

## August Gardening Calendar

Distribute 07-16-2020

It was great to have a full year without severe drought and irrigation restrictions in 2019. We are back in the normal summer pattern now in August of 2020 and many communities are under drought restrictions. Check on the situation in your community and comply with the restrictions if they are in place. Even if there are no restrictions it is tough to keep a lawn green in our soils when it is over 90 degrees every day. It is especially difficult if you have less than 6 inches of soil. The soil reservoir is limited, and the moisture gets used up before a week passes so any kind of restriction to weekly applications is a problem.

If you have Bermuda, zoysia or buffalo grass one option is to stop watering and to allow them to go dormant if it is difficult to apply enough water to keep them green. It is best to irrigate St Augustine at least once every 2 weeks for grass survival. The dormant grasses will recover when the rains and cooler weather returns. If you have an area that is especially prone to dry out, you can let it go dormant or supplement its dose of sprinkler water with a supplementary hand application. Hand watering is allowed any day and at any time in most systems.

If you have a planting of zinnias, mistflower, porter weed, and milkweed to supply nectar for your butterflies it will require some attention to keep them supplied with enough water to keep fresh blooms being produced and an active nectar flow. They are all generally tall plants with large bloom areas that require access to water more than once/week to keep them fulfilling their role. If you are in a community with restrictions but have a drip system you can probably operate it as often as every day to keep the flowers in an active state. Under most irrigation restriction regimes, you have more freedom with drip (and hand watering) systems because it is very efficient. If you rely on sprinklers or soaker hoses use your watering day for a generous application and then meet any further needs in the bed by hand watering.

The migrating monarch butterflies will not be back in our area until late September or later, but the related queen butterflies will be laying eggs on available milkweed. The black swallowtails will find any dill, fennel, or parsley that is in the garden Also expect the giant swallowtails to produce a few bird dodo shaped caterpillars on your citrus trees and gulf fritillaries will utilize the passion vine. For a long list of butterflies and their favorite or required egg-laying sites visit my archived articles on plantanswers.com, or, better yet, obtain a copy of "Butterfly Gardening for the South" by Geyata Ajilvsgi.

Keep an eye on your shrubs and trees, especially those that were planted within 2 or 3 years. With drought it is not uncommon for the root balls to dry out and the plants drop all their leaves. If you detect wilting on a young tree or shrub hand water them directly at the base so that the root ball gets soaked. Even esperanza, thyralis, firebush, duranta and poinciana may pause in their blooming if temperatures stay very high, they are in shallow soil and are not irrigated.

For your fall tomatoes, if they were purchased as 2-inch peat pot plants, it is best to keep them in a 1-3-gallon container filled with potting soil and Osmocote until the plants grow larger. Place the containers

in morning sun and afternoon shade. Some nurseries sell recommended selections like Tycoon, Red Snapper, Celebrity, HM8849, and BHN 968 in the 1-gallon size. They are the best transplant option in hot weather like we are experiencing.

Okra, peppers, and eggplant should be able to make it through the month as long as you can keep them watered.