

## SUMMER GARDEN CHORES CHECKLIST

By Kit Smith

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June 21<sup>st</sup> was the official start of summer. So on that note, here is a list summer garden chores you need to consider to get started for the season.

Walk the yard to assess if it is thriving or just surviving in the summer heat. While out there, check the watering system for clogs. Is it putting out enough water to irrigate deep down to the roots? Plants and trees need more than a surface watering but not so much water that they are flooded or that you create runoff. Try to water early in the morning to decrease evaporation and discourage the growth of fungal diseases. Check container plants. Are they getting sufficient water? For pots that sit on pavement, it is advisable to either insulate the bottoms or move them to filtered shade. Keep in mind that these plants may need to be watered on a daily basis.

Weekly, water and turn the compost heap. Add to the pile in correct brown and green proportions.

Plant canna and begonia flower bulbs.

Plant summer vegetable seeds. Corn, snap beans, zucchini and cucumber are easy to grow. In July, plant Brussels sprouts and rutabaga seeds. In August, start cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, lettuce and turnips from seed. Thin vegetables and herbs, if they are crowded.

Care for tomatoes by giving them a low nitrogen fertilizer when the fruit starts to develop. Stake them so the fruit does not rest on the ground and spoil. Keep the soil damp, but not soggy. Apply mulch to conserve soil moisture.

Stake taller delphinium, hollyhock, gladiola and peony.

Keep fertilizing flowers including roses with appropriate supplements. The same goes for citrus.

Prune volunteers and suckers - those are the vertical sprouts from horizontal limbs. Now is a good time to consider pruning apple and pear trees. There will be less re-growth with summer pruning than with winter pruning. Trim hedges to their desired height and taper them so that the bottom is wider than the top, that lets the sunlight in.

Keep weeding.

Cut off and throw away – but not in the compost pile – pods, seeds and fruits of aggressive plants like *Campsis*, trumpet vine; *Lonicera*, honeysuckle; and *Convolvulus*, morning glory.

Deadhead spent blossoms to encourage more flowering and to tidy the plant.

Cut flowers to enjoy indoors. Snip and place them promptly in warm, 100 degree, water. Once inside, re-cut the stems and place them in tepid water.

Thin fruit as it develops on trees to reap larger-sized fruit and promote branch stability.

Divide early blooming bulbs like iris, watsonia, hyacinth and daffodils when the leaves have completely died back.

Keep a garden journal. You can look back next year and have a reminder of what worked and didn't work for future planning.

Learn how to cut back or eliminate the use of costly and potentially destructive pesticides and turn your garden into an environmentally friendly habitat for plants, pets, and humans. Saturday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, Master Gardeners present a free three-hour class on "Attracting Beneficial Insects". The class starts at 9:00 a.m. and is held in the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr., in Placerville.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at [http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/). Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.