repair anything broken. Too much water from leaking sprinklers can be just as harmful to your garden's health as too little, as it mixes with heat to encourage disease-causing fungi, extra insect pests and other nuisance wildlife.
- Divide German iris, which is another name for the bearded and other iris most of us have in our drier, sunny spots in the garden. Lift the entire clump. Trim leaves to about six inches. Set exposed sections in the sun to dry and callus over any cut sections. Plant the rhizomes (that big gnarly root-like mass) just below the soil surface, water well and mulch.
- Clean up any fallen fruit under trees to prevent disease, insects, and those rodents who want a free meal!



Critter Control

Monitor problems. Use the least toxic approach first. Sometimes a squirt of water is better than anything chemical. Many products can worsen a pest problem by killing the beneficial insects in your garden along with the pest you are trying to control. This includes lawn products. Try soaps, insecticidal oils, microbial insecticides, exclusion, trapping, or plain old handpicking bugs before using more toxic pesticides.

Insecticidal soaps will control aphids, whiteflies and mites. Completely cover the plant with the solution, especially the undersides of the leaves. Use in the evening to reduce leaf sunburn. Repeated spraying may be needed.

Insecticidal oils control aphids, whiteflies, mealybugs, scale, spider mites, psyllids and thrips. Don't apply to water-stressed plants, or when temperatures are over 90 degrees.

Microbial insecticides will work on specific insects. *Bacillus thuringiensis*, commonly called Bt, controls hornworm and other leaf-eating caterpillars. Codling moth granulosis virus, sold as Cyd-X, controls codling moth, which can be a big problem in fruit trees. Consider if you can tolerate some caterpillar damage on ornamentals in order to support native moths and butterflies.

Need some inspiration for garden changes? Visit our public lands, local public gardens, or visit public gardens while you are on vacation, especially in regions with similar climate and precipitation patterns.

Happy Gardening!

July 1, 2017