

Gardening tips for July

July, gardens at their best assuming there is enough water to keep them going. The flower garden should be blooming, the kitchen garden ripe for picking. Not the best time for taking a holiday, so if you are, get a neighbour to do your watering to pick some flowers, salad and veg in your absence to prevent everything running to seed. You can reward them on your return with a box of fudge with a postcard stuck on the front to show them where you have been.

The kitchen garden

Harvesting of crops is always something worth looking forward to. While you are picking the cream of the crop hoe those weeds and consider breaking the soil surface so if there is any rain, it can soak into the ground more easily rather than running away.

If you have a greenhouse, remember to keep it well-ventilated and apply shading if necessary.

It isn't too late to plant potatoes, the easiest source of "seed potatoes" in July are your shop bought potatoes that started sprouting the moment you got them home from the supermarket. If you don't have a veg plot, plant two or 3 potatoes in the largest pot you can find, keep them watered and you should get a crop by the end of the year.

Pinch off the growing tips of squash, courgette and cucumbers to encourage branching, most flowers are formed on the side branches and water regularly.

If you have planting gaps in your runner beans, plant French climbing beans to increase and diversify the crop.

Tomatoes

Water consistently and apply liquid feed weekly once flowers start appearing. Remove side shoots on cordon varieties and pinch the growing tip out when there are 4 or 5 sets of flowers. If growing in a greenhouse allow 5 or 6 sets of flowers to form.

The Flower Garden

Dead head flowering plants to prolong their flowering season. If you are feeling guilty that you gave your flowering perennials the Chelsea Chop, they should now be rewarding you with an abundance of flowers.

Blackbirds and thrushes, along with house sparrows, greenfinches and goldfinches, often nest as late as August, so avoiding trimming hedges until the last of this season's birds have left their nests. Always check hedges thoroughly before trimming.

Lawns

If you have let your lawn grow to help support wildlife but now you're thinking it could do with a cut have a look to see what is living there. Cut it back in stages over the next few weeks. Leave seedheads where they fall for a few days to let the seeds scatter into the soil, then gather up the clippings for compost, then cut with a lawnmower. If you are aiming for a wildflower meadow look, remove all the mowings to avoid enriching the soil - most wildflowers grow best in low-nutrient conditions.

And finally, the EGRGA Summer Show is held on 15th July, this year at Rudgwick Village Hall starting at 2.30 pm.

For membership details and to ask garden related questions please go to our website www.gardenreg.org.

Keep gardening.

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