

The Garden in Mid Summer

Last year, in July 2006 temperatures reached record levels. (I remember the hottest day well, sweltering in the heat during my annual pilgrimage to the RHS Tatton show) Many plants, including large established trees showed early autumn like colour showing the stress they were under. Many recovered with the August rains but this year there is a noticeable number of trees with leafless branches, which is a likely indication of the damage done. Water is essential in the garden but plants are often more tolerant than we think and will put down deep roots to search out water. Lawns may lose their colour but recover quickly when rain returns. Hanging baskets and containers however are a different matter as we are putting them in an artificial environment which can dry out completely very quickly. Such containers must be watered regularly either early in the morning or late at night. The garden in July can be quite spectacular as the garden is at its most lush. Annuals and perennial plants provide much of the colour, and grasses, trees ferns and shrubs provide interesting form and texture. If your bedding plants have survived this far and have not been nibbled by slugs and snails it is likely they will now survive the season and should be well on their way to a magnificent show. Dead heading regularly and the occasional liquid feed will keep them flowering until the first frosts.

July Notes

- Scents of flowers are at their strongest after the sun has gone down, this is a good time to walk around the garden and appreciate them. Annuals such as Stocks Phlox and Nicotiana are particularly scented at night.
- Cut back perennials that have flowered to encourage a second flush later in the year.
- Still time to take cuttings of shrubs, particularly take cuttings of short lived shrubs such as Lavertera that you wish to replace.
- Keep an eye out for other pests and diseases in the flower and vegetable garden and take appropriate action.
- 'Summer prune' fruit trees.
- Prune shrubs that have finished flowering like Weigelas, Deutzias and Philadelphus (Mock Orange), and large early flowering clematis.
- Keep controlling weeds which if left unchecked will suffocate plants, rob the soil of plant food and encourage the presence of pests and diseases. Dig out perennial weeds by their roots but emerging annual weeds can be hoed off and left on the surface.
- Remove the runners of Strawberry plants if they are not required.
- Pinch out the top of outdoor tomatoes at 4 trusses and snap off side shoots.
- Keep an eye on trees and shrubs planted within the last 9 months, give them a good soak if the soil starts to dry out
- Inspect ties on trees, make sure they are not constricting growth and slacken any that look too tight.
- Take notice of weather forecasts, apply fertilizer (particularly to the lawn) just before rain, spray plants when there is no likelihood of rain to wash your spray off.

Enjoy your gardening!

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