



Garden Tips for July 2018

by Peyton Ellas, UC Master Gardener

PLANTING:

It is stressful to plant trees, shrubs, lawns, and most perennials in the summer months, so if you can, wait until autumn to add anything new to your garden. The exceptions are heat-loving edible annuals, and some water and heat-loving small perennials. If you must replace a tree or shrub, plan on spending some time every day for at least two weeks to monitor the soil moisture.



If you must plant, do it early the morning or late in the day when the sun is going down, fill the planting hole with water, let it drain, and repeat at least once. Water the plant in the container thoroughly, try not to disturb many roots when removing it from the pot. Place in the planting hole, press the soil around the roots firmly, then water once again. If you use mulch, saturate the mulch that will be around the canopy of the plant. Hose the plant off with a light mist. Do not use any fertilizer either in the planting hole or around the base of the plant. What to expect: the plant may wilt or drop some yellowing leaves, but should recover within two weeks. The soil should remain moist but not completely water-logged, since roots do need some oxygen to grow. You may, following water district guidelines, hose the foliage off in the evening several additional times in the weeks following transplantation.

Avoid planting species that are susceptible to root and crown rots. This includes many low-water, woody shrubs and perennials like Ceanothus, manzanita, many woody sages, lavender, rosemary, buckwheat, cactus and some succulents, flannel bush, desert mallow, hesperaloe, and coffeeberry.

You can plant California fuchsia and goldenrod for some late summer and fall color. Edibles to plant in July include tomatoes, basil, peppers, and artichoke from well-developed seedlings, and from seed: winter and summer squash, radish, peas, bulb and green onion, and fall-harvested vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, chard, kale, and cabbage.

MAINTAINING:

Monitoring watering is the biggest maintenance job in July. If you have your own well, try to follow the nearest water district's guidelines as a "best practice" on growing healthy and climate-right plants. Established ornamental trees and shrubs should be deep watered, but on a less-frequent schedule than smaller perennials and new transplants. The edible garden, including fruit trees, should receive a consistent supply of water sufficient to replace water lost through transpiration and used for fruits. That doesn't mean the ground should be wet all the time. Let the first inch or more dry out between watering. If a heat-wave is predicted, water a day or two in advance, and then not again until the soil dries out a little. Roots need oxygen as well as water and nutrients, so water-logged soil leads to stressed plants. Check your irrigation system at least once during summer, especially if you will be gone more than a few days.



Major pruning should wait until the weather cools, unless there is a safety reason to remove plant material. You can lightly prune in the cool morning or evening hours, but not if a heat wave is predicted in the next few days. Go ahead and continue dead-heading roses and daylilies. Remove spent flower heads and the entire flowering stem from hydrangea, leaving only a few buds per stem for next year. You can begin to divide bearded iris in July, or wait another month if they still look lush and green. If you decide to divide: lift the entire clump. Trim leaves to about six inches. Set exposed sections in the sun to dry for a few days to callus over any cut sections. Plant the rhizomes (that big gnarly root-like mass) just below the soil surface, water well and mulch.



Don't fertilize anything during July with high-nitrogen products, including lawns. Fertilizing itself is stressful to plants. When they start to use the extra nutrients to produce new growth, that new growth is very fragile and more susceptible to damage from hot sun, heat, wind and drought. You can use a timed release fertilizer, or a mild fertilizer like tea or coffee or alfalfa pellets or meal. But July is a good month to let the entire garden rest a little bit. Exceptions are heat lovers like Bermuda grass, autumn and summer sage, desert mallow, California fuchsia, California goldenrod, roses, and summer annuals like zinnias, sunflowers, and marigolds. Those should have been fertilized in spring. If you skipped it, don't worry, just enjoy what you get and plan on adding a timed release fertilizer next year.

Weeds are a year-round challenge, so keep up with those heat-loving weeds. Monitor and control the best you can rodents, and insect pests like aphids, whiteflies, scale and mealybugs. Hose off plants as a first treatment. Insecticidal soap sprayed in the evening is the second treatment.

CONSERVING:

Healthy plants can tolerate quite a bit of damage. Chewed leaves may be from grasshoppers, but if you find caterpillars, try to identify them before removing or reaching for the chemicals. Try to tolerate damage from native species in order to support native moths and butterflies. Tobacco or tomato horned worms and other exotic pest larvae are fairly easy to handpick. Native bees and wasps are active in the summer months. Most of these tiny insects are hardly noticed because there are so many European honey bees also active. Support our native insects by planting a variety of flowering plants. Don't be too quick to remove some flowering ("bolting") plants like radish, onion and carrots from the vegetable garden, and leave a little bare dirt here and there for ground-nesting solitary bees.

Happy Gardening!

Where can the UCCE Master Gardeners be found this month?

- Visit us at the Visalia Farmers Market at the Sear's Parking lot on Mooney on each Saturday. On the 2nd Saturday of the month, we will be presenting ongoing talks.
- Porterville Farmer's Market at Sierra View Hospital, Parking Lot, 465 W Putnam Ave., Porterville, -- 8 am-11 am each Tuesday in June

We love to talk plants. Come ask us your gardening questions!

For answers to all your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 684-3325, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 and 11:30 am; or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m; or visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:
http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

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