

JULY CHECK LIST

- This is the month for maximum plant growth. Enhance growth with fertilizer. Use high phosphate fertilizers, such as 15-30-15 for flowering or fruiting plants. If high nitrogen is used on these plants, you will over stimulate vegetation and decrease flowering. Be sure to follow label directions, don't apply more often than recommended. Organic fertilizers are slower acting, and generally lower in total available minerals, but also are less likely to burn.
- This is the most active time of year for aphids and mites. Check the yard at least every other day to keep up with invasions.

VEGETABLE GARDEN

- Remove seed stalks from onions and garlic.
- Keep up with weeds, especially before they drop their seeds. Often it's a weed or two that got by you last year that makes the weedy patch the next year and for years to come.
- As you harvest, keep track of what varieties are doing well for you, especially if you are growing more than one variety of a certain vegetable. Write results down on index cards and store by year in a recipe box. You will know exactly what varieties to try new next year, against the best performers you've discovered so far.
- If you are having problems with tomatoes, squash or other plants, not setting on fruits, you can give them a hand by using a water paint brush to pick up pollen from male flowers and spread it to female flowers. With squash, you can pick the male flower, take off the petals to expose the pollen, then rub noses with female flowers. Female squash flowers always have miniature fruits right behind the bloom. Male flowers just have a straight straw like base, attaching them to the squash plant.
- Harvest broccoli when heads are fully developed, but before they start to bloom. If they bloom you can still eat them, but you'll have missed the optimum quality harvest. Slice off the stem about 5 inches behind the head and watch for smaller side shoots to start producing.
- If you haven't already, consider mulching your garden to cut down on weed growth, moisture evaporation and soil heat. If using grass clippings, be sure they haven't been treated with herbicide. If so, wait till after the 3rd mowing to use in the garden.
- Slugs feed mostly at night, leaving a slimy trail as evidence. To control use products like Sevin or baits that contain Metaldehyde (usable around Fruits and vegetables) or Mesurool (use only around ornamentals). Be sure you have the right bait for the plants you are treating. Organically you can scatter diatomaceous earth around plants being attacked.
- When garden plants are through producing, remove plants and replant with a quick maturing variety.
- Plant lettuce in shady areas of the yard, like the north side of the house, or somewhere in the garden, like in the shade of the corn patch, for fall harvests.
- For fall peas, plant the heat resistant Wando variety.
- Mid-July plant transplants of cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower for fall harvests.

ORCHARD AND FRUITS

- Continue spraying fruit trees for codling moths, curculio worms, etc. every 7-10 days.

TREES AND SHRUBS

- Maples may be showing signs of iron deficiency such as yellow leaves with green veins. As symptoms progress, the tree will decline in vigor and the section will die out. Treat with chelated iron products, preferably those with 10% or more iron. These are often foliar or deep soil applied.

- Remember to water trees and shrubs separately from lawn watering. They have a much deeper and larger root system, and need more water than what lawn irrigation provides.
- No high nitrogen fertilizer should be applied after the end of July. This will promote succulent growth which is more susceptible to winter injury. Allow trees to slow down and proceed with a buildup of needed carbohydrates for winter. You can fall fertilize after trees go dormant, or wait till first thing in spring for best results.

INSECT ALERT

- Elm leaf beetles will also be evident now, causing considerable damage on elms. Apply Carbaryl (Sevin) when caterpillars are evident or the organic product Bt kurstaki. Repeat as needed as they will reproduce all summer.

LAWN

- If you are finding dead patches in your lawn that don't seem to be insect or disease related, then you may want to check your thatch thickness. If it's much over ½ inch, your lawn is probably suffocating out. Alkaline soils don't break down organic matter well, and this buildup is a common problem in our area. Aerating and power raking are two ways to physically fight back, but when the thatch is over ½ inch, it's next to impossible to pull out the thatch from under the grass without pulling out the grass as well. Torro's Thatch Attack and Judd Ringer's Lawn Restore both contain natural enzymes and complex nitrogens that aid in the natural composting process, encouraging thatch break down. Otherwise it's often best to simply remove thatch thick areas and rework and condition the soil for replanting.
- Mosquitos breed and lay eggs in anything that holds water, even a pop can raise a big family. Eliminate any sources of standing water. For slow-moving water or standing ponds, there are biological mosquito control products that contain Bt Israelensis, like Mosquito Dunks. For outdoor picnics, etc, spray lawn with products such as malathion, diazinon or sevin, several hours before. These last 1-2 days at most. A product which claims eight day mosquito control is Bonide's Mosquito Beater, which is not harmful to people, pets or plants. Other organic products, very low in toxicity, would be those containing Neem. For personal protection use products containing DEET. The higher the percentage of DEET the longer it lasts.

FLOWER GARDEN

- Remove spent flowers from plants, to encourage more blossoms or to divert energy to roots rather than seed production, unless you are naturalizing a variety.
- Don't pinch mums after mid-July, as it will delay blooms.

HOUSEPLANTS

- General purpose houseplant insecticide:
 - 1 Tbls liquid dishwashing detergent (not for automatic dishwashers)
 - 3 pints rubbing alcohol (most are 70% grade)
 - 2 qts. water

Alcohol is a desiccant, sucking water out of living insect tissues, interfering with nerve conductivity. White flies, mealybugs, aphids and spider mites all succumb to this treatment after only a short time. Test on a few leaves to be sure no harm is done to sensitive plants. Use a spritzer or mister for spraying. Repeat in six days.

- To encourage denseness in your poinsettia, pinch the terminal inch of each stem the first of July and again the end of August. You may grow your poinsettia outside in semi-shade during warmer months, using extra care to maintain your watering and fertilizing schedule.