

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH: JUNE

This is a rewarding month in the garden as you start to see the fruits of your labours from the past few months. Herbaceous borders are alive with colour and the vegetable garden is earning its keep.

TASK LIST

- Plant out all summer bedding and plant up your summer containers.
- Keep the weeds under control.
- Lift and divide spring flowering perennials such as primroses, aubrietia, auriculas and bearded iris.
- Stake tall flowers to prevent wind damage and check that climbers are well supported.
- Sprinkle rose fertiliser around the roots of roses to encourage strong growth and a good flower display. Remove any flowers that have finished by cutting back the stem by several inches.
- Keep a watch for pests attacking flowers, fruit and vegetables as the weather warms up and remove before infestation takes hold. Fungal disease such as mildew and black-spot should also be treated appropriately.
- Remove dead foliage from your spring flowering bulbs once the leaves have died back naturally.
- Continue sowing salad crops and other vegetables for a continued succession.

HANGING BASKET CARE

It is time to hang up those baskets that you have been nurturing for the past few weeks if you have a greenhouse or to buy one ready-made from the garden centre. With a bit of care the baskets should look good through to the end of September. There are 3 main activities that a basket (or any other container) requires to keep it in tip top condition:

WATERING

Hanging baskets dry out very quickly as they contain relatively small quantities of compost and a number of large thirsty plants. Hopefully your basket will have some moisture control such as water-retaining crystals in the compost which will help but consider the fact that they are hanging out to dry all day! There

are many types of basket available and some have reservoirs built into them and if you hope to have one in an inaccessible situation then this is a must. Wire baskets require the most watering as they are open to the elements. Baskets require watering once a day in warm weather and twice a day in hot weather. Always water in the evening or in the early morning to avoid leaf scorch and evaporation. One way of testing the dryness of your basket is to feel its weight – if it's light then it's dry. Give your basket a good drenching – excess water will run out so there's no chance of over-watering. If a basket has dried out then water will just run off the top of the compost and not penetrate the crust. In this situation, take it down and dunk it in a large bowl of water for an hour – just watch the air bubbles appear! Another tip for a dry basket is to add a drop of washing-up liquid to the water as this helps the water to be absorbed.

FEED

Again, you may well have some slow-release fertiliser in your compost which will help but basket plants are hungry as well as thirsty. If normal multi-purpose compost without any additives has been used, the nutrients in the compost only last 4-6 weeks. As soon as the plants start to look weak, leggy or tired, feed the basket by adding multi-purpose food such as MiracleGro or Phostrogen to the watering once a week.

DEAD HEAD

Plants produce flowers to produce seeds and once these seeds are produced the plant thinks that it has done its job and will stop flowering. By snipping off the faded flowers regularly the plant has no opportunity to create seed and will therefore continue to flower.

