

What to Do in July 2023
Weekly Gardening Timely Tips from
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Westchester County

July 1

Perennials and Flowers: Last call to pinch asters, mums, and other late blooming flowers to encourage bushy plants come fall. For the rest of the summer, let them fill out and set buds. Clean up faded, browning or diseased foliage and deadhead (remove) spent flowers that do not provide seed for birds or have ornamental seedcases that will last for winter interest. It's best to leave upright hollow stems with nesting solitary bees. If you must remove these stems for aesthetic reasons, you can place them with the tops upright somewhere they will not be obvious. Young spotted lanternfly nymphs are still feeding on perennials and other herbaceous plants. Be on the lookout for this invasive pest. See <https://nysipm.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-species-exotic-pests/spotted-lanternfly/> for information and [ReportSLF.com](https://www.reportslf.com) to report sightings.

Fruits and Vegetables: When garlic has 4 or 5 green leaves remaining, it's time to harvest. Remove the withered outer leaves and hang or dry the bulbs in one layer in a shady, protected place. An airy shed or garage is ideal. When fully dried, trim off the roots. The tops may be trimmed to an inch or so, or left intact for braiding. Continue harvesting early crops. If you have empty space in the garden, you can fill it with fast-growing vegetables for a fall harvest: string beans and edible soybeans (check days to maturity), carrots, Swiss chard and fast-maturing summer squash. Keep an eye on ripening cherries so you can harvest before the birds take all. Well-secured bird-proof netting may be used on small trees. If you haven't already done so, prune out old, spent raspberry fruiting canes.

Trees and Shrubs: Last call to prune many spring-flowering deciduous shrubs. Learn the best time to prune specific shrubs to avoid removing flower buds that are now set to open next spring. You may neaten up evergreen hedges and evergreen trees if there are a few unruly stems sticking out here and there. Avoid exposing tender leaves/needles that are protected by outer foliage as these may burn in the summer sun.

Lawns: This past spring trended toward cool and wet weather, and many cool season lawns have responded accordingly with robust growth. To regulate the rate of growth, you can mow approximately on a 2 week schedule: when the grass has grown about 5 inches tall, cut it back to 3½ inches. As the weather warms and growth slows down further or stops, you can mow even less often, or not at all.

Houseplants: Continue to assess the growth of your houseplants and other container plants. Check at least daily and water as needed to keep containers from drying out. If the plants are outdoors, you might need to water more than once a day if the top inch or two of the potting mix feels dry. When plants need to be watered often, they may benefit from fertilizer to replace nutrients that are leached away. Follow fertilizer label directions.

July 8

Perennials: If weeds have been a problem in the garden, you can apply an inch or so of mulch to help suppress them. Plants that are close enough together that their leaves are barely touching may provide a living mulch that keeps weed seed germination to a minimum. You can also leave some bare soil between plants for native ground nesting bee habitat. How about installing a birdbath in the garden? DIY versions are cheap and easy with a clay pot and saucer; go online for more inspiration. Especially at the height of summer, birds need a ready source of fresh water.

Flowers: By mid-July, the flowers in containers may be tired looking. Deadhead spent blossoms and neaten up planters and window boxes as needed. Cut back shabby trailing vines. Apply fertilizer if needed, according to label directions.

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue weeding and other maintenance tasks in the vegetable garden. Continue to pick strawberries as they ripen. Maximum sweetness and best flavor develop a day or two after the berries are entirely red. After the harvest is done, renew the bed by mowing or clipping the plants to a height of approximately 3 inches. Removing the clippings will help to prevent disease. Strawberries may be fertilized according to label directions to promote new growth. For other fruit crops such as cherries and raspberries protect the ripening fruit until harvest if you don't have enough to share with the birds. You can cover small plants with netting. Larger plants may need to be caged.

Trees and Shrubs: Prune climbing roses and rambling roses after they bloom. Climbing roses are simply roses with such long canes that they mimic or are employed as true vining plants. All rose varieties benefit from regular deadheading: cut the stem below the spent flower just above a set of leaves with the largest number of leaflets, commonly five, seven or nine. This is where new growth with flowers will emerge. Ramblers usually produce new canes from the base of the plant around or after bloom time. The habit of arching the canes of climbing roses on a trellis or horizontally along a fence has a purpose. This enhances the likelihood that latent buds on the arched canes will spring into action to produce growth and flowers. New canes may be trained into the framework of the existing plant after you have pruned out the oldest, thickest canes in the framework from the base. Spotted lanternfly nymphs may be found on roses, vines and other thin-barked woody plants. See <https://nysipm.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-species-exotic-pests/spotted-lanternfly/> for information and ReportSLF.com to report sightings.

Lawns: If you need to water the lawn, do so in the morning to prevent disease and reduce evaporation. To conserve water (and reduce the risk of leaf diseases on ornamentals too) make sure sprinkler heads are adjusted to cover only the lawn and not the leaves of ornamentals, driveway, sidewalk or other impervious surface.

Houseplants: Indoors or out, houseplants need more water this time of year than at any other time. That might mean watering once (or even twice a day outdoors) if the soil feels dry. The exception could be houseplants kept in darkened rooms that are continuously air conditioned or are naturally darker and cooler. Check all houseplants regularly.

July 15- July 21

Perennials: Is the garden humming with pollinators? Enjoy the show! To attract pollinators and other beneficial insects, employ groups or swaths of flowers with a diversity of shapes and bloom times. These include mint family plants such as mountain mint and sage; coneflowers, daisies and sunflowers in the composite family; dill, fennel and parsley in the carrot family, and many more.

Flowers: Check flowering vine supports. Vines can become heavy this time of year, and in need of extra stability. Tie plants directly onto stakes and always use a loose knot to prevent girdling the stems.

Fruits and Vegetables: Begin to monitor squash for vine borer. While you're in the garden, check other vegetables for insect and disease pests. Spotted lanternfly nymphs may be found on cucumber, squash and other vegetables. These may be in the black and white phase or with added red coloration. Grape vines are a preferred host of this invasive pest, and can kill the vines when feeding pressure is heavy. See <https://nysipm.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-species-exotic-pests/spotted-lanternfly/> for information and ReportSLF.com to report sightings. Once apples have reached full size but have not yet begun to color, monitor for apple maggot by hanging one red sphere trap with a sticky coating per each 100 fruit. This may catch enough of the adult insects to reduce damage to a tolerable level if you have only a few trees. Keep the traps clean for best results. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Trees and Shrubs: If you planted trees and shrubs this year, remember to continue watering them regularly. Apply an inch of water weekly, inclusive of rainfall. New installations need consistent watering to become established over their first 3 seasons. Plants that have matured in the landscape also benefit from supplemental water in hot dry weather. Too much water through rainfall or overwatering can be as bad as drought for many trees and shrub species. Carefully water only as needed in areas with poor drainage.

Lawns: Grass growth slows down considerably or stops in hot weather. This month and next, the lawn won't effectively take up fertilizer. Wait until the weather begins to cool and steady rain returns in early fall to fertilize if needed, usually around Labor Day. A well-established lawn may be recycling enough nutrients that additional fertilizer may not be necessary.

Houseplants: After a flush of growth, prune or pinch back houseplants to keep them looking full. Keep an eye out for aphids, mealybugs, mites, scale insects and other pests. If you find them, contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

July 22- July 28

Perennials and Flowers: Resist the urge to move most perennials now (sedum may be one exception). Spring blooming perennials that are crowded and losing vigor are best divided in late summer or early fall. Division renews the plants and helps to maintain vibrant flowers and reduce the risk of disease. If you must move plants, mulch to moderate the soil temperature, and pay special attention to watering and weeding. Annual flowers that love the heat are in stride.

Keep the spent blossoms of most annuals and perennials picked to encourage additional flowering. Leave those that are grown for interesting seed heads or if you plan to save seed. Consider ordering bulbs now, rather than in the fall, so you're not shut out of popular choices.

Fruits and Vegetables: Start seed of broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower indoors or in a protected area outside. Next month, you can transplant these seedlings into the vegetable garden for a fall harvest. Last call to plant fast-maturing green beans, summer squash, sweet corn directly in the garden for a fall harvest. Harvest ripe peaches, plums, and raspberries.

Trees and Shrubs: Most trees and shrubs require little if any fertilizer. Applying fertilizer in the heat may cause injury. So it's best to avoid fertilizing trees at any point unless there is a demonstrated need, determined by a nutrient test. Powdery mildew may become quite obvious at this time of year, especially on lilacs. This may be unsightly, but isn't significant to the health of the lilac, so treatment isn't necessary. Some other plants (such as ninebark) may be more severely infected. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice. Spotted lanternfly nymphs and early adults may be found now. These prefer tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus*), and may also be found on many trees, grape vines, and other woody plants.

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Lawns: Cool season grasses slow or stop growing in hot weather. So far this year Westchester County has had plenty of rain, but it is still possible that the lawn may brown and go dormant if we enter a dry spell with high summer heat. When the turf is stressed, stay off and do as little as possible.

Houseplants: Container plants outside may dry out quickly in the heat. Check plants and provide moisture if needed. Many houseplant leaves will bleach in strong sunlight even with some shade. Move affected plants into a more heavily shaded area if needed.

General: Join the New York State Turf and Landscape Association on Tuesday, August 15th for free presentations on water resource management, lawn care, beech leaf disease and other topics from trusted university staff! Stick around for the trade show and food trucks. This event will take place at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale, NY, no registration is needed! First class begins at 10:00 am. Contact CCE at westchester@cornell.edu or 914-285-4640 for information.

July 29 - August 5

Perennials and Flowers: A hose that's been baking in the sun will deliver scalding water to garden plants if you don't let the water run for a few minutes. Remember to check the water temperature before watering anything. Drought, heat stress and scorch are common plant problems this time of year. If this occurs even though you water regularly, consider making plans to move a plant to a shadier location where it may be happier.

Fruits and Vegetables: Keep up with the harvest. Some vegetables, such as beans, okra and summer squash will stop producing when their seeds begin to mature. If you plan to be away, arrange for someone to water the plants as needed and bring in the harvest for their own use or to donate to a food pantry. Continue to harvest blackberries, blueberries, and other ripening fruit. Once apples have reached full size but have not yet begun to color, monitor for apple maggot by hanging one red sphere trap with a sticky coating per each 100 fruit. This may catch enough flies to reduce damage to a tolerable level if you have only a few trees. Keep the traps clean for best results. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Trees and Shrubs: As long as you have protection from the heat and adequate water available, you can still take softwood cuttings now of deciduous azalea, shrubby dogwood, hydrangea, lilac, rose-of-Sharon, rugosa rose, viburnum, weigela and other shrubs to propagate plants cheaply. Spotted lanternfly nymphs and early adults may be found now prefer tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus*), and may also be found on many trees, grape vines, and other woody plants. See <https://nysipm.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-species-exotic-pests/spotted-lanternfly/> for information and [ReportSLF.com](https://www.reportslf.com) to report sightings.

Lawns: There's no reason to mow (or other lawn care tasks) if the grass is not growing. Enjoy a cool drink in the shade and do something fun instead.

Houseplants: Indoors or out, houseplants may need more water this time of year than at any other time. This might mean watering once (or even twice a day outdoors) if the soil feels dry. An exception could be plants in darkened rooms that are continuously air conditioned or are naturally darker and cooler. Watch the soil moisture conditions and adjust the watering schedule as needed so the mix is never too wet or too dry.

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