August Gardening Calendar

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Drip irrigation is the best way to irrigate fruits, flowers, vegetables, and shrubs in the landscape. The irrigation method applies the water at the soil surface directly over the plant roots. No water is lost to evaporation and no water sits on the leaves to contribute to the development of foliar fungal diseases.

Start applying the drip irrigation on a weekly or twice weekly schedule before the plants show any drying out symptoms. The drip application does not cover the whole root system so it is necessary to stimulate root growth in the wetted area before the plant is desperate for water.

If you do not have drip irrigation and want to learn more about it, or you want to learn how to manage your drip system better, visit thehillcountrygardener website. Dr Tom Harris and Ron Csehil wrote a drip irrigation guide that is excellent. It is called “Drip-Line Gardening.”

Concerning watering the lawn, establish an irrigation day each week and apply about .75 inches of water during weeks when it does not rain. That amount of water should keep the lawn green and growing.

There are two other options that are even better than applying .75 inches every week.

 One choice is to visit the SAWS website and seek out the lawn watering section. If you sign up for it SAWS will provide an email on a regular basis relating when and how much water is needed for your lawn. The recommendation is based on the weather data for the past week. You don’t need to be a SAWS customer to participate.

The second option would be available to homeowners with zoysia, Bermuda or buffalo grass lawns. If the rains aren’t enough to keep the grass green, let it go dormant until the rains resume. The lawn will be off-color but it will survive just fine.

The hot weather blooming plants such as crape myrtle, esperanza, Poinciana, thyrallis, duranta, lantana, and summer salvias should be providing lots of color. Encourage more bloom on esperanza and poinciana by cutting off the spent flowers or small seed pods. The same strategy works for crape myrtle if you can reach the bloom area. Extend the blooming period on New Gold lantana by skimming the plant surface with the string mower. You will sacrifice berry production in favor of more bloom if you prune off spent flowers on duranta. The birds will have delayed access to berries but the butterflies will benefit.

In the vegetable garden it is best to harvest peppers, eggplant, and okra at a young tender stage for high quality meals. If you get behind, remove and discard over-mature vegetables to stimulate production of new, more usable fruit .

 In most cases it is desirable if the spring tomato plants are removed from the garden to make room for new fall plants. Plants left from spring are likely to be less productive and serve as reservoirs for diseases and spider mites.

It is generally too late to treat the lawn for grubs but if you see the damage and find the mature grubs under the sod, make a note on the calendar to apply a preventative soil insecticide application on about June 15 next year.

It is not too late to plant vinca, zinnias, moss rose or cosmos for flowers in the sun. In the shade use begonias, pentas, coleus, or caladiums. They will provide color until Thanksgiving.

To bring hummingbirds on the patio plant one or more firebush in a container. This fall and in the years to follow the migrating birds will entertain you with skirmishes for dominance of the firebush. Firebush requires full sun.

Most gardeners had excellent production from peaches and other tree fruits this spring and summer. The flower buds for next year’s fruit are being formed this summer. Provide adequate irrigation to keep the foliage in good shape. The care is necessary to have another good crop next year.