Friday's Feature
By
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June Gardening Tips

Summer officially arrives June 21st, but the summer weather has already started. In Northwest Florida, summer means heat, high humidity and afternoon thundershowers. Summer also brings a change in gardening activities and sometimes a change in gardeners’ attitudes.

Resist the urge to quit gardening because of the heat. There are many things that can be done in the landscape and garden. Do however try to limit most activities to the cooler times of the day and drink plenty of fluids.

The petunias, snapdragons and other spring flowers that can’t tolerate the heat need to be removed from the garden now. This time of year plant heat tolerant annuals. For your full sun areas try celosia, kalanchoe, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, portulaca, salvia, torenia, vinca and zinnia and for your shaded areas try impatiens or crossandra.

To get maximum effect from these colorful annuals, remember to deadhead. To get a flowering plant to bloom for longer periods, the old flower heads need to come off as soon as the petals fall. This process stops the flower from going to seed. Annuals that start to put their energy into forming seeds usually stop forming flowers. To keep these bedding plants growing well, lightly fertilize every four to six weeks.

Trees and shrubs will also need your attention in June. If you haven’t pruned your spring flowering shrubs like azaleas and camellias, finish this job quickly. Wait any later and you are likely to cut off the buds that form next year’s flowers.

Be sure to start scouting for insects on your landscape plants. Inspect maple trees for infestations of cottony maple scale. Look for a white substance with some black on one end. Individual scales are about ¼ inch in diameter and resemble bird droppings. Also check for bagworms on conifers and lace bugs on azaleas.

Summer can also bring lawn pests. Spittlebugs are back and may cause damage to centipedegrass lawns. Spittlebugs are small insects about ½ inch long, black in color and have two orange strips across their back. A few spittlebugs will not cause significant damage but when spittlebug populations become excessive, damage shows as yellow or reddish streaks down the grass blades. The blades eventually turn brown and the whole lawn takes on a brownish cast. If damage isn’t significant, don’t spray. However, if damage is
beyond your tolerance, application of an insecticide may be necessary. If you do spray, follow the label directions and precautions carefully. For complete information on spittlebugs, review the UF/IFAS publication at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH077](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH077).

The vegetable garden will also need some attention. There is still time to establish some of the more heat tolerant vegetables. Plant seeds of lima beans, okra and southern peas. Set out plants of eggplant, pepper and sweet potatoes.

To keep your vegetables growing, keep the plants watered and fertilized. Be careful to water their roots instead of their leaves which helps reduce the chance of disease. A light application of a fertilizer such as a 15-0-15 every four to six weeks will help keep your vegetables healthy and producing.

**Tip of the Week:** If you are interested in hearing about the latest research in turfgrass management on the upper Gulf Coast you may want to attend the 11th Annual Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo & Field Day scheduled for June 15th. You can register online at [http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/center/events/05-turfexpo.htm](http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/center/events/05-turfexpo.htm) or by calling (850) 983-5216 ext. 113.

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