

Central Virginia Master Gardeners
July Garden Chores

**"No bought potpourri is so pleasant as that made from ones own garden,
for the petals of the flowers
one has gathered at home hold the sunshine and memories of summer, and
of past summers
only the sunny days should be remembered."
- Eleanor Sinclair-Rhode**

Category	Description
Ornamental Garden	<p>Keeping up with watering (in non-Noah's Ark years) and weeding tops the to-do list for July. Get up early to work in the cool morning hours.</p> <p>Gardens need an inch of water a week. Check your rain gauge to make sure they get it, and remember: soak deeply in the root zone, don't spritz things with a sprayer now and again like you're washing the car. That's a garden no-no. Those plants living in pots need extra attention, especially smallish ones in sun, and they also need regular feeding. Be alert!</p> <p>MAKE A PASS through each bed each week, since weeds are not just unsightly but steal moisture, nutrients and light from desired plants. Top up mulch in all garden beds if washed or worn away to help in the plight.</p> <p>Handpick Japanese Beetles (as with other obvious pests like tomato hornworms) in early morning and drown in a can of water to reduce infestation. Adding liquid soap helps to drown the little buggers!</p> <p>STOP FEEDING woody plants. Promoting more soft growth in high summer isn't good; time for them to start moving toward the hardening-off phase of their cycle. No more eats till late winter or earliest spring.</p> <p>TREES ARE especially vulnerable to drought, particularly the oldest and the youngest (those planted in the last few years). Water deeply</p> <p>ALWAYS BE on the lookout for dead, damaged, diseased wood in trees and shrubs and prune them out as discovered. Ditto with suckers and water sprouts.</p>

<p>Vegetables, Fruit and Herbs</p>	<p>SPRING-FLOWERING shrubs like lilacs reach the end of their pruning window after July 4th here, otherwise risking damage to emerging buds for next year's blooms.</p> <p>THROUGH MONTH'S END, softwood cuttings of buddleia, weigela, rose-of-sharon and roses, among other shrubs, can be taken to propagate more plants inexpensively.</p> <p>PREPARE NEW beds for fall planting by smothering grass or weeds with layers of recycled corrugated cardboard or thick layers of newspaper, then put mulch on top.</p> <p>EDGE BEDS to make a clean line and define them, and keep edges clean with regular fine-tuning with grass shears. A clean edge makes a big difference.</p> <p>Don't bag or rake lawn clippings; let them lie on the lawn to return Nitrogen to the soil.</p> <p>Don't let the heap dry out completely, or it will not "cook." Turning it to aerate will also hasten decomposition, but things will rot eventually even if not turned.</p> <p>STRAWBERRY BEDS may appreciate rejuvenation now.</p> <p>KEEP GARLIC AND ASPARAGUS well weeded. Garlic may start to fade and topple by later this month or next, as harvest time nears. When several lower leaves yellow, try carefully lifting a head or two to judge readiness, before lifting all to cure during a warm, dry spell in an airy, sheltered place. Let asparagus ferns grow till frost to feed the underlying crowns.</p> <p>CONTINUE SOWING carrots, beets, radishes, lettuce, dill. With salad greens, select heat-resistant varieties, and sow small amounts every 10 days. Direct-sow a short row of bush beans every two weeks through month's end, and another mound of bush cukes and zucchini right now.</p> <p>FOR PEAK FLAVOR, basil, sage, marjoram and oreganos, mint, tarragon are best harvested just before bloom. Start more basil from seed for combining with those September tomatoes, and dill for late pickles. Harvest lavender, rosemary and chamomile as they flower, blossoms and all.</p>
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