



We've reached the peak of the season in the July garden. Everything is looking lush and growing by leaps and bounds. Make the most of early mornings in the garden to get some work done before the heat of the day. Just take a cup of coffee out there, start to wander around, and the next thing you know – you'll be weeding. It never fails.

Just a Pinch – Mums and asters set buds in response to day length and temperature, with most developing flower buds when the days are less than 12 hours long. Some cultivars begin flower development early in the season in response to heat. Established plants should be pinched back by about an inch, back to a leaf. The first pinching should have already been done in mid-June and again, typically in early July, to induce more branching and flower buds.

Wise Watering – Rain or lack of it may be a major factor this month. Remove the weeds that compete for water; re-apply mulch to conserve moisture; water early in the day; keep those containers watered so that the root systems are not compromised; keep a fresh water supply for the birds; allow lawns to go dormant if appropriate; invest in a rain gauge; water deeply to get water down to the root area – the soil should be moist at least 3-4" deep; don't water the sidewalk or the driveway – adjust the sprinklers if you must water.

Beetle Mania – Yes, it's time for the Japanese beetles to hatch and wreak havoc on your roses. Take a look at an informative article on the JB's at the American Rose Society (rose.org) about handling the little devils in your garden. And yes, they recommend hand picking and soapy water. There is also a warning not to squish them (even though it would be gratifying!), because "when you squish a female Japanese beetle her sexual-attractant pheromone is spewed out and brings in every male in the neighborhood!" Ugh!



Fruit Facts – Remove surplus strawberry runners; tie new canes of blackberries to support them; protect fruit bushes from the birds by placing netting over them; clean up fallen fruits under trees.

Not to Worry – Those neat, circular or crescent areas that are removed from your roses and other plants may be the work of leaf cutter bees. The damage usually won't hurt the plant, and besides, they are very efficient pollinators. "The US Agricultural Research Service says that one alfalfa leafcutter bee can do the job of 20 honey bees." (buzzaboutbees.net) The leaf segments they get from our plants are used to build the cell walls of their nests into cylindrical cavities and to seal up each cell. Research some of the clever ways you can build nesting materials to attract them to your yard. (permaculturenews.org)

Whack 'em Back – Now is the time to prune back perennial salvia, catmint, tall sedums, New England asters, garden phlox and other tall annuals. You may sacrifice a little bloom, but the shorter, stockier plants will not need staking and the delayed bloom will give you color later in the season. Oriental poppies, lupines, delphiniums and cranesbill can be cut down to the ground to clean them up and encourage new growth. Water them thoroughly after cutting back.

And then – Continue to apply deer repellent; finish deadheading lilacs and rhododendrons; deadhead sweet peas to keep them blooming; prune raspberry canes that have finished bearing; fertilize annuals and containers; watch for spider mite damage; stake floppy plants; inspect lilies for lily leaf beetle; shear back spent annuals – especially in containers; pot up a division from a favorite perennial and share it with another gardener. 



21 South Grove Street
East Aurora, NY 14052