

AUGUST GARDEN CHORES

By Linda Lewis Griffith, UC Master Gardener

Summer is in full swing. Whether you're harvesting bushels full of tomatoes or planning next year's blooms, there's plenty to keep you happy.

General tasks:

- **Compost.** Turn compost and keep it as moist as a wrung-out sponge. Add garden waste, grass clippings and pest and disease-free pruning materials and leaves.
http://ucanr.edu/sites/Nutrient_Management_Solutions/stateofscience/Compost/
- **Irrigation.** Water demands are at their peak this month. Check your irrigation system for leaks and broken emitters. Pay close attention to the stress levels of new, drought-susceptible plants. Established perennials, shrubs and trees need infrequent but deep watering.
http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/The_Big_Picture/Irrigation/
- **Water.** To reduce evaporation, water in the morning when temperatures are coolest and the air is still. Water deeply to moisten the root zone, but no deeper. Container plants may need daily watering, as soil in pots dries out quickly and can damage plant roots on a hot day.
- **Mulch.** Apply 2-3" of mulch where existing mulch is thin or soil is bare to protect against heat and water stress. Keep mulch back 12" from tree trunks and 6" from perennials to discourage pathogens.
- **Weeds.** Manage weeds using nonchemical methods such as hand weeding, cultivation or mowing. Use chemicals as a last resort.
<https://www.unce.unr.edu/programs/sites/ipm/weed/>

Landscape:

- **Lawn.** Raise the cutting height of your lawnmower to 1-1.5 inches to help grass survive drought and heat. Leave clippings on the ground to provide both nutrition and a layer of mulch.
- **Plant.** Sow seeds of fall-blooming annuals directly in the ground; keep beds moist until seedlings emerge.
- **Protect.** To reduce fire hazard, keep wild grasses and weeds mowed, leaving a 30-foot swath around your property. Trim dead growth from shrubs and trees and prune any branches that overhang the eaves. Remove leaves and debris from the roof.

Edibles

- **Harvest.** Harvest and store mature warm season vegetables. Not sure when they're are ripe? Check out this link:
<http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Vegetables/>
- **Plant.** Start cool weather vegetables directly in the soil or in flats to be transplanted later in the season. Check this planting guide for choices in your region:
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/veggies.html>
- **Prune.** Prune apricot and cherry trees. Manage the height of other fruit trees by pruning once they've finished producing. Remove all suckers. If growing blackberries, cut two-year-old canes to the ground after harvest. Retain several canes from this year's growth and train them on a trellis for next year's crop.
- **Protect.** Consider covering crops with shade cover to protect them from hot mid-day sun. Cover fruit trees and grapes with netting to exclude birds and other vertebrate pests.

Pests and Diseases

- **Leaffooted bugs.** Adults are around 1 inch long and have narrow brown bodies. Adults feed on many types of plants but are especially fond of tomatoes, pomegranates, pistachios and almonds. Manage them by removing overwintering locations, such as woodpiles and fallen fruit and keeping weeds closely mowed.
ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74168.html
- **Powdery mildew.** Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that affects apples, stone fruit, crape myrtle, grapes and roses. Unlike many diseases, it is common in warm, dry conditions. Look for white powdery spots on both sides of leaves. In severe infestations leaves will turn yellow and brown and fall off, and stems will twist and distort. Minimize outbreaks by planting in sunny locations with ample air circulation. Avoid overfertilizing with nitrogen fertilizer because lush foliage and shade encourage the spread of disease. Whenever possible, buy mildew-resistant varieties.
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/powderymildewcard.html>