

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH: JULY

Hot summer days are here (hopefully!) and now is the time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of your labours in the garden. There are plenty of maintenance jobs to be done and watering is important in keeping your plants looking their best but there should still be plenty of time to sit and relax.

TASK LIST

Finish planting out summer bedding in borders, containers and baskets – fill in any gaps with large Pelargoniums, Fuchsias and Begonias to give a blaze of colour.

Keep on top of weeds by removing any that appear and hoeing between your flowers and vegetables. Removing them now will save them seeding for the future!

Watering is vital at this time of the year, especially during a dry spell. Pots and containers dry out very quickly and should be watered regularly. If borders and vegetable plots require watering it is better to soak them thoroughly every few days rather than a sprinkle every day as this will encourage the roots to go grow deeper and find water.

Hanging baskets also require care to keep them looking their best. Watering is essential even if it rains as they hang under eaves and against walls and don't get enough water from just rainfall. Dead-head faded flowers to encourage further flowering and give them a feed with a diluted, all purpose plant food once a week if they start to look tired.

Remove faded flowers on perennials such as Delphiniums and Lupins – this will encourage a second flowering later in the season.

Sow seeds of biennials such as Sweet Williams, Hollyhocks, Foxgloves, Violas and Canterbury Bells for flowering next year.

Summer flowering shrubs should be pruned for shape after they have flowered, removing any diseased or dead branches.

Cuttings can be taken from the non-flowering shoots of shrubs and climbers, and from Fuchsias and Pelargoniums.

Fertilise flowering shrubs such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias immediately after flowering and remove the dead flower heads.

Plant out successions of salad crops for continued harvest throughout the summer.

Enjoy the harvest of your home grown fruits such as strawberries, raspberries, currants and cherries.

OUR PLANTS OF THE MONTH

Ageratum
Alchemilla mollis (Lady's Mantle)
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon)
Astilbe
Buddleia (Butterfly Bush)
Calendula (Pot marigold)
Callicarpa
Dahlia
Digitalis (Foxglove)
Gaillardia
Gypsophila
Helianthemum
Kniphofia (Red Hot Poker)
Lathyrus (Sweet Pea)
Lobelia
Phlox
Rose
Salvia
Verbena
Weigela

DIANA'S CHOICE

My choice of plant this month is the African lily or AGAPAN-THUS. They add an exotic touch to any planting scheme or container but

are often used as a pot or tub plant as they prefer to be contained with cramped roots. Originally from the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, they are now grown globally and there is an increasing range of hardier varieties. During the summer months the plant has strap-shaped leaves and spectacular large heads of blue or white flowers on long stems. In winter it dies back and benefits from a sheltered spot in the garden or greenhouse to protect it from the worst weather. They require plenty of water during the growing season but keep on the dry side during the winter. They flower best in full sun.

