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## *Your Indoor Outdoor guide to gardening* **AUGUST**

### **XERISCAPING**

Xeriscape gardening (pronounced zer-uh-scap) groups together plants with similar water needs to conserve water. It commonly means planting a landscape that is drought tolerant and requires little water. After several years of drought conditions in the Northeast and Middle Atlantic, more gardeners use some principles of Xeriscape gardening when selecting plants.

Seven steps in developing a Xeriscape garden include:

1. Consider topography of the site, proposed use, light, placement of hardscape, and a schedule for implementation.
2. Test the soil and add elements needed. Adding organic material can help retain water and improve root development.
3. Turf uses a lot of water. It should be used sparingly and contiguously with other high use plants to reduce the irrigation area.
4. The use of greater numbers of low water need plants in your design will reduce water consumption accordingly. Selections must be both highly drought tolerant, and also be able to thrive in years with normal rainfall and the higher humidity. A few of the best selections are Achillea, Veronica, Nepeta, Echinops, Perovskia, Salvia and Echinacea.
5. Water efficiently by drip irrigating the separate zones according to the grouped plants' water needs. Water turf separately. Irrigate based on climate and plant needs, not according to a set schedule. Be aware that all plants need more water until established.
6. Mulch your landscape with organic mulch. Decomposition of some mulch (wood-based) draws much nitrogen from the soil. Choose mulch that will break down slowly, such as shredded bark mulch, adding nutrients to the soil. Keep mulch at least 4" away from the base of trees and shrubs to avoid moisture build up that can harm them.
7. Weeding and proper maintenance will reduce competition for water resources.

In combination, these principles can be effective in reducing water consumption by 25-50%. In the East, it can mean a difference between losing hundreds of dollars worth of plantings or of enjoying seasons of bloom in a landscape that rides out the vagaries of Mother Nature's whims.

Seven Principles based on information provided by Colorado Springs Utilities website: [www.csu.org](http://www.csu.org).

### **FLOWERING OR FRUITING THIS MONTH**

- ❖ Perennials: Artemisia, Asclepias, Black-eyed Susan, Chrysanthemum, Hosta, Liatris, tiger lilies, lobelia, Physostegia (obedient plant), Sedum, Yucca.
- ❖ Shrubs: Abelia, bearberry, beautyberry, Buddleia, Caryopteris (blue-mist shrub), Clematis, grape heather, Hydrangea, Mahonia, Potentilla, St. John's wort.
- ❖ Trees: apple, plum.

### **SEASONAL**

- ❖ A National Gardening Association study showed that schoolchildren who "participate in a garden-based curriculum outperformed other students in science comprehension and attitudes". Consider starting one this fall, at local schools.

- ❖ Design your landscape for fall. Since many people move every five years or so, plan on buying the largest plants you can afford so that you can enjoy them more now.
- ❖ Yellow jacket problems often increase this month especially around doors, garbage cans, and fruit trees. Removing nests can be dangerous, consider professional help.

### **HOUSEPLANTS**

- ❖ Make cuttings of favorite plants to have extras for you and to give to friends.
- ❖ An application of pepper sprinkled on soil can discourage cats from bothering plants without hurting the cats or the plants.

### **BULBS**

- ❖ If you have not already ordered your fall bulbs, now is the time to order for fall planting.
- ❖ Irises and daylilies can be divided now.

### **COMPOST**

- ❖ Start or add to a compost pile with garden trimmings; maintain pile moisture; and pile turned weekly for best and fastest results.
- ❖ If finished a batch of compost, (after pile was hot, then cooled down about 1/3 or the original volume) let the pile 'cure,' harvest in 4 weeks for use in the garden.

### **VEGETABLE GARDENS**

- ❖ Begin resowing cool-weather crops such as radishes (European types tend to stay milder tasting in hot weather), lettuce, kale, carrots, turnips and beets.
- ❖ Plant transplants of broccoli, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage and cabbage for a fall crop.
- ❖ Harvest onions when the tops yellow and dry.
- ❖ If temperatures are excessive, (over 90°F) tomatoes, peppers, snap peas and many other vegetables may stop setting fruit.
- ❖ Heavy rains can reduce the sugars (sweetness) in watermelons: if it has just rain heavily, wait for a few days of dry weather before harvesting watermelon and it will be sweeter.
- ❖ Watch tomato plants for yellow concentric rings on the fruits; this is caused by the tomato spotted with fungus and spreads rapidly to other plants.
- ❖ Blossom end rot of tomatoes can be avoided or reduces by mulching the plants and keeping the soil moist.
- ❖ If you have had early blight on tomatoes in previous years, you can make your plants less susceptible by applying a light fertilizer application.
- ❖ Squash bug populations may be high on summer and winter squash, hand destruction of the insects is effective, but sprays can also help reduce the problems.
- ❖ If you are going on vacation in August, harvest all vegetables before leaving and arrange for squash and other fast-maturing, crops to be picked while you are away.
- ❖ Two inches of mulch will reduce soil temperature and reduce watering needs.
- ❖ In planning for next year's garden, look for disease and pest free varieties. Some crops are generally pest free, including: many herbs, beets, chard, Chinese cabbage, lettuce, radish and peas. Mustard, spinach and sweet potato usually only have minor problems.

### **SMALL FRUITS**

- ❖ Blackberries should not be picked until they separate from the stem easily.
- ❖ Canes of summer fruiting raspberries should be pruned. Remove those canes which produced fruit this season.
- ❖ This is the time to increase the size of your strawberries for next year. The better the growing conditions in August and September, the better the berries next June. Make sure that strawberries receive at least an inch of water a week throughout this time period.

### **TREE FRUITS**

- ❖ Reduce watering frequency allow the trees to harden off for winter. Do not fertilize fruit trees now.
- ❖ To reduce pest problems for next year, pick up and destroy fallen fruit.
- ❖ Support over-heavy branches with wooden supports.
- ❖ Place nets over ripening fruits to reduce bird damage.
- ❖ To see if apples are ready to pick, hold one up and twist slightly. Ripe apples will come off, otherwise wait for a few days and try again.

## **HERBS**

- ❖ Many herbs will self-sow if the flowers are not removed.
- ❖ Harvest herbs just prior to flowering for best flavor.

## **LAWNS**

- ❖ If you fertilize lawns this month, you could increase disease problems.
- ❖ Late August to early September is a great time to seed a new lawn. Prepare soil prior to testing; test the soil.
- ❖ Continue to mow often enough that you never remove more than a third of the leaf blade with each mowing.
- ❖ If you are not installing a new lawn, you can begin to decrease the frequency of watering, but water deeply each time. Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation.
- ❖ If you have not had a soil test done in the last three years, this is a good time to do one.
- ❖ Mow your lawn before leaving for vacation, if you will be away more than two weeks arrange for someone to mow it while you are away.

## **PERENNIALS, BIENNIALS & ANNUALS**

- ❖ A light application of fertilizer will help to keep your annuals flowering, but be sure to water the soil before applying it to avoid burning the roots.
- ❖ Sow hollyhocks, poppies and larkspur for next spring's flowers.
- ❖ Continue deadheading and staking.
- ❖ Spots on impatiens may be due to Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus; many flowers and vegetables are affected.
- ❖ If there are holes in the leaves and flower buds of your flowers, then they may have geranium budworms. Sevin or Bt can be used to control the budworms.
- ❖ Powdery mildew can become a problem towards the end of August, as the evenings become cooler.
- ❖ Order peony roots for planting in September; they need to be in about a month before the killing frost.

## **TREES & SHRUBS**

- ❖ After flowers fade; prune summer flowering plants that flower on new wood.
- ❖ Don't fertilize plants now; give them time to harden-off before winter.
- ❖ Water plants deeply in August; this is when they set buds for next year's growth.
- ❖ Hand remove bagworms and tent caterpillars.
- ❖ To reduce problems with powdery mildew in late summer, consider prevention strategies. Select resistant varieties space and prune water early in the day and reduce nitrogen fertilizer.
- ❖ Root cuttings of many woody plants: including azaleas, hollies and hydrangeas at this time.

## **ROSES**

- ❖ This is the last chance for deadheading and fertilizing before winter.
- ❖ To take late cuttings for additional rose plants, use a sharp knife and take a 6-9" section. Remove leaves on lower section (none should be below soil) and place so that only 2-3" is above ground. Water well and cover with an inverted glass jar. Place in bright, indirect light only.

## **WATER GARDENS**

- ❖ Continue to clean up dead leaves.

- ❖ Fertilize in early August with a balanced, slow release fertilizer.