

This Month in the Garden...

by Peggy Koppmann

Over the years, we have adopted a late garden season philosophy: 'If it's ugly in August, we just don't grow it.' Plants that have lost their vigor, look shabby, reseed everywhere, or make you think "I just can't deadhead one more plant," have gradually been edited from our garden. Gardeners are entitled to be a little weary during the heat of August, so don't feel guilty if you ditch a plant or two that is not performing. Besides, it just makes room to try something new.

Think Spring – Bulb catalogs are arriving and it's time to plan spring flowering bulb additions to your garden. Some spring bloomers are pollen and nectar sources for bees emerging from hibernation. Bumblebee queens only have a short period to find food sources to ensure their survival. Think beyond crocuses and daffodils and consider Winter Aconite, ornamental Alliums, or Chionodoxa. Add native plants such as Bloodroot or Virginia Bluebells. Plan on a mix of early, mid, and late season blooms to provide a continuous source of food: <https://secretpollinators.com/blog/spring-bulb-guide/>; <https://www.bhg.com/gardening/flowers/bulbs/bulbs-for-pollinators/>

Evil Weevils - Vine weevil larvae live underground and attack many herbaceous plants, especially younger ones with tender roots. These are the larvae of the black vine weevil, (*Otiorhynchus sulcatus*). The larvae are easily identifiable by their creamy-white color, brown head, and distinctive C-shape. The larvae eat roots, especially those of container and potted plants and can cause wilting and plant death. The adult beetles feed on Rhododendron, Hydrangea, Bergenia, and Primula, leaving notched leaf margins, but rarely kill the plant. Birds, frogs, and toads will eat the larvae and the beetles. Check container grown plants for damage and re-pot if necessary, removing all larvae before using new potting soil.

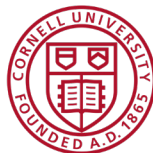
Cast a Critical Eye – August is a good time to take a close look at your garden. Are there empty spaces? What needs to be removed or divided? Is more color needed? What crops did well? (Did you write down the variety names?) Are there areas that are overgrown? Too many annuals and not enough perennials? What's done well and what didn't perform up to your hopes? Where is a tree or a special shrub needed? This is not just an academic exercise, but an essential part of the evolution of your garden, and your evolution as a gardener. Keep notes during the

growing season or use a garden journal. (You know you're going to forget it if you don't write it down.). Take photos. Label them with the location and the garden issue or success they illustrate.

The Well-Groomed Garden – As the season progresses, it's tempting to let things go. Even if you are going for a casual look or a 'chaos garden,' there are plenty of reasons to keep up with garden grooming chores. Removing plant debris such as dead and dying plants or leaves reduces the risk for fungal disease and insects. Controlling weeds reduces competition for water, nutrients, and light. It also reduces the chances they will seed and live forever! If a plant or shrub dies and you can't determine the cause of death, dispose of it; don't compost it and risk spreading pathogens. Many plants benefit from removing spent blossoms, thus directing the plant energy into producing new growth rather than seed. Overcrowded plants benefit from thinning to increase air circulation and reduce the chance of fungal diseases such as powdery mildew. The well-groomed garden is a healthier place for all.

No Smoking Near the Solanaceae – Tomatoes are members of the Solanaceae family along with potatoes, eggplant, peppers, ground cherries, and tomatillos. Tobacco mosaic virus infects over 350 species, but heirloom species are the most susceptible. (Editor: Wondering why? Hybrid plants are bred to resist the virus as heirloom plants do not have the protective genes.) It stunts leaves, slowing photosynthesis, but doesn't kill the plant. Leaves become mottled or discolored with yellow, pale green or darker green coloration on the leaf surface. There is no cure for TMV, and it can easily spread to other plants. So, don't use tobacco products near your garden. Do your homework to learn more about diseases that affect tomatoes. <https://ccenassau.org/resources/tomatoes-growing/>; <https://www.vegetables.cornell.edu/pest-management/keys-for-identifying-vegetable-diseases/tomato-diagnostic-key/symptoms-on-leaves/virus-symptoms>

And then... Prune out old raspberry canes; water deeply, in the morning; divide Japanese and Siberian iris; give roses a final feeding; keep weeding; finish pruning summer blooming shrubs; pick up and destroy all fallen fruit; clean off spider mites with a stream of water; watch for viburnum beetles; harvest regularly and donate some of your harvest to a local foodbank.



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