



## GARDEN CHECKLIST FOR JULY

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

An early indicator that the hot days of summer have arrived is when an unopened can of soft drink explodes after being left inside a vehicle when daytime temperatures are rapidly warming up. Whether you are a beginner or expert gardener, health and safety are always important when working outdoors during hot weather.

As yet another record temperature went down over the last weekend, I think I may be becoming an Ebenezer Scrooge. As daytime temps passed the triple digit mark, I find that I do not like the concept of setting records especially when it comes to weather. I do not like temperature records being set over the summer season regardless whether records involve daytime temps, nighttime temps, or even rainfall. I view summer as a price to

pay for having the three other seasons of the year that are generally rather enjoyable!

July is almost here and that means heat and humidity are settling in as the summer season gets underway. A little care now will not only help your plants withstand the rigors of summer weather, it will also reward you with a flush of color later on during the late summer and fall seasons. Critical gardening

activities for July include the following:

### WEED CONTROL SEMINAR:

Do you have a bumper crop of something growing in landscape beds this spring that you did not plant? Is your lawn more weeds than grass? What can you do about problem weeds that are taking over your yard?

Master Gardener Anna Wygrys will provide a seminar on Saturday, July 13, 2013, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. at the Galveston County



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AgriLife Extension Office located at 4102 Main in La Marque (Carbide Park). Preregistration is requested by e-mail ([GALV3@wt.net](mailto:GALV3@wt.net)) or telephone (281-534-3413, ext. 12) to ensure availability of handout material.

Discussion topics will include the most common weed problems in local landscapes and gardens, chemical and cultural management options, and understanding how weeds gain a foothold in the home landscape.

**GARDENING HEALTH AND SAFETY TIPS:** Gardening is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, get physical activity, beautify the community, and grow nutritious fruits and vegetables. Whether you are a beginner or expert gardener, health and safety are always important. Daytime temperatures have already exceeded 100 degrees in some areas. The following are some guidelines to follow when trying to beat the heat.

- Gardeners need to make an effort to stay hydrated by drinking water often – even if you're not thirsty. Don't drink caffeinated beverages or alcohol.
- Avoid outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day (and yes, this includes gardening).
- Avoid overexertion. Take frequent rests – preferably in the shade – while you work outside.
- Wear light-colored clothing to reflect the heat. Be sure to apply a sun screen to exposed skin.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.
- Where possible, garden with a friend. The Master Gardeners prac-

tice a buddy system when gardening at the Horticulture Demonstration Garden in Carbide Park. Everyone should keep an eye on everyone else for signs heat-related problems and to encourage frequent water and rest breaks.

When it comes to heat-related illness while working in the garden, prevention is the best medicine.

**CHECK NEW LANDSCAPE TRANS-PLANTS:** Make periodic inspections on recently planted landscape trees and shrubs for soil moisture level. Their root systems will not become well-established for some time. During extended periods of dry weather conditions, be sure to water new transplants regularly to avoid stressing plants.

**TALLER LAWNS:** Check the cutting height of your lawn mower. During hot, dry weather conditions, consider raising the lawn mower blade to a higher setting. The higher the cutting height, the less lawn grass is stressed resulting in a healthier lawn.

**LOW SPOTS IN THE LAWN:** Low areas in the lawn may be gradually filled with shallow applications of good top soil where needed. However, avoid temptation to apply a layer of sand over the entire lawn area just because your neighbor does. This is an excellent way to introduce new weeds, smother your grass and encourage unwanted insects and disease problems.

**BARK LICE ON TREES:** July is the month when many homeowners start reporting the appearance of strange webbing on the trunk and

limbs of trees. Several concerned homeowners have already sent e-mails to me with digital photos of bark lice on tree trunks. The webs are produced by colonies of very small insects known as bark lice. The webs may give trunks and limbs the appearance of being "dressed" in a white stocking. Fortunately, bark lice (which really aren't lice) don't cause any harm to trees. In fact, they are very beneficial in that they eat lichens and fungi growing on the bark. No control is needed.

**CRAPE MYRTLES:** Crape myrtles are putting on a spectacular flower display this year. The flowering period of crape myrtles can be extended by pruning flower heads as soon as possible after they finish flowering.

Somewhat akin to the Ebenezer Scrooge character in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," I expect to become a nicer, more gentle person when daytime temperatures subside with coming of the fall season. During the summer season, I will garden safely and appreciate Mother Nature.

