

July Gardening Calendar

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Tomatoes are at the end of their productive period for the spring. If they are left in place you will be more likely to produce spider mites and fungal diseases than more tomatoes. Pull the plants early in the month and consider planting a fall crop late in the month. Recommended varieties for the fall include Red Snapper, HM 8849, Tycoon, Celebrity, Red Deuce, Phoenix, BHN 968, Ruby Crush, and Valley Cat. Tycoon, Celebrity, BHN 968 and Valley Cat are nematode resistant. The Roma canning tomato is also often planted in the autumn because it produces fruit very quickly and always beats the cold weather.

If spider mites have been a problem in the past apply a preventive spray of 2 tablespoons per gallon of water to the new transplants every week. Spray under the leaves. If the old tomato plants show evidence of nematodes be sure that you use a nematode resistant variety for the fall and do not put the pulled plants into the compost pile. Discard them in the garbage. The same treatment is also recommended for pulled plants that are infested with spider mites.

Green beans, cucumbers, and summer squash may come to the end of their production in July. Okra, eggplant and peppers should be in full production. Keep harvesting up to date to maintain quality and production.

July is a big month for purple martin action. The young leave the nest and the whole population readies for their trip to South America for the winter by assembling at gathering points in the local area and then the region. The end of the month is a good time to lower the houses and clean the apartments out. If you can block the nest box entrances you can prevent further English sparrow nesting.

It may be a coincidence but in July and August after the martins leave there is usually a big increase in butterfly populations seeking nectar and a place to lay their eggs. Plant zinnia, porter weed, mistflower, lantana, salvia, sunflower, duranta and cosmos for nectar plants. Milkweed is a good nectar plant, but it is also the only site that Monarchs and Queens will lay eggs. Plant citrus for Giant Swallowtail and passion vine for Gulf Fritillary. For the other plants required for butterfly egg-laying sites seek out one of my archived articles on plantanswers.com or obtain a good resource book such as Geyata Ajilivsgi's "Butterfly Gardening for The South."

Zoysia, Bermuda, and buffalo grass can survive without irrigation. The lawn will turn brown but will recover when fall rains and cool weather arrive. To keep the lawn green water every week with approximately .75 inch of irrigation. You can fine tune the water application and save water costs by signing up to receive the SAWS weekly irrigation recommendation and gardening email. The email is free, and you do not have to be a SAWS customer. Visit SAWS. Org and go to Conservation.

For summer color consider planting one or more of the drought tolerant sub-tropical plants such as firebush, "Gold Star" esperanza, duranta, poinciana, and thyralis. They will freeze to the ground most winters but grow to 7 feet and bloom each summer.