

What to Do in August 2026

August 2 - August 8

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 [Spotted Lanternfly | CALS \(cornell.edu\)](https://www.cals.cornell.edu/extension/programs/pests/spotted-lanternfly/) for more information.

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.

August 9 – August 15

Perennials and Flowers: Daylilies may have taken a beating in the heat. If these and other plants are showing withered leaves, removing damaged foliage now will help to improve their appearance and reduce the spread of disease infections. Many plants will recover as cooler weather returns, but if you need replacements to fill gaps and they are hard to find now, make a list of options to use as more plants become available in fall or next spring. Order hardy bulbs now for the best selections.

Fruits and Vegetables: Eggplant, melons, okra, and other tropical vegetables love the heat. Provide an inch of water weekly, inclusive of rainfall, to help them do their best. Continue to keep up with harvest. Pick up and destroy fallen apples weekly now through harvest. Apple maggot larvae develop within the fruit and removing those that drop may reduce the potential for maggot injury next year. Continue to harvest blackberries and other fruit that do not hold up well on the plants once they are ripe.

Trees and Shrubs: Spotted lanternfly adults are active now. For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly> Wait several weeks or until the

weather begins to cool to plant or transplant trees and shrubs. It's still too hot, and they might not survive the stress. Fall planted trees and shrubs do best when they have 6 to 8 weeks to settle in before a hard freeze. Do some research now to find the best plants for the site. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for advice.

Lawns: If the lawn is brown and dormant, stay off it. The browned grass will give way to green when rain returns. Watch for areas where weeds arise. As the grass starts to regrow and rain returns in cooler weather, make a note to check where the lawn may be thin and should be reseeded. If you think a disease might be at play, contact your local Cooperative Extension.

Houseplants: Do the houseplants look tired and yellow or uncharacteristically reddish? Most houseplants prefer some shade from the summer sun, especially those that spend the summer outdoors. Too much light can bleach leaves, causing them to look whitish green or yellowed. Excess light and heat can promote reddening and is a sign of stress. Move stressed plants to a shadier spot and maintain even soil moisture, checking daily. Avoid fertilizing stressed plants.

August 16 – August 22

Perennials: Have some perennials dropped their lower leaves and developed “bare legs”? Make a note to plant a shorter type of perennial in front of them this fall to hide the bare stems. Alternatively, plan to move them next spring to a spot where the stems won't show, or have extra annuals on hand next year as a cover-up. If you don't have room to squeeze in another plant, consider swapping it out for a perennial that will keep its leaves.

Flowers: Time to freshen up hanging annual flower baskets and window boxes if you haven't done that recently. Cut back leggy stems, fertilize plants if needed according to label directions, and you'll be rewarded with new growth and blooms.

Fruits and Vegetables: If some crops are looking tired and producing less, and there isn't enough time to plant a succession of the same type, consider a cover crop now or planting fall vegetables such as carrots, greens, radishes and turnips in a few weeks. The invasive spotted lanternfly can damage grape vines and may also be found on fruit trees such as apples. Spotted lanternfly adults are active now. For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly>

Trees and Shrubs: Resist the urge to prune woody plants in hot weather. Leaves and stems that were shaded by growth above may burn if exposed to the strong sun. It's also best to wait until spring because late pruning can cause growth that doesn't harden off before winter. Early flowering trees and shrubs are generally pruned right after they flower. Most trees and shrubs that flower on new wood is best pruned from late winter into spring before the buds swell.

Lawns: During times of high heat and dry (or soggy) soil, stay off the lawn and do as little as possible. Take a break in the shade with plenty of hydration to cool the gardener too!

Houseplants: Vacationing these last few weeks of summer? Don't forget to ask someone to water the plants.

August 23 – August 29

Perennials and Flowers: You can start dividing bearded iris, and other sturdy spring blooming perennials as the weather begins to cool. Discard any old center parts or those gnawed by iris borers. When you replant, make sure the tops of rhizomes sit just below ground level. The plants will adjust the depth of their rhizomes as they become established, but planting them too deeply can interfere with future blooming. To keep iris and other

plants that fill in quickly in their best form, this task may be done every three to four years. Order bulbs at the earliest opportunity, before popular colors and varieties are sold out.

Fruits and Vegetables: Continue to harvest vegetables at their peak. To prevent weeds, thinly mulch bare spots in the garden until it is cool enough to plant a fall or cover crop. Continue to pick peaches, plums and cane fruit. Begin to harvest ripe apples, pears and grapes. And watch for the invasive spotted lanternfly. Adults are active and may be feeding on fruit trees and vines and laying eggs. For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly>

Trees and Shrubs: Newly planted trees and shrubs are especially vulnerable to heat and stress from lack of moisture. Apply an inch of water weekly, inclusive of rainfall. In extreme heat with no rainfall, it's a good idea to check trees and shrubs established this year twice weekly to make sure the soil is moist (but not soggy), and water as necessary. Those planted within the last 2 or 3 years should be monitored weekly. Most roots that absorb water and nutrients are in the top 6 to 12 inches of soil. Resist the urge to fertilize the plantings, especially those that are wilting or have leaves with brown edges or tips. Fertilizing now can burn the roots and make matters worse.

Lawns: If the grass is barely growing now, don't feel compelled to mow it.

Houseplants: Houseplants should move indoors long before you feel the need to turn on the heat. Before you move the plants indoors, gradually wean them from the great outdoors. Move their pots to a shadier spot outside for a few days. Check for pests that might hitchhike indoors and take care of them before you bring them inside. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for management advice.

General: Scorch is a common problem in hot, dry weather. (One sign: Leaves that have brown edges or tips. Uncharacteristic reddish or yellowing leaves are another sign.) Wilting plants that don't perk up at night need to be watered promptly. Be on the lookout and water plants as needed; stressed plants are more susceptible to disease and pests. Use drip irrigation or water in the early morning, so any foliage accidentally sprayed can dry before dark to help prevent the spread of plant diseases. Avoid overwatering that could promote root rot.

August 30 – September 5

Perennials and Flowers: Peonies are often best left in one place. They may not need to be transplanted or moved for years (if at all), though this is a good to divide them to increase a favorite variety or propagate some to give away. You can also order and plant more at this time. Set the "eyes" so they settle in no deeper than one to two inches, or flowering may be poor. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for best methods. You can also divide many spring blooming perennials now. Plant late-season annuals such as ornamental cabbage and kale for nice color this fall.

Fruits and Vegetables: You can plant seeds now of fast-growing, late-harvest veggies such as beets, broccoli, carrots, radishes and turnips. Extend the salad days into autumn by planting seeds of chard, kale, lettuce and other cool-season greens as the weather cools this month and next. If you plant spinach, this may germinate better if you refrigerate the seeds for a week before you plant them. Alternatively, you can freeze spinach seed in ice cubes for a few days. Use two or three seeds per cube, and plant the cubes directly in the garden, spacing and thinning them according to seed packet or catalog directions.

Trees and Shrubs: To make sure there's enough time for roots to establish before winter, plant or transplant evergreens as cooler days arrive, through mid-October. Water the planting hole a few days before you do the planting. At planting, form a low berm of soil around the perimeter of the planting hole to trap water and

promote establishment. Plan to rake out or remove the berm before freezing weather arrives to prevent ice buildup around tree trunks and stems of shrubs.

Lawns: If the lawn contains less than 50% of desirable turf grasses, consider a renovation when the weather begins to cool. Alternatively, if the weeds are low-growing and attractive in bloom, establish 2 week mowing intervals at a height of 3½ to 4 inches to provide floral resources for pollinators. Late August through early October is the best time to seed a lawn (including bare patch repair). Consider getting a soil test if you haven't had one in a few years, dig up dead patches, level low areas, and incorporate organic matter or other amendments if indicated by the test.

Houseplants: Shape and prune houseplants as you get them ready to bring them back inside. While you're at it, check carefully for insect pests. Contact your local Cooperative Extension for management advice.

General: Continue to weed. Late summer and early fall are key times to remove a host of weeds, including invasive plants that set seeds this time of year. While you're outside, keep an eye out for the spotted lanternfly. Spotted lanternfly adults are active now. For more information on spotted lanternfly and how to report it if it is new to your location, see <https://westchester.cce.cornell.edu/horticulture-environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/spotted-lanternfly>