

Dog Days Of Summer Mean It's Time To Prep Your Garden For Fall

Leimone Waite, Master Gardeners, Aug. 2, 2019



It's time to seed broccoli for fall gardens. (Photo: JOEL BANNER BAIRD/FREE PRESS)

Q: I am new to the area and have both a yard and small garden. I'm still trying to learn the season here and am wondering what I should be doing now to prepare for fall and winter. Can you give me some tips?

A: This time of year, watering and pest control are at the top of the to-do list for both the yard and vegetable garden.

Remember it's best to water until after midnight and before 10 a.m. to reduce the chance of fungal infection, especially on lawns, and to conserve moisture.

Using inline emitter drip irrigation in the vegetable garden can help to conserve water and reduce weeds.



Zucchini, cucumbers, and peppers provide many options for canning, cooking, and even baking into desserts. (Photo: Submitted)

Here's some more summer gardening advice:

In the yard

Now is the time to lightly fertilize roses and continue to deadhead blooms for fall flowers.

Cut back Canna stems to the ground as they finish flowering; new stems will continue to appear and you may get repeat blooms.

Remove spent flowers of daylilies, roses, and other bloomers as they finish flowering, this may encourage a second bloom.

Cut back lavender stems to the first leaves after flowering to promote a second bloom. Never cut back to the woody part where there are no leaves as the plant will not regrow.



Now is the time to cut back lavender stems to the first leaves after flowering to promote a second bloom this season. (Photo: Matthew Dae Smith/Lansing State Journal)

Dig and divide over-crowded irises and other bulbs once the foliage dies off. Bulbs can then be replanted, stored in a cool dry place for planting later or shared with a neighbor or friend.

Trim faded crape myrtle flowers for more fall bloom and spray off aphids with water or use insecticidal soap to reduce honey dew that will cause black sooty mold.

For citrus and stone fruits, pick up dropped fruit to prevent brown rot and clean around trees to limit pest problems.

Prune apricots now to avoid infection by *Eutypa* fungus that can kill the tree. It is best to remove about 20 percent of this year's growth without exposing limbs to sunburn. You can also give a final summer pruning to other fruit trees if you need to control size or remove unwieldy limbs.



Now is the time to start seeds for fall vegetable crops including broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage (pictured). (Photo: Lee Reich ASSOCIATED PRESS)

In the vegetable garden

Be sure to harvest vegetables promptly to encourage continued production.

Now is the time to start seeds for fall crops indoors such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower.

Pull weeds when they first appear to prevent them from going to seed and causing more work later.

If fruit isn't setting on your melons and squash, use a soft brush to hand-pollinate the flowers and increase production. Use the brush to gather pollen from male flowers, then brush it onto the female flower; female flowers have a tiny embryo fruit at the base of their petals.

Continue mulching to conserve soil moisture and control weeds. My favorite method is to lay down cardboard around the plants and then cover with a layer of compost or other mulch material. This does a good job of blocking out weeds and eventually breaks down so that it can be tilled into the bed next year.

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.