

Garden Checklist for July

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Crapemyrtles are putting on a spectacular flower display this year. The flowering period of crapemyrtles can be extended by pruning flower heads as soon as possible after they finish flowering.

The last days of June ended with an abundance of rainfall and surprisingly cooler temperatures.

July has arrived and that means that the year is about half over and the days are getting shorter. It also means that the warm temperatures of summer have set in for sure.

Most of us put our gardens into a holding pattern in July. We just try to keep the bugs and weeds at bay and to keep cool. Here's your gardening checklist for July.

WHITE GRUBS IN LAWNS: This grub is the larval stage of the June beetle. Later on during the summer and fall, high populations of

white grubs in a given area of turfgrass can consume the roots and cause the grass to turn brown and be easily pulled up. As larvae become older, they are more difficult to control.

For the most effective chemical control of white grubs, timing is critical. They are best





controlled with the application of a recommended granular insecticide (such as permethrin) applied to the lawn in early July. Follow up with a second application in 4 weeks. In the absence of rain, lightly water after applying the granular insecticide to maximize contact with the soil surface and hence the small, developing larvae.

TALLER LAWNS: Check the cutting height of your lawn mower. During the heat of Gulf Coast summers, 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.

HANGING BASKETS: To keep hanging baskets looking attractive, soak the baskets in a tub of water every few days in addition to the regular daily watering. Fertilize container plantings. Fertilize with a water-soluble fertilizer every two weeks or try the slow release fertilizers for longer term fertilizing.

SALVIAS: Re-blooming salvias, such as *Salvia greggii* and *S. farinacea*, should be pruned back periodically during the summer. To make the job easier, use hedging shears, and remove only the spent flowers and a few inches of stem below.

PERENNIALS: Divide spring and early summer perennials including daylilies, iris, etc., and replant the best clumps. Discard the diseased or damaged material and share any surplus with friends.

PRUNE OLD CRAPE MYRTLE FLOWERS: Crape myrtles are putting on a spectacular flower display this year. After crape myrtles put on their first full bloom, you can stimulate the plants to extend their flowering period by pruning the flower heads as soon as possible after they finish flowering.

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.

WEBWORMS AND BAGWORMS: "Do I have webworms or bagworms on my trees and shrubs?" This has been a frequently asked question over the last few weeks. Webworms are the ones that make the spider-like maze of webs around leaves near the tips of branches and bagworms are the ones that live inside brown bags that they drag along with them for protection.

Both insect pests can be controlled with organic insecticides such as Dipel, Bio-worm Killer or other organic spray products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis*. The caterpillars eat it, become sick almost immediately, stop feeding and then die within a few days.

Bagworms can be somewhat difficult to control, especially as cater-

pillars become larger. Conventional insecticides currently labeled for bagworm and webworm control include carbaryl, cyfluthrin, malathion and permethrin.

BARKLICE 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 barklice on tree trunks. The webs are produced by colonies of very small insects known as barklice.

The webs may give trunks and limbs the appearance of being "dressed" in a white stocking. Fortunately, barklice (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.

BLACKBERRIES: July is the last month for pruning blackberry canes which promotes secondary shoot growth. Blackberries should be lightly fertilized with a general purpose fertilizer such as 15-5-10 or 21-0-0.

