

Summer Gardening To Do's

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch - Adding mulch to your garden will help protect your plants two ways. First it will keep the hot sun off the roots of your plants so they won't burn and second it will help keep the moisture in prevent less loss after you have watered. Mulch with anything that is organic, such as leaves, shredded wood, pine straw, bark chips, etc., as it will help the soil in the long run as it decomposes over time adding nutrients to your soil along with making your garden look nice.

Weeding - Many weeds pop up during the summer as they love the heat and go from teeny to gigantic overnight, stealing your plants needed moisture and nutrients. They also encourage pests to come join them in your garden. Pull them when they are small and when the ground is moist as they are the easiest to come out of the ground. If you get them before they flower, you are saving yourself from weeding next year. A single dandelion plant can produce up to 2,000 seeds in one year.

Add Summer Annuals - Now that the heat of the summer is here, your spring blooming annuals such as pansy's have already faded and you are looking for new color. Pull out those old spent plants if you have not already done so and add heat-loving annuals such as Angelonias, Lantana, Coleus, Gazania, Pentas, Salvia, Sweet Potato Vine, and Zinnias. Water them well the first couple of weeks until they are established then you will only have to water occasionally. I have found Angelonia, Lantana, Salvia and Gazania's will grow as perennials in our area if you mulch them in the fall well.

Summer-Blooming Bulbs - If you like calla, canna and dahlias, plant them for another way to have color this summer. Make sure they will grow in Zone 9.

Deadhead Perennials - If you have perennials, mums, asters and other fall-blooming plants, be sure to deadhead all spent flowers so they will continue blooming. If the fall-blooming flowers are getting tall, pinch them back a couple of inches to promote new growth. Do this up until 7-4 so they will set blooms for fall. It also helps give a stronger compact plant.

Pests & Disease - Watch out for pests in your garden. When you are weeding, watering, deadheading, always be on the lookout for garden pests. Mid-summer seems to be the time you see them the most, as the plants are weaker from the summer heat. Take the appropriate action for the pest or disease.

Water - If you have dry summers, keeping your garden looking it's best will require water. It will take on average about one inch of water per week. Apply all at one time to encourage plant roots to sink down deeper in the soil. Apply to the ground instead of getting the foliage wet unless you are doing foliage fertilizing.

Raise Your Mower - Raise the height of your mower blade as more leaf surface keeps the plants healthier during hot, dry weather.

These are just a few of the many tips that can be found on our website <https://txmg.org/orange> Click on Plant & Insect Information and the information is listed by months. These are from June and July/August. Sheri Bethard, President, Orange County Master Gardeners Association.