

August Garden Tips

By Dove Johnson

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Yes it is so very hot and we know in Texas it is August. Our gardening chores go on but try to work in the morning and take frequent breaks. Drink a lot of water and pace yourself. Here in Central Texas we can grow something every month of the year. So let's get busy with our fall gardens.

Fertilize fruiting vegetables after first fruit set for higher productivity

Turn compost pile. Recycle plant material and Shred leaves to use as mulch. Add healthy plant material, and kitchen waste to the compost pile.

Watch for cutworms on new tomato transplants; protect with aluminum foil around base 1" above and below ground.

Pulling a handful of weeds everyday is better than spending a sweltering afternoon picking weeds that are out of control and if you are out every day in your garden you will see a problem earlier so that it does not get out of hand.

For best survival rate plant during or after a rain in the fall, winter, or spring

Never pack down the soil when planting anything, and do not walk on the beds. Always use stepping stones or paths and keep off the soil. This is absolutely vital! Work compost into your soil and cover with mulch.

Work with nature, not against it. Improve soil health to improve plant health. Use beneficial insects. Encourage biodiversity by planting a variety of plants that provide shelter and food for the natural enemies of pests. When you view your garden, you should see it is alive with birds, toads, lizards, and beneficial insects such as green lacewings and ladybugs. Do you know what ladybug larva look like? Never just spray to kill an insect unless you know what it is; it may be a beneficial. Educate yourself so you will know. When you put in a garden, you are creating a micro habitat. You will know you have done well when it is teeming with life. All these creatures need water; provide a source for those who need water placed on the ground and those who need a birdbath.

Keep a garden journal to write down your successes and failures. Record such things as varieties that did especially well in production, products that you felt improved your garden, and things that you want to buy. Take photos of your successes and put them in your journal.

Take advantage of local gardening events and Master Gardener sales and lectures, to hear seminars, buy hard-to-find plants, and get new ideas that you can use. Also take advantage of local gardeners who are usually very happy not only to share advice.

Planning a fall garden? Early in the month is the time to plant beans, cucumbers and squash. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and cauliflower can be planted in the middle of the month. Leafy and root crops can be planted later in the month.

Here in central Texas we can grow something every month of the year. An important factor to remember is that our spring and fall gardening seasons are very short, sandwiched between frosts and blistering hot summer conditions that cause many crops to stop production. Variety selection and proper planting time are critical to success.