

Gardening tips for June

A cold and wet June spoils the rest of the year

This may be true! Once weather patterns get established, they can stick around for weeks to come. April and early May were bright but cold and many plants seem to be affected. June is a key month, the midpoint of the year: the end of spring and the beginning of summer.

The veg patch

It should be safe now to plant out tender plants but remember to harden them off (put outside in the daytime, bring them in at night) if they have been luxuriating in the greenhouse or windowsill.

This is your last chance to sow seeds such as runner beans or maincrop carrots, however, if the weather has been kind to you, you could be harvesting your first crop of potatoes, beetroot, onion, strawberries, cherries and gooseberries. Sow carrot seeds together with coriander to keep the carrot fly away.

Plant out courgettes and squashes, beans, sweetcorn etc. If planting sprouts and cabbage, they need plenty of growing space and like to be firmed into the ground.

With the longest day comes maximum sunlight hours and better temperatures, all good for plants in the garden but unfortunately for the gardener the best time for the usual pests such as insects, birds, slugs and snails. It can't be coincidence they are very fond of the things we like to grow and they usually get first pickings, so the gardener needs to be vigilant at keeping these pests off our produce.

Keep hoeing, weeding and watering. When watering a good drenching is better than just a sprinkle but only do this weekly.

Tomatoes

Time to plant the tomatoes out. Choose the sunniest position and provide, support as they grow. If your tomatoes are in a greenhouse, they may be in flower or fruiting in which case time to give them a high-potash fertilizer. Tomato plants come in two different growing habits, upright and bush. Bush tomatoes are good for growing in pots on the patio. Just let their side shoots grow to form a bush and will become covered in tomatoes. The upright varieties need the side shoots pinching off. Wait until the side shoot is big enough to distinguish it from a truss of flowers then remove it.

The flower garden

Put the hanging baskets up and plant all the tender bedding plants and feed with tomato fertilizer. Tomato fertilizer is a very useful all-round fertilizer for the garden, buy the concentrated version and dilute to use. Don't be put off by the name, if you look at the label on the bottle it will give different dilutions for different uses. In addition, try using pelleted chicken manure cast across the surface of the border and then lightly hoe to mix in.

When planting out pot grown plants into the borders sink the pot in a bucket of water for a few minutes to make sure it is nicely watered to give it a good start.

Try to plant shrubs away from a fence or wall as they grow in all directions so need space all around.

The soil in our area is mostly clay which is perfectly acceptable for most native trees but in the flower border you may need to consider improving it. One way is to make a raised bed and fill with quality soil, or you may want to improve the clay soil by adding bulky organic material such as manure or composted bark. Alternatively choose plants than enjoy clay such as Acers, roses, fuchsia, cotoneaster, Hydrangea, Viburnum, Geranium, Hellebore, Hosta, Kniphofia.

Lawns

If the weather is still on the cool side or rain forecast, it is still not too late to provide a weed and feed treatment but if not done early June it is best left to the Autumn. Don't cut the grass too short for a healthier lawn.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman