

Gardening tips for July

Wet, wet, wet!

I hope not, but plants always need watering at this time of year. Whether due to the weather or the watering can, plants in pots need watering whatever the weather. Consider investing in water butts to collect rainwater off the shed or greenhouse, using your own supply of rainwater is far more satisfying than using the hosepipe, you're not paying for the water either.

The Veg Patch

Lift early varieties of potatoes as required, after a very dry April they may need a few more weeks so just lift one plant to start with and see how you go.

Certain vegetables have a natural tendency to flower and run to seed (referred to as bolting) as the days lengthen and temperatures rise. Lettuces, rocket, spinach, cauliflowers are particularly prone. Watering regularly may help or delay bolting, or just eat them, that is what they were planted for!

Climbing beans don't really know when to stop climbing so pinch out the tops when they are at the highest you can easily reach. Keep them well watered, including spraying the flowers. This is supposed to be beneficial in helping set the flowers and stopping them falling off. If the sparrows can leave them alone for long enough you should have a generous crop of beans.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes need regular watering and feeding, the more consistent the watering the less problems you will have with your crop. The compost should feel damp, yellow leaves can be a sign of under or over watering. For tomatoes growing outdoors remove the growing tip when 4 or 5 fruiting trusses have formed, if in the greenhouse you can try 5 or 6, anymore and the resulting tomatoes are unlikely to ripen.

The Flower Garden

There are many jobs to do in the flower garden this month. Plants to stake and tie, weeds to pull and dispose of in the compost heap or acorn bin, fertilizers and mulches to be given, seeds to sow and plants to be watered and shrubs to be pruned.

Feed, water and deadhead summer bedding regularly, weather in pots, borders or hanging baskets. Try not to let your hanging baskets get too dry. If wilted and you can't get them to recover, lift them down and put them in a bucket of water for an hour to fully rehydrate before putting back where they came from.

Keep watch for pests such as lily beetles, snails, aphids and vine weevils, and remove before they do too much harm.

Water and feed sweet peas regularly, pick the flowers every few days, and remove seed pods to prolong flowering.

Give dahlias a liquid feed, keep them well watered and tie the shoots of tall varieties to sturdy stakes as they grow.

If aphids become a problem, use the garlic extract mentioned in the May article and hope for the best. I had a go at making some and will let you know if it is effective!

Plant autumn bulbs, including nerines, colchicums and sternbergia, in pots and borders.

Cut back early summer perennials, such as hardy geraniums and delphiniums, after flowering for a second flush of flowers.

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

Clear blanket weed and dead leaves from ponds. If blanket weed has become a problem, consider a biological control such as Blanket Answer or Green Lightning, these contain natural pond bacterial that out-compete the blanket weed for nutrients found in the water. Blanket weed thrives on bright sunlight which is why it is always at its worst in summer. If you can give the pond some shade this can help and an effective way to shade a pond is to grow water lilies which just happen to be at their leafiest in the summer. Also, keep the pond topped up, preferable with rainwater. If you have fish in the pond don't overfeed.

Lawns

Time to enjoy the lawn. All the earlier preparation to get it looking perfect just in time for the summer sun to turn it brown! Not to worry, just give it a cut weekly or less often if very dry, resist the temptation to water unless newly planted. Dry lawns with bald patches will recover in the autumn.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman