

This Month in the Garden...

by Peggy Koppmann

It's high season in the garden and flowers and vegetables are flourishing. Unless they're not. Writing this at the beginning of July it's hard to predict what our weather and rainfall will be like during July and August. But gardeners always persevere and so watering and harvesting will be adjusted, weeds will continue to be dug, everyday garden tasks will continue, and zucchini will still threaten to take over the world. If you are truly desperate, there are recipes for zucchini ice cream. Don't say I didn't warn you!

Plan Ahead – With milder temperatures and fewer pests, it's time to plan your fall vegetable crops. Some vegetables can survive a light frost that actually improves their flavor. Peas and cauliflower can survive light frosts while cabbage, chard, carrots, kale, lettuce, spinach and parsley can survive hard freezes down to 25-28°. Fall plantings can begin in August and continue through mid-September. Find the first frost date for your area of the county, (<https://www.nrcc.cornell.edu/services/blog/2021/10/21/index.html>) and use that date to calculate your planting schedule based on maturity dates of your crops as listed on their seed packets. Plants to consider for your fall garden include arugula, beets, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collard greens, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, parsley, peas, radish, spinach, and turnips. Keep crop rotation protocols and succession planting in mind to ensure a harvesting season that will last until frost comes, (and beyond for some root crops).

Horticultural Haircuts – It's not the time for heavy pruning but some plants will benefit from a haircut now. Herbs can be trimmed back to promote new bushy growth for later harvesting. Hedges and topiaries are ready for the final trim of the season so that new growth will harden off before winter. Cut brown, faded blooms off hydrangeas to tidy them up and cut some fresh blooms for inside. Cut back rose suckers and prune rambling roses. Summer blooming shrubs such as Callicarpa, Clethra, Hypericum, and Itea can be shaped before next year's growth is set. And of course, cut back those leggy annuals, feed them, give them a rest, and they will be back in bloom to finish out the season.

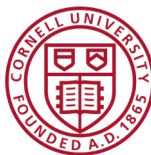
A Little Batty? – There has been some interesting research in Pennsylvania about birds, spiders, praying mantis, and other invertebrates that eat the highly destructive spotted lanternfly. Now a PhD candidate at Rutgers University has found that bats also eat the pest. She analyzed what bats eat by studying their guano, (aka bat poop) and found that bats feed on the insects, devouring thousands every night. The research may help encourage the use

of residential bat houses. You never know what Mother Nature has up her sleeve: researchwithrutgers.com/en/publications/detection-of-spotted-lanternfly-lycorma-delicatula-by-bats-a-qpcr

A Sure Sign- When onion tops begin to yellow and fall over, that's a sign they are ready to harvest. Wait for about three quarters of your onion tops to fall over, then gently push down the rest keeping the tops attached to the bulb. After a few days, loosen the soil and gently pull them out. The Cornell Veg Growing Guides have more information on harvesting and curing onions for storage. The same is true for garlic; watch for yellowing tops to fall over. Lift a bulb out and check to see that the wrapping around the head is papery, thick, and dry. Bulbs should be dug, not pulled so be careful not to bruise the bulbs. The Schoharie Otsego CCE has an excellent resource sheet for harvesting, curing, and storing garlic: <https://cceschoharie-otsego.org/gardening/food-gardening/guide-for-growing-garlic>.

Don't Forget the Trees – As we have become increasingly aware of the role of native plants, the emphasis has often been on perennials. Somewhat overlooked in the discussion has been the importance of trees, but they also provide nectar, pollen, and habitat for pollinators. Do you have a spot in your garden, landscape, or property to add a tree (or several) in the cooler months ahead? Do your research now; visit local nurseries to see their stock. Check out the work of Doug Tallamy and others in identifying keystone species and make a commitment to planting a tree this fall. If not in your yard, perhaps as a gift to a friend or relative. In the words of Nelson Henderson, "The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit." Here are a couple of places to start: <https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Plant-Native/Why-Native/Keystone-Plants-by-Ecoregion>; <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/keystone-plants/>

And then..... Keep birdbaths clean and filled with fresh water; cut back strawberry plants; keep up with harvesting; don't waste water on dormant grasses; keep your mower blades high; dispose of rotting fruit or vegetables; continue to pinch out tomato side shoots; keep feeding annuals, hanging baskets, and container plantings; start cuttings of coleus and geraniums for overwintering; lift and divide Siberian iris; sign up to work at the Erie County Fair and admire the fruit and vegetable displays in the Ag Building. Then go buy a funnel cake and indulge. You have my permission.



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