

Gardening Tips for June, 2011

Oh my, who let it get so hot! June is here and boy did it make an entrance! Needless to say, but it is dry and much rain is needed. Not the stormy kind we had the other night but the slow soaking type that give our lawns and gardens the drink they thirst for. We had several trees and limbs down from that storm. Some even had them fall on their homes causing damage. I couldn't help but notice neighbors helping neighbors the next day. That is what it is all about. We all should be aware of our surroundings and pitch in when it is needed. Thanks neighbors!

I once had a writing instructor whose advice has lingered through the years: "learn the rules like an expert so you can break them like a master." This advice applies to gardening as well as it does to grammar. There are some gardening rules you do need to follow, such as choosing the right plant for the right site. But other gardening rules are meant more as gentle guidelines than absolute mandates.

This is especially true in container gardening, where new gardeners often rigidly follow the "thriller, filler, and spiller" model. It's a great guideline starting with tall, spiky plants in the middle, then adding mounded plants around it, then tucking in plants that cascade down the sides of the pot. When applied with a creative eye for color and form this rule produces stunning arrangements. But it is not the only way to design a beautiful container. A tall glazed urn with a single type trailing plant (such as creeping Jenny) cascading over the sides like a waterfall or a low, squat container planted with hens and chicks or other groundcover succulents are stunning even though—a maybe even because—they break the "thriller, filler, spiller" rule. Just food for thought!

Summer is here! For container gardeners, that means the battle is about to begin. Who will win—the sun or your plants? Here are three tips to ensure your container plants stay happy all season:

- WATER. Plan to water once a day. Twice if in full sun and high temperatures, rainy days, take a break.
- FERTILIZE. Containers need feeding, low release when planted, every two weeks quick-release food.
- CHANGE IT. Throughout the season, replace fading plants with new ones

Now to our monthly garden schedule:

- Each week a shrub needs one gallon per foot of height.
- You can safely remove one fourth the foliage of any healthy tree during the growing season.
- Collect seeds from foxglove stalks. Scratch the soil around the plant scattering seed and cover.
- Look for small seedlings under Lenten rose. They can be moved to other spots now.
- Lure slugs and snails under a hollowed out half-cantaloupe near hosta. Check at noon every few days and scrape them into a bucket of soapy water.
- Conserve water by using a soaker hose for plants and shrubs.(applies 1 gallon per foot per hour)
- Circular, dead, brown spots could be "Brown Patch", correct fertilization and watering practice before using a fungicide.
- Mulch vegetable garden. I use three sheets of newspaper to cover the ground around each plant then I cover the paper with straw or mulch.
- Plant annuals in small beds that make a visual impact but are easy to water.
- Fertilize outdoor plants regularly.
- Raise the height of your mower by one notch to help your lawn grass withstand dry weather.
- Remove faded flowers from geraniums and marigolds to help them make more blooms.
- Pick okra and squash regularly. If you leave fruit on it halts blooming on the entire plant.
- Keep lawnmower blade sharp because a ragged cut makes grass use more water.

- Try not to kill the big green caterpillars on parsley and other plants because they are the precursors to beautiful swallowtail butterflies.
- Tree roots are almost bone dry. Try to water as much as possible.
- Prune back hydrangeas when most of the blooms have faded. This will make more branches which may give more flowers this fall.
- Water the lawn only once a week making it a deep, thorough soaking, one inch.

I do hope these tips give you are start to a fun and beautiful yard and garden and make it a little easier for you this summer so more time can be spent at the pool.

As I mention earlier, there were many limbs, pine cones, sweet gum balls, leaves and such blown and scattered everywhere. So we all need to check our yards and do the necessary cleanup and mulching to help maintain our beautiful neighborhood and if you see a fellow neighbor needs help, be a good neighbor by doing what you can to help out. Pay it forward!

On any given day, you'll see me playing in the dirt, will you join me?

Your happy gardener,

Ann Taylor