

# June's Gardening Checklist

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr. William M. Johnson

**Home gardeners are harvesting bountiful crops from their gardens including onions. Onions are an easy-to-grow and manage crop, that when properly harvested, can provide a kitchen staple for many weeks.**

June signals the start of the summer season. As I am preparing this column rain clouds are moving into the area. While we are not in a severe drought situation, most gardeners have started to provide supplemental irrigation to plants and are hopeful for rainfall.

Even though our summers tend to be on the warm side, productive home gar-

deners still can gather colorful bouquets from the landscape and fresh vegetables from the garden. The productive landscape and garden will call for early summer care, and important and timely gardening chores.

June's gardening calendar includes the following:

**VEGETABLE HARVEST:**

Harvest vegetables frequently to ensure continual production. When not harvested on a frequent enough basis, many vegetables will reduce production of flowers and channel their energy into seed production in the maturing fruit already on plants.

**BLACKBERRIES:** Once blackberry plants have



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Dr. William Johnson is a horticulturist with the Galveston County Office of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit his website at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston>.

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completed their current crop, they should be fertilized. The "stalks" (called fruit canes) that produced this year's crop will soon die back and should be removed to reduce disease problems. A new set of green "stalks" (called primicanes) should be present and these will produce next year's crop of blackberries.

**SUMMER ANNUALS:** It is not too late to plant colorful summer annuals during June and early summer, especially if transplants are used. Plant dependable summer annuals such as vinca, impatiens, salvia, and portulaca.

**ONIONS:** Onions will be ready to harvest after their necks soften and the leaves fall over. Stop watering when that happens. Pull the bulbs, and let them dry in a shady, airy location. Once the tops have dried, clip the roots and tops, leaving about 1 inch above the bulb. Onions which put up a flower stalk will have a hollow center and will not keep very long, so eat them first.

**MULCH PLANTS:** Rainfall has been sparse over the past few weeks in most areas of the county. Soil moisture, essential for plant growth and health, may be conserved by applying an organic mulch. Choose a clean mulch—one that is free of weeds and that will remain loose and well-aerated. Shredded pine bark, compost, pine needle and oak leaf mulches are excellent for conserving moisture. These mulches also serve to keep the soil cool and limit weed seed germination and/or weed growth.

If you have a newly planted landscape tree, it will be well worth the time and effort to mulch the area from the base of the tree trunk out to at least 3 feet. Weeds and lawn grass are aggressive competitors for nutrients and moisture. As a result, newly planted trees often struggle along the first year or two. Your landscape tree will grow up to 50% faster when mulched. Apply a 4-to-6 inch layer (after settling) to landscape trees. Applying an overly deep layer of mulch next to the trunk of a tree or shrub should be avoided as doing so can increase the incidence of insect pest and disease problems.

**CONTAINER PLANTS:** Plants growing in containers are far more dependent on you for adequate water than plants growing in the ground. A practical approach to determining whether a plant needs water is to stick your finger in the soil. If the soil is dry down to the first knuckle on your index finger, then add water. Conversely, if the soil is still damp to the touch, don't water.

Watering frequency will vary depending on the type of plant, time of year, temperature and size of the plant in relation to the size of the container among other factors. It has been a very windy spring and soil in container-grown plants dries out faster under windy conditions.

You'll note that the procedure is called watering as opposed to sprinkling. When you water, wa-

ter generously until water runs out of the drainage holes to ensure adequate soil moisture throughout the potting soil medium. Generous watering also helps to flush or leach out excessive salts (commonly seen as a flaky, off-white crust along the inside rim of pots).

To facilitate watering, the soil (or soilless potting medium) should not be level with the rim of the pot. Having the top of the soil slightly lower than the pot rim provides space to hold water while it penetrates the medium.

**CRIME DETERRENT:** School's out and June is vacation time for many. You know that would-be burglars look for newspapers piling up on the lawn and mail not being picked up from the mail box for clues that you're gone.

Before going away on an extended vacation, also be sure to make arrangements for mowing the lawn. A lawn that is left unmowed, especially if yours is the only one unmowed in the area, can heighten the interest of burglars in your kingdom. While you're at it, make sure that your potted and other garden plants are also cared for properly.

**FREE ADVICE:** June gardening days should also include taking time to just sit back in your favorite lawn chair on a long summer evening to just enjoy the fruits of your labor.

