






Tips for the Garden – August


 Create a garden journal and take notes on your observations of the garden – if you haven't already done so. Write down what plants performed well in the garden and plants that languished. Note the weather patterns for the season, the plant's location and lighting conditions. All of your observations will help with your selection and planting for next year. Include your favorite vegetable varieties too!


 Leave perennial seed heads on for local and migrating birds. Echinacea, black-eyed susan, sunflowers, basil and small seeded flower heads are wonderful for attracting goldfinch, cardinals and other song birds.


 Now is the perfect time to visit local garden centers to see what perennials are available for late summer and fall bloom. It's easy to make wise plant selections by seeing them in flower. Mix and match the plants at the garden center before making purchases. You will quickly discover what plants appeal to you by seeing the approximate height, shape, color, and texture. Read each plant label carefully for growing requirements. Have a list of sites that you plan to populate so you don't go overboard in purchasing.


 Renovating an old lawn or creating a new one? This is the perfect time. Make sure that the area you are planting is raked smooth with a grading rake before you plant the seed. Once planted, put a light layer of mushroom compost on top which will provide additional nutrients. Then apply a light layer of salt hay. This type of hay is a bit more expensive, but well worth the price because you will not get unwanted weed seeds found in regular straw. The hay will help hold seed in place, especially in heavy rains. When selecting grass seed, chose seed that is a blend of seed. Seed mixes are a safeguard in case one seed fails due to weather conditions or disease – your lawn will still look great. If you are interested in going organic, the non-profit organization www.safelawns.org is the perfect place to get started.


 Make sure lawn mower blades are sharpened regularly – keeping lawns looking green. Dull blades create brown tinged lawn surfaces.


 Pull out vegetables that are no longer producing to make room for cool weather crops. Prepare beds with fresh compost and plant mixed salad greens, cole crops and other cool weather vegetables.


 Create new container gardens with fall blooming perennials. You can even add some cool weather vegetables to enhance color and texture in the pots. Easy to pick vegetables will look good and taste good too! Change out declining pots and keep these for next month in preparation for planting winter interest plants.


 Select your spring blooming bulbs now for fall planting. There are wonderful sources for bulbs through catalogue purchase or from local garden centers. Select bulbs that are plump and have tight outside coverings – both are signs of high quality bulbs.

 If you have too many vegetables in your garden, and you have shared a good bit with neighbors and friends, consider giving to local food banks. They help to fight hunger in our region of the country. Look for a location near you. <http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/>

 Continue to weed. Pulling weeds before they go to seed, reduces germination of unwanted seed for next year.

 This is a great time of year to jar tomatoes at their peak of ripeness. If you don't have a garden many farm stands will sell bushel baskets of tomatoes or other vegetables – especially imperfects. <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>

 Cedar Longhorn Beetle. This is not the infamous Asian Longhorn Beetle but is equally destructive to trees and shrubs. The Cedar Longhorn Beetle was thought to be a dead-wood eater in Japan – but here in the US it has now taken on to tastier digs. What is scary about this insect is its broad range of appetite – pines, falsecypress, Japanese cryptomeria, arborvitae (east and west coast types) and the list goes on. They emerge in early spring and adults are typically found at the base of the crotch of the tree or evergreen shrub (point where two branches meet). The females lay yellow eggs in the crevices of the bark and then when hatched the larvae fest on wood creating serpentine roadways (galleries) in the wood. The adult overwinters in the wood to start the cycle over again the following year. My colleague told me that Montgomery County, Pennsylvania has already been identified as one of the points infected, found at a local nursery and according to Keystone Tree Experts they have been spotted in Bucks County too. Eradication of the infected plants has taken place but this does not mean that the insect hasn't already spread to other areas in the region. Avid gardeners like you can help by reporting any suspicious activities like the ones described above, please report it to your local Cooperative Extension Agency. For more information, please visit the following bulletin <http://massnrc.org/pests/pestFAQsheets/japanesecedarlonghorn.html>

 Take photos and notes. Photography is one of my favorite past times. I love photographing garden flowers and unusual things happening in the garden. I also enjoy taking photos of the areas of the garden that I think worked really well. By having these kinds of records for the future, I am able to replicate things that were satisfying visually in the garden. It's also helpful to take phenological notes to make reference from one year to the next. Phenology, the Greek word that means “the science of appearances” can help tremendously in the garden. One year for example, my Franklinia tree began to bloom almost a full month before its usual time. This has alerted me to think that fall and other activities in the garden may be coming earlier than usual. Or, the phenological notes can also help with the development of bloom times to assure that I have something in bloom all season long. The following Web site provides a super phenology outline for

home and school use. A camera in hand can help too!

<http://www.motherearthgarden.com/downloads/Phenology.pdf>