July gardening tips from the UT Gardens

Here is your “to do” list for the garden for July. These tasks were submitted by Jason Reeves, horticulturist and curator at the University of Tennessee Gardens in Jackson.

▪ Many plants are easily propagated by layering. Hydrangeas, viburnums, weigela, trumpet honeysuckle, Carolina jessamine, and climbing roses are a few that will root if the stems are fastened down and covered with soil.

▪ Start planning your fall vegetable garden. Late July is the time to start seeding your winter broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and brussels sprouts to be transplanted into the garden in mid-August.

▪ You should be receiving fall nursery catalogues in the mail soon. Now would be the time to begin planning a new garden.

▪ Raise the height of your mower to reduce stress on your lawn and to conserve moisture in the ground. For best results, mow 2 inches for Bermuda grass, 1 to 2 inches for Zoysia and 2.5 to 3 inches for fescue.

▪ July is a good month to prune “bleeder” trees like maples, dogwood, elm and birch and other trees that “bleed” when pruned in winter.

▪ Give your chrysanthemums and aster a last pinching no later mid-July.

▪ Keep your perennials deadheaded so they will continue to flower. Be sure to remove the fading flower down to a leaf node or new bud.

▪ Cut back early planted annuals that are getting leggy or out of control by one-third to keep them looking good into the fall. Give them a shot of a water-soluble fertilizer. Good candidates include impatiens, salvia, sweet potato vine, trailing or ground-cover-type petunias and herbs, like basil.

▪ Avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs from now until next spring. Anything you remove now will also be removing next year's flowers. Spring-flowering shrubs include azaleas, camellias, witch hazels and rhododendrons among others.

▪ Now is the time to prune overgrown oakleaf and mop-head hydrangeas.

▪ Cut flowers for a bouquet early in the morning. Immediately place them in water. Good cut flowers include purple or white Echinacea (coneflower), Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan), zinnias, salvia, dahlias, sunflowers, Mexican sunflower, celosia, jewels of opar, cosmos, dill, fennel, Gomphrena (globe amaranth), Gaillardia, Monarda (bee balm), phlox, yarrow, ornamental grasses and Artemisia.

▪ Cut old flower heads off Hydrangea arborescens such as 'Annabelle' to get a second, but smaller, flush of flowers.

▪ July is a good time to buy crapemyrtles. They are in flower now so you can be certain to get the flower colored desired. Crapemyrtles should not be fertilized after mid-July to allow them time to properly harden off by fall.

▪ Keep birdbaths clean and filled with water through the hot weather, but be sure to control mosquitoes by eliminating sources of stagnant water.

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The UT Gardens includes plant collections located in Knoxville, Jackson and Crossville. Designated as the official botanical garden for the State of Tennessee, the collections are part of the UT Institute of Agriculture. The gardens’ mission is to foster appreciation, education and stewardship of plants through garden displays, educational programs and research trials. The gardens are open during all seasons and free to the public. For more information see https://utgardens.tennessee.edu