

Gardening tips for August

August is the last of the summer months so can be a mix of baking sunshine and the return to dew in the mornings signalling cooler nights.

The Veg Patch

Storing the fruits of our labours is hugely satisfying. Whether it's jars of homemade jam, pickles or bunches of garlic and onions hanging up to dry. There is a feeling of satisfaction knowing that we can stockpile homemade and homegrown for the winter. If you're feeling brave there is always the Autumn Show for showing off your produce.

August can be a time of plenty with the various crops doing their thing. If you have a glut and can't store, remember your neighbours and friends, they will be thrilled at the sight of your bent cucumber and purple filberts.

Veg. crops such as courgettes need a lot of water but are hungry feeders. Once a week treat them to a gourmet snack of high potassium liquid fertilizer such as tomato feed. I know they are not tomatoes but look at the tomato feed label and dose at the recommended level, you can use this feed elsewhere in the garden.

Tomatoes

The blight resistant tomato plants had a very slow start to the growing season, they have now caught up and are flowering. As tomato plants grow, tie into a supporting cane or string. As I'm writing this the temperature is approaching 30 C so chances of blight look less likely than last year. Water all tomato plants regularly and feed weekly with tomato fertilizer.

The Flower Garden

Deadheading is the name of the game this month, this helps to keep the borders, hanging baskets and pots looking tidy but also encourages repeat flowering. Don't forget the watering, a good soaking every now and again is better for the plants than a sprinkle every day. The latter can turn the roots to the surface and make the plants more susceptible to drought.

Support the flower stems of dahlia, lily and gladioli; as the flowers develop their weight will need supporting.

Prune summer flowering shrubs, such as Abelia and shrubby honeysuckle. Honeysuckle can start looking very straggly in dry hot summers so give them plenty of water.

Now that the birds have flown their nests, time to give hedges a trim. Prune rambling roses after flowering and summer flowering climbers such as common jasmine, honeysuckle and passionflower.

Propagate tender plants such as fuchsia and pelargonium (geranium). Plant cuttings and leave somewhere frost free ready for next year.

Buy and plant spring bulbs.

The Water Garden

Water quality in ponds can suffer during the summer particularly if there has been a long hot period, this can happen in the UK but the school summer holidays usually puts an end to any decent weather. Oxygen levels can drop during the heat of summer so try to aerate the water. If you don't have a pump to do this for you, fill a watering can from the pond and pour it back in again from a height, do this several times a week to keep pond life happy.

Lawns

The lawns are starting to look brown, avoid watering them, they will recover in the autumn. Don't stop mowing the lawn but raise the cutting height, this puts less stress on the grass and encourages deeper root growth. Apply Autumn lawn feed if there has been enough rain for the colour to start returning, if still brown leave it alone until later in the year.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman