



From the Bedford VCE Master Gardener
HELP DESK

August 2013

*A monthly newsletter column for Bedford Extension Master Gardeners.
Now available at the BAMGA website for interested gardeners, like you!*

Editor: Linda Esser

Just because August is usually too hot and muggy for anybody to really WANT to be outside does not mean gardening chores can be set aside. For vegetable gardeners August should mean bountiful harvest as well as continued care of the existing crops and vegetable beds. In addition, in August vegetable gardeners should start planning for and begin planting some of their autumn crop(s). [1]

Ornamental gardeners should continue to remove any spent flowers or diseased foliage. This will encourage many flowering shrubs and annuals to re-bloom which should continue into the fall. An assessment of the health of perennials, shrubs, and trees, should be undertaken and corrective measures taken as appropriate. And finally, fall planting bulbs should be ordered.

For “lawn” gardeners with cool-season grass early-to-mid-August is the time to prepare the lawn in anticipation of rejuvenating it later in the month/early September.[2] If you haven’t tested the pH level of your soil recently August is a great time to get it done. Getting the results in early will give you ample time to appropriately amend your soil before the ground freezes.

For container gardeners, August can be rough on potted plants especially those in terra cotta or clay pottery. Make sure the plants get sufficient amounts of water; with the added heat and seepage from their pots the plants tend to lose moisture quickly.

And finally, don’t forget your house plants! August is a good time to repot them to a slightly larger container, if necessary. Taking care of that in August will allow the plants to get plenty of sunshine while it’s hot out and excess water can seep out of the soil without lingering and causing your plant any “wet feet.”

On to the Help Desk questions we go...

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QUESTIONS:

1. The caller wanted to know when she should harvest her sunflower seeds.
2. The client wanted to know when she should pick her Concord grapes.

ANSWERS:

1. The client was told to cut when back of sunflower turns brown, usually about the third week in September. Allow the flower head to dry completely before removing the seeds.
2. The client was told that the best tell-tale sign of ripeness is to taste them. Unlike some other fruits, once the grapes are cut from the vine they will not ripen any further. Fully ripe grapes are soft and tender - plump & well formed.

REFERENCES:

[1] Fall Vegetable Gardening

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-334/426-334.html#L1>

[2] Maintenance Calendar for Cool-Season Turfgrasses in VA

http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-523/430-523_pdf.pdf



The answers provided herein were based on specific situations and growing conditions. These recommendations may or may not be appropriate for all circumstances. For specific recommendations for your particular situation please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

Bedford County Extension Office: (540) 586-7675 / Email: Help Desk @ BedfordMG@vt.edu

Websites: www.BedfordAreaMasterGardeners.org and <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/bedford/>



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