

Horticulture Hints

*If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need.
- Marcus Tullius Cicero*

August 2020

Well, it took awhile for the wet season to begin, but indeed it did. Watering was beginning to be quite a chore! As I write, the moisture from Isaias is sliding past us, hopefully not doing too much damage on its way.

August is a good time to take stock of what may have worked (or not) for you this past year. The early heat may have been too much for some plants. Might that be a good reason to move it? Or maybe remove it altogether? Maybe it just needs a little more mulch. By the end of the month, garden centers will be restocking for cooler weather, so before you buy anything new, be sure to evaluate what you already have.

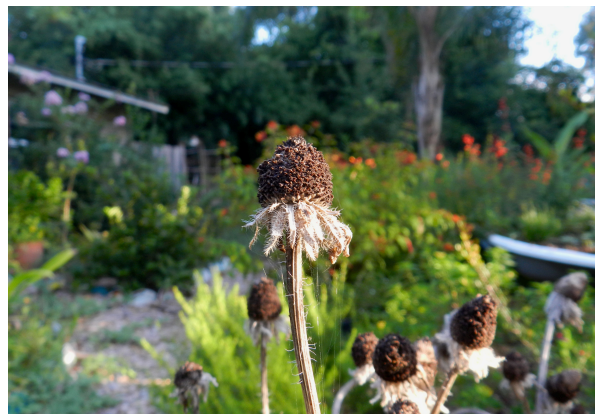
August is traditionally the time to start cool weather vegetables from seed, but I believe I'll wait just a little. Last year, I started them in August, but when I put them out in October, which was unseasonably hot, they just withered, and I only ended up with several stunted kale plants instead of the loaded bed I had anticipated. I believe this year I will also experiment with kohlrabi, which was a favorite of mine when I was a



Purple or green - kohlrabi is delicious

kid. Mom made a cream sauce for the thinly sliced vegetables. Heaven for a kid who already loved brassicas. I haven't had decent kohlrabi for years. I think I'll start my seeds the first of September (in the house), and then see what happens with the weather before I put them outside.

Many summer perennials are fading now, and as the flowers go to seed, what better time to take advantage of all that potential for next year? If you don't plan to leave the seed heads for the birds to eat, (I like to leave about half of them for the birds) cut them back just below the flower when they're nice and dry. Some of the seeds may have already made it into the dirt in order to



Black-eyed Susan seed head

pop up in the spring, but there should still be plenty left. Save the dry seed heads in a paper bag. Be sure to label them, so you know what you're growing for next year. And remember, we DO plan to have a plant sale next spring, so all those little seedlings can go to someone else who will love them as much as you do. In case of no plant sale, they can be passed around the Garden Club.

August is also great month to prune your roses. Some growth may have become leggy or foliage become thin. Take off these branches now, and new growth should follow. Also remove any diseased or declining branches. This is also a good time to sprinkle a little epsom salts and time-released fertilizer around your roses. Top dress with a little compost and they'll be happy campers for the rest of the hot season.

Since it *is* August, and very hot, the mosquitoes love to hang around in the best part of the day (early morning). It seems that they love the moderated temperatures of the early morning as much as I do. But there's a way to put the kibosh on them: half fill a spray bottle with the cheapest blue peppermint mouthwash you can find. Fill the rest of the bottle with water. When working outside, spray the area around you with the mixture. Even spray your clothes with it if you want. They apparently don't like peppermint. Who knew? Well, I knew they didn't like peppermint, but this is a brilliant Pinterest item. I do love Pinterest.



My lavender crape myrtle!

After you've sprayed your personal space with cheap blue mouthwash, here are a few more chores that can be done during August: trees, palms and citrus trees could use another dose of fertilizer before things

start to cool down. Remember, a quarter pound of citrus fertilizer for each inch of trunk circumference, sprinkled out to the drip line is what you need. Shrubs may be showing signs of nutrient deficiencies about now: yellowing leaves or leaf drop. This is a good time to give them an extra boost before the heat starts to fade. Feeding crape myrtles now will help them keep their leaves well into the fall. (BTW, my Arbor Day Society bare root seedling from 3 years ago finally bloomed - it's lavender!)

Safe gardening, and I look forward to seeing you all at our September meeting (by ZOOM no doubt).



Just a happy bumble bee on a partridge pea - the sounds of summer