



July Gardening Tips

ORNAMENTALS

Cut back your chrysanthemums to 6" by July 30th to keep them full. If this is not done they will become leggy and bloom early. Now is also a good time to cut back leggy annuals & perennials like petunias, coneflower, black-eyed Susan, spiderwort and yarrow. Removing dead flowers will stimulate repeat blooming later this summer.

Spider mites love hot dry weather and are very active currently on many plants. They feed on the underside of leaves and can be seen with an unaided eye. Spider mite damage is called stippling and looks like tiny yellow dots on the leaves, in severe infestations the entire leaf may look yellow. Control them with by spraying the plants daily with a hose or apply insecticidal soap or summer oil.

Japanese beetles are becoming a problem now, pick them off plants and drop them in soapy water to kill them. Avoid installing Japanese beetle traps on your property, they will attract more beetles which only adds to the problem.

Thrips feed on flower buds and opened flowers which causes them to turn brown. Check the underside of leaves for their presence, it will look dirty and silvery. Control with summer oil applications.

Attract beneficial insects that will help to naturally control pest insects to your landscape and gardens by planting a wide variety of flowering annuals and perennials that bloom over the entire growing season. I suggest marigolds, daises, asters, mums, carrot, dill, fennel, anise, yarrow, parsley, mint, and thyme.

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Remove tomato plant leaves infected with the Early Blight fungus. Look for leaves with lesions resembling a bulls-eye pattern and yellow halo on the lower part of tomato plants. The fungal spores splash up from soil onto the lower leaves, but are also spread on wind currents. Prevent disease by covering the soil with newspaper and watering only the base on the plants. Apply chlorothalonil or a copper fungicide to severe disease outbreaks.

Cucumber plants that continue to wilt despite watering are infected with bacterial wilt disease transmitted by the cucumber beetle. There is no control for the disease, remove infected plants and re-sow.

Pinching back herbs to stop flowering will keep the best flavor in the leaves and encourage branching.

Flea beetle is a serious pest of eggplant which also cause damage to potato, tomato, and cabbage. This small black beetle is named for it's habit of jumping when disturbed. Damage symptoms are

small shot holes in leaves. Two good botanical insecticides for controlling them are Neem and Rotenone.

Installing a 2 - 3 foot high wire mesh fence with 1 inch or less opening will exclude rabbits from the garden. Secure the fence to the ground with "sod staples" so they cannot get underneath it. Harvest blackberries when the fruit is a dull, deep purple. Shiny fruits are sour. Harvest blueberries once they become completely blue. Waiting a few days more will enhance flavor and sweetness.

Raspberries in intense sunlight that also experience high temperature can show symptoms of White Druplet Disorder. The fruit becomes hard and turns white, but is still edible.

Japanese beetles are very attracted to grapes and most brambles. It is best to pick them off daily and drop in a pail of soapy water to control them without pesticides.

Old strawberry beds (3-4 years) should be renovated this month. Use a lawn mower and cut them down to about 4" above the ground, remove debris. Narrow rows to 12 - 18 inches with a tiller or spade, then thin plants in all directions to 6 inches. Apply 4 lbs. of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 sq. ft. and keep watered during hot weather.

Brown rot affects peach, cherry and plum fruit. Small brown spots develop in bruised or punctured fruit skin usually 1-3 weeks prior to harvest. The fungal lesions expand and the fruit turn brown, shrivel and are then referred to as "mummies". Control disease with early and continued fungicide applications, by removing mummies from trees and ground, and with proper annual pruning in February. Harvest fruit gently being careful not to bruise the skin.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture sells a beneficial insect known as *Pediobus faveolatus*. This tiny parasitic wasp (will not sting humans or pets) is useful in biologically controlling the Mexican bean beetle. Call the MDA at **1-410-841-5920** to order the wasps and then simply release them on your property upon arrival.