

## Garden Tips for August 2011

Well Ya'll, here we are in the middle of summer. A very hot, humid summer, I might add. There has been much happening here in Country Walk. We've had celebration of July 4<sup>th</sup> with a parade, the teen parties, the adult gatherings, and just some plain old relaxing and cooling off by the poolside. All in all, it has been a very productive summer, with much improvement of Country Walk properties. It has been so nice to see our homeowners painting, roofing, trimming, beautifying, and taking care of the lawns. It shows homeowners taking pride not only in their own homes but in the neighborhood as well. Kudos to those folks making the effort and showing the pride!

I don't know about the rest of you but the extreme temperatures have just about shut me down this past month. But since there is plenty to be done, we must forge on. The heat doesn't stop the grass from growing or the weeds from reaching for the sky. They must be mowed, pulled or sprayed. So bring out the mowers, the gloves, and of course the sweat and muscle. My mother always said gardening in the South is not for the faint of heart, and there's no need to wither and stay inside. Your garden is depending upon you to stay on top of things. And there is much still to be done so the following is a checklist of things to be taken care of for August.

- Plant flowers that love the heat - there is still time to plant seeds of marigolds, cosmos, sunflowers and cleome for a beautiful late-summer show - Plant 4" petunias, impatiens, coleus, and geraniums - Don't plant trees or shrubs until fall.
- Prune and trim annuals, perennials and shrubs – Deadhead annuals for better flowering - Trim shrubs and trees to shape or to remove diseased or damaged branches.
- Water the lawn, vegetable garden and container plants – Watch rainfall and adjust your watering accordingly - Better to water less often but more deeply to encourage deep, healthy roots.
- Mow regularly – Keep grass in shadier areas mowed ½"-1" higher than sunnier grass spots, longer grass blades have a larger surface area to absorb available light.
- Prevent garden problems – Stay on top of plant and lawn health, but don't automatically reach for a product if you don't know what the problem is – doing so can create more issues for the garden. Not sure – take a sample to an expert for advice – if you do use a product, follow directions carefully.
- Potted plants – Poke holes in the soil, as it dries out quickly, so the water then saturates the soil.
- Snakes – I've noticed several around the neighborhood – Remove log piles, leaf piles, and rock piles away from the house as these piles provide a habitat for snakes.
- Prune tropical hibiscus – As this fall, they will be placed indoors in the sunniest window.
- Collect hosta, iris, and lily seeds – for next spring's plantings.
- Fertilize roses – 1 tablespoon per height 10-10-10 for fall's blooms
- Sharpen lawnmower blade – So it will cut sharply instead of shredding the grass.
- Cutting back faded annual flowers – By half, fertilizing and watering will produce more blooms.
- Plant fall bulbs – Blooming bulbs such as colchicums, fall crocus and sternbegia.

- Slugs – Make a slug trap from a small board raised an inch off the ground by small stones - Check it at noon and scrape the crawler into a bucket of soapy water.
- English ivy – Pull English ivy out of your tree - if left on, the leaves act like a sail in a thunderstorm - you don't want that falling on your roof!
- Webworms – Right now you can see the big webs of fall webworms in your trees – if reachable – use a stick – wrap and destroy the webbing to expose the worms to the elements.

I hope you are enjoying your bounty from your summer garden of tomatoes, squash, cucumber, blueberries, or whatever you planted in the spring. It's always worth the effort when you finally see the crop on the table or in that wonderful BLT, isn't it? We've had tomatoes, squash, cucumber, blueberries, peaches, peppers and can't wait for the figs and grapes to ripen in the next couple of weeks. Then on to making preserves and jam.

In the meantime, will you join me while I play in the dirt?

Ann Taylor