

ACTON GARDEN CLUB

HORTICULTURAL HINTS

July 2024

Continue good maintenance practice in the garden by removing any dead or diseased plants to prevent the spread of disease. Pick up their dropped leaves and don't compost them. Keep up with the weeding. Don't let weeds go to seed.

Deadhead (pinching off) the spent flowers of perennials and trim off the flower stems. This may encourage reblooming of some plants and in general improve the plant's appearance. Deadhead flower stalks of daylilies, goatsbeard, coral bells, daisies, bee balm, salvia, phlox and spike speedwell. *Do not cut off the flower heads if you wish the plants to go to seed.*

As plants grow taller, lean over or crowd other plants, give them support by staking them. Many types of stakes are available in your garden center or simply use branches, I have used bamboo stakes for very tall plants.

Create a naturalistic look when pruning shrubs such as: azaleas, rhododendrons, lilacs, winterberries, viburnums, weigelas, hollies, boxwoods, and small trees such as crabapples and Japanese maples. Remove deadwood, broken and crossing branches and judiciously tip branches for shape. It will increase air circulation and space for branches to leaf out to photosynthesize and reduce the incidence of disease and pest problems.

Plantings in containers dry out much faster than plants in the landscape. In order to prevent over-watering, use potting soils that contain lightweight materials such as peat moss, perlite and bark, not soil. Lightweight potting mediums make moving pots easier but more frequent watering is required. Be sure to keep deadheading to keep container plants looking their best and encouraging new blooms.

Be on the lookout for poison ivy in the landscape. The oily resin urushiol is found in all parts of the plant: roots, leaves, flowers, berries, stems and vines. Be sure to wear gloves or use tools to remove and dispose of these plants. If poison ivy plants are *very* small, place a plastic bag on your hand to pull up the plants and then fold the plastic over the plant and dispose of it in the trash.

Never use pesticides or fungicides on your garden plants when temperatures get higher than 85 degrees. The bright sun will burn the foliage and may kill the plant.

With the heat and humidity of summer, keep a close eye on your garden plants for powdery mildew. The fungus will begin as a white dust like covering on the leaves of your plants. This is especially true if you water with overhead sprinklers. Powdery mildew will block the sunlight from plant foliage and the leaves will turn brown and black quickly dying. When the foliage dies, the plant is prevented from making fruit and flowers. Again, pick up the dropped leaves and dispose in the trash.

If leaves are curled and brown on the edges of your plants, the problem may be leaf scorch. This occurs when water loss through transpiration exceeds the ability of a plant to take up water through the root system. Leaf scorch can be caused by transplanting, root damage because of excavation, soil compaction, over fertilization, high soil salts, or environmental conditions. The environmental conditions include hot weather, low soil moisture, and windy conditions.

Don't irrigate in the midday or on windy days when evaporation is the greatest. It's best to water in the early morning or evening. Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses when possible. Overhead irrigation may result in watering plant surfaces and not the root systems. Water deeply allowing the water to soak into the soil. Newly installed plants need more frequent irrigation until established. Less frequent, deeper irrigation encourages good root growth which will help plants survive water stress.

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