



The Vine Line

July 16, 2014

Dear Vine Liner,

Summer represents many challenges for the home gardener and I asked our staff to give some summer advice for Vine Line #4 that might be useful in our approach to the great outdoors. That advice follows in these submissions.

The Memphis Botanic Garden is flourishing, and early mornings and late afternoons are nice times to visit us. We hope to see you soon. You won't be disappointed.

Thanks,

Jim

Summertime Trees

We are beginning "the dog days of summer." At this point the home gardener who spent spring planting, mulching, fertilizing, and pruning should be able to spend this time enjoying a glass of lemonade in the shade while watching their plants grow. However, I know that many gardeners do not have time to do all of the work during the cooler months, or they are all gluttons for punishment and actually want to work in the heat. To those constant gardeners, like those of us at MBG, who are also tree lovers here are a few thoughts regarding trees and summer time.

In general it is OK to plant trees any time of year but there are a few keys to success. Dig a hole twice the width of the root ball and almost as deep. No matter the size of the plant your hole should look like a shallow bowl not a pit the same shape as the pot or root ball. Place your tree in the hole with an inch or two of the root ball above original grade, backfill with native soil. Mulch up to the top of your rootball without covering the crown of the plant. Water, Water, Water. When planting a tree I usually hold the hose on the plant until the water runs off, then I wait for it to drain into the soil then I water it till it runs off a second and then third time. In general the fertilization routine occurs in spring and fall but we always fertilize at planting with a mycorrhizal inoculate that is rated 3-3-3.

Fertilizing with anything higher than that during the heat of summer could burn plants. Root growth occurs all year, even during the dormant winter months so planting in fall definitely

increases the tree's chances for survival and will require less water for establishment (perhaps just the initial watering in will suffice). If you are going to plant a tree in the spring or summer, water at planting and plan on providing supplemental water as needed, potentially several times a week. You should water before you see the leaves flagging (drooping), if this occurs water immediately (no it cannot wait an hour or two).

Pruning is a mystery to many gardeners. The best thing I can tell you is that pruning best occurs during certain windows of opportunity. All trees can be pruned during the dormant winter months. Trees can be pruned in early spring just as they are starting to break buds but be aware this can cause suckering. Generally once a tree has begun to put on this seasons growth it is wise to wait until the first flush has hardened off. This hardening off is happening right now on a redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) in my yard. Once this hardening off is complete, you could prune again or wait until winter. Once we get into August, September, and October, try to refrain from pruning because new growth will be stimulated and could be killed off by an early frost.

By Chris O'Bryan, Certified Arborist and Horticulture Assistant

Good Health With Herbs



Summer is upon us! It is hot and humid, but our herb gardens are in full tilt! What to do? I just read a report that says that over 40% of American adults do not get enough sunshine to produce the vitamin D needed by the body. It only takes about 15 minutes of sun exposure for our bodies to produce the needed vitamin D.

Let's go get our dose of vitamin D and enjoy our garden at the same time! Gather together the following items: basket, bag, or cloth to carry your herbs; and scissors or snips (and bug spray if the mosquitos like you like they like me!) Wait until any dew has dried off the plants. Now, let us collect! It is hot and gardening can be thirsty work, so we will collect and make some nice, cold, herbal tea. What to collect? What do you have? Pretty much any herb you like to eat would make a nice tea. Here are a few of the ones I like: thyme, basil, oregano, mint (peppermint, chocolate mint, Kentucky Colonel spearmint, apple mint, banana mint, et cetera – by the way, did you know that basil is a mint?), Texas tarragon (*Tagetes lucida*), cilantro (hey! don't knock it until you try it!), fennel, rosemary, and dill. Have any stevia or Aztec Sweet Herb? Snip a bit of both, or either. Any ratio is

good: just grab a little of this and a little of that-more of what you know you like.



Now stand up and look around. Miss anything you would like to add? If not, has it been 15 minutes? No, then spend a few more minutes enjoying the butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, fragrances and flowers – or grab a weed or two and upend them so the sun can bake them dead. It has been 15 minutes? Take your “loot” inside, rinse it well, set it aside. Gather a pitcher, take your rinsed herbs in hand and twist them (this releases the oils in the leaves so you can have a burst of flavor), place in the bottom of the pitcher, fill pitcher with ice, and top off with fresh water.

Go wash up, grab a magazine or book, fix a snack (you know you have worked up an appetite – how about a home grown tomato sandwich?) now pour you a glass of ice cold cold-press herbal “tea!” Be sure to allow some of the ice to flow into your glass. Take your glass, book and snack to a chair in the shade (or hide inside by a window – hey you’ve gotten your vitamin D for the day!) sit back, take a sip of your herbal drink, and know this is the best way to garden!

By Sherri McCalla, Herb Garden Curator

Summer Gardening

Summer is a time of constant weeding, watering, and watching. Warm-season weeds like crabgrass and pigweed thrive in the hot weather and can take over garden beds seemingly overnight. Be sure to remove these undesirables before they set seed to break the cycle of infestation, and mulch well, 1"-2" of your mulch of choice, to prevent new weeds from germinating. It is critical to keep newly-planted plants well watered through the hot days of summer. Again, mulch is the key to maintaining the even moisture that these young plants require. Apply 1" of supplemental water each week in the absence of rain.

Summer Critters

Moles and Voles are 2 rodents that most gardeners love to hate. They are different species and have different diets, so the methods for controlling each is different.

Moles dig long, raised tunnels, usually in your lawn. They eat grub worms, earthworms and some other invertebrates, so it is really difficult to control them with a poison bait. They are blind and nocturnal so you rarely see them, only the damage. If you are lucky and actually see them moving in the tunnels with their paddle like feet, you can dig them out and dispatch that individual with a shovel. Small dogs such as Rat Terriers or Jack Russell Terriers can be used to dig them up and kill them with less effort than any person I know. The good news is, on



Summer is also a perfect time to evaluate the performance of the plants in your garden. If plants seem to be struggling, consider relocating them to a site with more afternoon shade to reduce heat stress. Even the sun-lovers like Echinacea and daylilies will bloom well with only a half-day of sun. Established plants that seem to require more supplemental water than you are willing to apply should be removed and replaced with more drought resistant species. Our native trees and shrubs are excellent candidates. Trees like dogwoods and redbuds readily adapt to a summer-dry period once established. Shrubs such as serviceberry and beautyberry are also very forgiving and will get on well with occasional supplemental water once established, provided they are mulched well.

If space allows, consider filling in empty spaces in the perennial garden with fall vegetables. Crops such as beets, carrots, bush beans, kale, collards, turnips, and Swiss chard should be planted between the 15th of July and the 15th of August to mature during the cooler weather of fall. Many of the Asian greens such as Tatsoi and Bekana will overwinter and continue to provide nutritious greens until the warming days of spring.

Seed is available from Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Johnny's Seeds, John Scheeper's, and many other mail-order seed houses. Be sure to spray all cabbage family plants weekly with a Bt product such as

the average there are only about 4 moles per acre. Moles have two types of tunnels. They have permanent ones that they use all the time and foraging tunnels that they use to look for food. If you will stomp down all the tunnels in your property 2 or 3 mornings in a row, you will quickly find out which are the permanent ones because they will be back the next day. If you purchase the mole traps that look like a spring loaded miniature pitchfork, dig this into one of the permanent tunnels. With luck you will have a dead mole in the morning. You will need to repeat until there are no more moles.

Voles look like a small brown field mouse with a stump for a tail. They love to eat the root systems of plants. I am sure they read garden catalogs because their taste seems to lead them to the most expensive plants in your garden. You know when you have them because a plant that looked good the night before is now a wilted pile of leaves with no roots. Voles love rich, loose, improved garden soil. Exactly what you work so hard to do for your plants. They especially love Hostas but have been known to prey on Azaleas, Dogwood, Hydrangeas and a long list of other species.

Voles dig small holes in the ground about the size of a 50 cent piece. Try baiting ordinary mouse traps with either a shelled, unsalted pecan or a peeled acorn. Set the trap next to a vole hole. Cover both the vole hole and the trap with an upside down flower pot. (If you use a plastic pot, put a brick or something similar on top so it doesn't blow over; you could trap a bird!) If you have many voles set many traps and check daily. You will make a dent in the population and if you are persistent get down to a control level. Short of a nuclear blast there will always be some voles. People that have several outdoor cats

Thuricide to control the ever-present Cabbage Butterfly larvae. This should be continued until November, when the butterflies are less active.

Alternately, cover non-fruiting crops with a lightweight summer insect barrier to keep out unwanted pests. During very cold weather, crops can be protected with cloches or floating row covers like Reemay. Reemay and its kin are very durable and will last for years if stored dry and out of strong sunlight when not in use. Both fabrics are available from Johnny's Seeds and are well worth the investment.

Happy Gardening!

By Chris Cosby, Senior Manager of Gardens

report good results in controlling vole populations. Like all things in nature, not all cats are created equal, so this may or may not be a successful solution!

By Rick Pudwell, Director of Horticulture