

THE ARBORETUM AT FLAGSTAFF

Summer Gardening Tips

Early Summer (*May-June*)

Planting: By now, cold-weather crops are planted. If some were lost to frost, try again with plants that won't bolt (accelerated flower and seed production) in the mid-summer heat, such as lettuce, spinach, and parsley. When evening temperatures begin to stay above freezing, it's time to plant warm-weather crops, such as tomatoes and peppers. Blankets and row covers can provide protection for tender plants on cold nights to prevent sluggish growth. Start planting summer blooming annuals and perennials. Remember to amend soil with organic materials before



planting. As bulb leaves die back, remove spent foliage.

Fertilizing: Fertilize lawns, flowerbeds, and vegetables after thinning to give them a good start for the growing season. Many organic fertilizers are available that are specific to crops you are planting and to your soil's nutrient content.

Watering: For good growth and flowering during the dry part of the summer before monsoons, water deeply, once each week under normal conditions, but more frequently when it is over 90 degrees. Depending on what you're growing, flood irrigation is especially helpful. Check the slope of your land and see if water run off is happening. If so, build berms surrounding your crops to dam the water in a centralized area.

Many established native plants will get by with less frequent watering until the monsoons, when they will put on their show. Check irrigation periodically.

Mulch: If the soil is rapidly drying out and most of your mulch was removed in spring to warm the soil, redress the soil around your plants with a thin layer to reduce water evaporation and to control weeds. This will make irrigation a little easier.

Pruning: Once early blooming shrubs have completed their flowering, prune. Spent spring flowers should be removed at this time so the plant will focus energy on this year's growth. If fruit trees have produced an overabundance of fruit, begin thinning fruits to several per branch to get larger fruit. If you're producing a root crop, like an allium such as garlic, remove the flowering part. In the example of garlic, that'd be the scape. This will allow the plant to focus its energy on the bulb.

Mid-Summer (July-August)

Planting: If you are a risk-taker, calculate backwards from the expected date of the first hard frost for your location to determine when to plant a second round of quick-growing vegetables that can take the cool early fall nights (kale, spinach, onions, radishes, etc.). Radishes are especially good and take about a month to become fully mature from the time sown.

Fertilizing: Feed annuals, potted plants, and vegetables monthly through the growing season.



Watering: Continue to deep-water lawns, perennials, shrubs, and trees until the monsoons arrive. Keeping lawns 2 to 3 inches in height will help protect against drying out by shading the ground and keeping it cooler. Additionally, planting lawns using native grasses such as buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*) and blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*), instead of traditional grass species like Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), can help curb watering needs. Green, manicured lawns are so 20th century!

Maintenance: Keep up with the weeds before they go to seed to minimize future weeding efforts. For those weeds with stout roots that are difficult to pull out completely, keep removing top growth every two weeks to drain energy out of roots. For noxious weeds such as field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), removing it before it spreads further is the best thing you can do for your garden. Its roots are brittle and grow deeply - after it becomes established, it is next to impossible to get rid of without heavier herbicide.

Late Summer (*August - September*)

Planting: Monsoon season is a great time to plant perennials, shrubs, and trees for next year. The higher humidity and frequent precipitation greatly reduces stress on new plants and gives them time to establish roots in the soil before the onset of winter.

Watering: When monsoons arrive, cut back or eliminate regular watering. Check irrigation timer clocks to be sure lightning storms haven't disrupted any programming. Now is a good time to replace batteries since fresh batteries will be more likely to maintain your programming even with a few electrical disruptions.

Harvest Time: If cold nights are predicted, cover warm-weather crops at night. Pick crops in early stages for the best flavors and textures and to keep the plants producing. Picking crops is like pruning, it stimulates new growth.

Plan ahead! Order bulbs for fall planting - crocus, garlic, tulips, etc. At this elevation, spring may be a better time to plant bulbs so that they are not battling the intense cold of winter before becoming established. Research the plant individually before you decide how to germinate them. Some bulbs do quite well with the intense, winter, cold stratification in Flagstaff.



Gardening Tips updated winter 2016