

June's Gardening Checklist

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

The high winds that accompanied last week's thunderstorms inflicted damage on trees as well as many tall-growing vegetables including sweet corn (pictured), okra, peppers, etc.

Even though we are less than three weeks away from the "official" start of summer (June 21 at 11:54 a.m.), as every Texan knows, when June arrives so does summertime. Even though our summers tend to be on the warm side, productive home gardeners can still 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.

Here are a few tips for your garden and lawn for the month of June.

WIND DAMAGE: Home gardeners can also be at the mercy of windy weather.

The severe thunderstorms that developed during the late afternoon last Wednesday were impressive. The sudden drop in air temperature was quite pleasant and the rainfall was much needed. However, the wind damaged many trees in the landscape in addition to tall-growing vegetables in the garden.





Tomatoes growing in cages were blown over. Stalks of sweet corn were knocked down (see photo) at the Discovery Garden.

VEGETABLES: Tomatoes are nearing the end of their production period with the onset of warmer temperatures. Peppers will benefit from a side dressing of fertilizer (mainly nitrogen) to keep them vigorous and productive throughout summer. The extra nitrogen stimulates leafy growth on peppers which will help prevent sun scald on the fruit. Okra, southern peas and other garden plants will also benefit from a side dressing of nitrogen fertilizer.

SQUASH: A common vegetable problem at this time of year is with squash not setting fruit. This is due to a lack of pollination. Squash plants have separate male and female flowers. Often, the first blooms to appear are mostly all male blooms. These have skinny bloom stalks, and, of course, male flowers do not produce fruit. Female flowers have a swollen stem that is actually the unpollinated fruit. Once pollen is transferred by bees from the male flowers to the female flowers, the fruit will develop normally. If the female flower is not pollinated, the swollen base can continue to swell for a day or two, but then shrivel, giving the false appearance that the fruit is growing but rotting.

Squash flowers only open for one day, mainly in the morning. If mornings are windy, cloudy or rainy, bees may not be out and about, and flowers will not get pollinated.

VACATION PLANNING: Before going on vacation, group plants in containers together near a water source and out of the afternoon sun. Grouping them will help plants conserve water, and shade will help reduce the need for water. If plants are located together near a hose, it will make it easier for a neighbor or friend to water all the containers in one spot.

Mow and edge the yard just before leaving for a neat and tidy appearance, and then give the lawn and garden a good soaking if the soil moisture level becomes dry. Don't give the appearance you are away, so stop the newspaper while you are gone.

Harvest garden vegetables prior to leaving, and if you'll be gone for a longer period, invite neighbors to help themselves to the produce.

LAWNS: Hotter weather with ample rainfall means grass will be growing faster. Keep up with the mowing so you don't have to bag the clippings. That may mean mowing every 5 or 6 days instead of every 7 to 10 days. Letting the clippings fall back into the lawn recycles nutrients. Keep the mower blade sharpened. Ragged ends indicate a dull blade. Mowing frequently at the correct height promotes a healthy, thick turf that is resistant to weeds.

SUMMER COLOR: June is a great month for setting out colorful summer annuals. For large areas, directly seed zinnias, cosmos, gomphrena or portulaca. There are

many types of annuals that can set out as transplants including angelonia, marigold, salvia, gailardia, vinca, purslane, dusty miller, ageratum, amaranthus, cuphea, gomphrena, celosia, Texas bluebells, cockscomb, and trailing petunias.

Don't overlook the great color that tropical plants provide throughout the summer. You get a lot of visual bang for your gardening dollar using tropicals like mandevilla, copper plants, tropical hibiscus, bougainvillea, crotons, ixora, jatropha and many others that provide season-long color through flowers or foliage.

BLACKBERRIES: Once blackberry plants have completed their current crop, they should be fertilized. The "stalks" (called fruticanes) that produced this year's crop will soon die back and should be removed to reduced disease problems. A new set of green "stalks" (called primicanes) should be present and these will produce next year's crop of blackberries.

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.

