

Gardening tips for July

July should be a dry month so keep an eye on all your plants to ensure a consistent amount of water, especially for vegetables that don't really like too much variation. Last year July had three times the usual average rainfall, ideal conditions in summer for fungal infections, this year can't be any worse!

The Veg Patch

Weed, water, mulch, repeat.

July is a good time to prune plumb trees. Cut shoots to about 15 cm aiming for an open structure. Don't prune apple or pear trees in summer, leave it to winter when the trees are dormant.

Harvest courgettes before they become marrows this will ensure a continuous crop. Courgettes, squashes, marrows and cucumbers all enjoy plenty of water and a generous liquid feed once a week.

Are your shop bought potatoes growing shoots? This tends to happen at this time of year. Try planting some in large pots, you should get a crop of "new" potatoes just in time for Christmas.

Tomatoes

The blight resistant tomato "*Crimson Crush*" has taken ages to get growing but I'm hopeful that it will crop regardless of the weather. If you have a greenhouse play safe and grow tomatoes inside, otherwise grow outside and hope for the best. If we are experiencing another wet summer there is a new product available called "*Blight Guard*" to help fend off blight in tomatoes as well as potatoes, this is a preventative measure so you would need to spray not knowing if blight is going to be a problem, may be worth giving it a go. Always aim to water tomatoes with the same amount of water every day to reduce the risk of blossom end rot.

Brassicas Special

If you have missed the fun of planting your brassicas this year, all is not lost, now is the time for sowing cabbage for next spring. It is a bit late to sow broccoli but if you choose varieties carefully you can just about get an autumn crop. If you have been successful growing cauliflower keep the heads from turning yellow by pulling the outside leaves over them and tying in place.

The Flower Garden

This is the alfresco dining time of year, warm summer evenings and the largest patio parasol to keep the rain off. To impress, plant up containers with colourful bedding plants such as begonia, osteospermum (African daisies), fuchsia, petunia, impatiens or pelargonium and remember to feed, water and deadhead to keep them looking at their best throughout the summer.

Tidy perennials such as Geraniums; when finished flowering cut their foliage back to the ground. Feed (the usual pelleted chicken manure), mulch and water well. New foliage will grow and more flowers. Deadhead roses and sweet peas. Ensure climbing plants are well supported. Divide clumps of Bearded Iris and always keep a watch for garden pests and deal with them as you will.

Prune wisteria to 6 leaves per branch.

Feed and deadhead roses to keep them flowering strongly. Use a rose specific fertilizer or the trusted tomato fertilizer at double the strength.

The Water Garden

Keep the water level topped up preferably with rainwater, some species of fish can be sensitive to tap water because it contains chlorine. Remove dead leaves and pull out the dreaded blanket weed. If you have a water pump with filter it is worth giving the filter a clean especially if the water flow has reduced.

Lawns

Now you have the lawn looking good time to take a break. If there has been little rain, just watch the grass turn brown, if deluged with plenty of summer rain, put your wellies on and keep on cutting but don't go to short, this is your garden not the barber's shop.

If you get this edition of the Rudgwick Magazine in time, remember that the EGRGA summer Show is held on 2nd July, Ellens Green starting at 1 pm.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman