



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Garden Tips for June 2020 (May 30, 2020)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener



June gardening teaches us to be flexible and resilient. The weather is still generally pleasant, but we can get bursts of scorching, July-like daytime temperatures, and we can get throwbacks to early spring rain, wind, and chilly nights. It is usually during a heat wave that our irrigation systems that we have not checked yet fail. June is also full of life in the garden and it is often just when the squash is ready to harvest that the pest insects, gophers, ground squirrels or deer discover the edible garden. June is also a significant transition month for low-water-use species, and it can be particularly hard on newly planted woody plants like lavender, Ceanothus, manzanita and Toyon. These plants don't like abundant summer water, but they need some to survive our hot summers. Getting the irrigation balance right and getting your plants safely settled into summer when growth slows is very rewarding. At the same time, there are still abundant maintenance tasks to accomplish, so we will be able to get our exercise, fresh air and gardening therapy easily this month.

PLANTING: Your major ornamental planting should be finished by the middle of the month. The exception is heat-loving annuals like marigold, cosmos, zinnia and sunflowers, which you plant right into the heat, as long as you can provide them with enough water to get them established. If you must plant ornamentals as the weather gets into the really hot days, choose water-tolerant plants. In low-water-use gardens, this can be the many sage (*Salvia*) hybrids and cultivars like "Hot Lips," "Mystic Spires," "May Night;" Yarrow (*Achillea*); Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*); Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*); or Bougainvillea.



In the edible garden, you can still plant melon, winter squash and pumpkin, basil, corn, and okra. I admit I often plant tomatoes, peppers and beans right through summer too. It's possible, but you must be ready to get those pest insects and other predators before they do in your tiny seedlings. The popularity of edible gardening has exploded the past few months, and I hope everyone keeps it up. It never gets old to grow your own food. Even a small container or one raised bed we tend and harvest helps us physically and mentally. Start small with the size garden you can reasonably manage. Edible growing is considered a high-maintenance garden project. But, oh how rewarding! We have abundant research-based information on our searchable website: https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/.

MAINTAINING: Lawns should be watered deeply and infrequently to promote deeper root growth and to prevent crabgrass. Mow frequently so you only remove a third or less with each mowing. Mowing too short during the summer stresses the lawn, yellowing the tips, and encourages weeds. If you have a lawn substitute ground cover like yarrow, June is a good month to mow it to four inches tall. Fertilize warm season lawns: Bermuda, St. Augustine and zoysia. You can also patch and reseed this month. Do not fertilize fescue and perennial ryegrass until the weather cools again this fall.

Unfortunately, the heat brings out the bugs. But remember it is bringing out the beneficial insects along with the pests. We may notice the pests first but look closely and you may find fairy-like delicate lacewings, lady

bugs, pirate bugs and spiders of all colors and sizes. The first step is to monitor populations of pest insects and see if the beneficials, including birds, can keep the numbers manageable. If some help is needed, follow the "least toxic first" method of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practice before you reach for the kills-everything insecticide. Some of the biggest pest insects to watch for are tobacco (tomato) hornworm, earwig, stink bug, spider mite.

Check your irrigation system for damaged sprinkler heads or clogged emitters and make repairs and renovations before the real heat of summer. Other tasks this month are:

- Deep-water ground covers, lawns, shrubs, and trees, including fruit trees.
- Divide bearded iris once they finish blooming. First carefully dig up plants and discard old rhizomes and any diseased or rotted sections. Replant the healthy rhizomes, making sure to plant shallowly. Just barely cover the rhizome with soil before watering.
- Prune azalea, camelia and hydrangea after bloom.
- Harvest vegetables regularly to keep them producing.
- After harvest, clean up berry vines. Cut this year's fruiting canes to the ground and tie up the new green canes in their place. Spread compost or fertilizer in the bed, then deep water.
- Prune apricot trees in the summer. You can also do a light summer pruning of other stone fruit trees. Beware of pruning too much, since bark that has previously been in the shade can be extra-sensitive to sunburn.
- Pinch asters, chrysanthemums, and sedum 'Autumn Joy' to encourage branching and more blooms in the fall.
- Lightly cut back any perennials that are becoming too leggy.
- Snip spent flowers from summer blooming annuals and perennials to keep them blooming
- Wisteria can be pruned aggressively now. Cut back to two nodes on the new branches, as this will keep the plant from unrestrained growth, while giving it time to put on a spectacular display of blooms next year.

WEED CONTROL:

- Crabgrass - This annual weed thrives in lawns that are watered too often in the summer. Mowing your lawn a little higher and watering less often will discourage seed germination. It is more effective to apply a preemergent herbicide in the winter than to selectively try to remove crabgrass from the lawn with a post emergent herbicide. **IF** you use an herbicide, be sure to follow the directions carefully; don't just throw it on by handful. Be mindful of the possibility of groundwater contamination.
- Nutsedge - Wet, waterlogged conditions favor the growth of nutsedge, so improve drainage and keep the area as dry as possible. Nutsedge is one tough weed to get rid of, so be diligent with hand pulling, hoeing, and spraying to remove it before it takes control of your garden or lawn.
- Spurge - This is the flat creeping weed with a red spot on the leaves. When you pull it, sticky white sap gets on your hands. Ants love it. Hand pull or hoe spurge plants before they set seeds and remove them from the site. In flowerbeds, spot treat with non-selective or broad-leaf herbicide and add a thick layer of mulch to prevent weed germination. You can also apply a preemergent herbicide in established beds



but be aware it will also harm newly-planted transplants. To discourage infestations in lawns, mow fescue at least 3 inches high to shade out seeds and fertilize Bermuda grass to keep it actively growing.

CONSERVING: Has this challenging time caused you to discover gardening is a marvelous passion? If so, I have two suggestions. The Garden Rant blog. The Cultivating Place podcast. Both will heal and help and turn your heart into a conservationist, which means someone who takes care of the natural world. There is a whole movement devoted to creating, encouraging and conserving natural worlds in our yards, whether they be tiny front yards in a sub-division or sprawling acreage. Hopefully you can tell from this column, our additional newspaper articles and the information on our website, it is possible to be a conservationist and grow awesome tomatoes, peaches, roses, lawns (yes, even this!) and keep your garden tidy and organized. When your heart turns to conservation, the garden breathes and everything in it balances nicely. That doesn't mean you save the life of every earwig or just sigh as the weeds take over. Conservation is an active occupation. This month, try a project that reduces erosion, install a bird or native bee house, remove invasive species from your property, reduce fire danger by removing fuel ladders under trees and clearing dead brush, maybe allow a spider to live? Even if it's large and creepy?

Have a safe, healthy, full of garden wonder month!

In accordance to the Shelter-at-Home guidelines, the Master Gardeners have cancelled all public events until at least May 10, but if you leave a message on our phone lines, we will get back to you!

For answers to your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 684-3325, or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, 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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