

June Hort Tips

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service - Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources -
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GARDEN TIPS FOR JUNE!

David Hillock

General Landscape

- Find someone to water plants in the house and garden while on vacation. Harvesting vegetables and mowing the lawn are a must and imply that someone is home.
- Mulch ornamentals, vegetables, and annuals to reduce soil crusting, and to regulate temperatures and moisture during hot summer months. Mulching will reduce about 70 percent of the summer yard maintenance.
- Remain alert for insect damage. Add spider mite to the list. Foliage of most plants becomes pale and speckled; juniper foliage turns a pale yellowish color. Shake a branch over white paper and watch for tiny specks that crawl. Watch for first generation fall webworm. ([EPP-7306](#))

Turfgrass

- Fertilize warm-season grasses at 1 lb. N per 1,000 square feet. Don't fertilize fescue and other cool-season grasses during the summer.
- Dollar spot disease of lawns can first become visible in mid-May. Make certain fertilizer applications have been adequate before applying a fungicide. ([EPP-7658](#))
- Seeding of warm-season grasses should be completed by the end of June (through July for improved varieties such as Riviera and Yukon) to reduce winterkill losses. ([HLA-6419](#))
- Brown patch disease of cool-season grasses can be a problem. ([HLA-6420](#))
- White grubs will soon be emerging as adult June Beetles. Watch for high populations that can indicate potential damage from later life cycle stages as grubs in the summer.

Fruits and Nuts

- Renovate overgrown strawberry beds after the last harvest. Start by setting your lawnmower on its highest setting and mow off the foliage. Next thin crowns 12-24 inches apart. Apply recommended fertilizer, preemergence herbicide if needed and keep watered. ([HLA-6214](#))

Trees and Shrubs

- Vigorous, unwanted limbs should be removed or shortened on new trees. Watch for forks in the main trunk and remove the least desirable trunk as soon as it is noticed. ([HLA-6415](#))
- Pine needle disease treatments are needed again in mid-June.
- Remove tree wraps during the summer to avoid potential disease and insect buildup.

- Softwood cuttings from new growth of many shrubs will root if propagated in a moist shady spot.
- Protect trees from lawnmowers and weed eaters by mulching or using protective aerated covers.

Flowers

- Pinch back leggy annuals to encourage new growth. Fertilize and water appropriately.
- Feed established mums and other perennials.
- When picking fresh roses or removing faded ones, cut back to a leaflet facing the outside of the bush to encourage open growth and air circulation.
- Stake tall perennials before toppling winds arise.

Pecan Information

Becky Carroll, Associate Extension Specialist, Fruit and Pecan

- Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the Annual Oklahoma Pecan Growers Meeting scheduled for June 10-12, 2020 is cancelled. They are hoping to have a fall field day.
- Registration is open for **Pecan Topics for June** zoom meeting – June 5, 2020 at 1 p.m. https://dasnr.zoom.us/meeting/register/TJufuyhqjwoEtPRG-x1-4C8Ub8_hszFqPeu. Timely topics for those with interest in pecans will be discussed during this zoom meeting. For homeowners/commercial growers or sign up for in-service credit for educators.
- **Pecan Topics for May** zoom meeting link – <https://youtu.be/I4rkc-zxwKo>. This session covered pecan nut casebearer, freeze injury, and zinc applications. Feel free to share with others.
- Several videos showing pecan seedling propagation are online. The videos show pre-germination, planting, and fertilization. There are also some videos on tree removal, herbicide and fertilizer applications. You can find these located on the @okpecans facebook page.

Spider Mites

David Hillock

Spider mites can be real pests as the weather turns hot and dry. They often attack my marigolds each year, but they have rarely done significant damage and only once did I opt to control them, and even then it was only with a hard stream of water, which did the trick.

Hosts – Some species of spider mites are restricted to one or a few kinds of host plants while others feed on many different kinds of plants. Tomatoes and marigolds are probably most commonly attacked in Oklahoma, but very few plants are completely immune from all the species of spider mites that will attack plants.

Symptoms – Damage occurs when the mites suck plant juices with their small, needle-like mouthparts. Light infestations leave a pattern of small, pale spots on the infested plant. With heavier infestations the individual spots run together and can cause the death of a leaf or needle. This type of damage is often the only sign of an infestation in species which do not spin webs. One way to check for the presence of mites is to shake the plant over a white piece of paper. If you see tiny specks begin to move on the paper, they are likely mites.

Life Cycle – Some species overwinter as adults and others overwinter as eggs. They hatch or become active as the weather warms in the spring. Hot, dry weather is favorable for most spider mites and during the summer months they can complete a generation in 7 to 14 days. Females lay as many as 300 eggs in their webs or on plants. Therefore, mite infestations can increase rapidly and cause extensive damage to plants in a short time. Infestations usually decline as the weather becomes cooler and wetter in the fall.

Description – Spider mites, often called red spiders, are very small, barely visible to the naked eye. The newly hatched mite has 6 legs but all other active stages have 8 legs. They are related to spiders and ticks and are not insects. We have several different species in Oklahoma. Some are reddish in color but others are brownish or pale greenish. Some have two or more darker spots on the back. Several common species spin fine, irregular webs over the infested parts of plants but other species spin little or no webbing.

Control – Spider mites are relatively easy to control with a strong stream of water (syringing) that knocks them off the plant. This method also conserves their natural enemies. There are numerous predators of mites (lacewings, lady beetles and predatory mites). Practices that encourage predators to the garden helps reduce the need for chemicals. Most spider mites can be controlled with insecticidal oils and soaps if necessary; these are often referred to as the “soft pesticides.” The oils, both horticultural oil and dormant oil, can be used. Other chemical controls include miticides. Spider mites are usually not killed by regular insecticides, so be sure to check the pesticide label to see if "miticide" is present. Pesticides claiming "for mite suppression" are usually weak miticides and will not perform well.

Don't Bag It!

David Hillock

Now that the grass is growing like gangbusters, especially if you have been generous with the fertilizer and water, there is plenty of mowing to do. One way to save time and effort is don't catch the clippings. Turfgrass clippings contain valuable nutrients, much of which you just applied, and will help the turf if recycled back into the soil. In fact, it may even reduce the amount of total fertilizer needed for the season. Using a mulching mower or one with a mulching blade works best as they are designed to chop the grass clippings up into small pieces that easily decompose and return to the soil. However, you do not need a mulching mower or blade. A standard mower will work just as well as long as you cut the turf frequently enough. If you choose to catch your grass clippings, at least toss them into the compost pile or use them as mulch in the landscape as long as they haven't recently been treated with herbicides. Avoid bagging them up and placing them at the curb to be hauled away as this puts an unnecessary strain on the local dumps and could cost you more money in the long run by increased waste handling fees.

Managing Water and Weeds in Your Garden

Lynn Brandenberger, Extension Specialist

Last month we discussed starting your garden which included everything from soil analysis, labor, and different crop groups that you might want to consider growing. This month I thought we could focus on a couple of management topics particularly watering and weeds, the two W's of gardening. Both of these topics are somewhat interrelated in that they will affect each other during the growing season.

Let's start with water. Water is essential for garden crops and can be in short supply during the hot and dry months of summer. Water allows plants to transport nutrients that are absorbed by the root system throughout the plant and sugars (carbohydrates) throughout the plant that are produced during photosynthesis. Water is a key component of the plant and is necessary for the enlargement of cells (growth), and for cooling the plant through evapotranspiration. Water in the right amounts is a huge part of crop health, but if too little or too much is applied then problems will arise.

There are very few vegetable crops that won't need to be irrigated on a regular basis. That said, please consider that all plants and especially vegetables require soil to have a balance between too wet and too dry to be successfully produced. What most vegetable crops need is for water in the soil to be maintained at field capacity which is where soil is at after all the water from a big rain has drained internally from the effect of gravity.

Deciding when to water can be complicated or simple depending on how you decide to approach it. On the somewhat complicated side of the equation you could use different types of sensors to give you a reading on the amount of water available for your crops. These sensors could include tensiometers, electronic meters, etc. On the simple side you could use the USDA "Squeeze Test" where you take a handful of top soil, squeeze it and if free-water is squeezed from it then it's too wet, if there is no water squeezed from the handful of top soil, but there is a very light film of water on your hand then that soil is considered to be at field capacity. Adding to the squeeze test you will want to observe your garden every morning to see if the plants that were wilted the previous afternoon have recovered or are they still wilted. If they are still wilted this is another sign that more water is needed.

Water can be applied to your garden in a number of ways including overhead sprinklers, soaker hose, some form of flood or furrow irrigation, and drip irrigation. The most efficient of these methods is drip irrigation which allows water to slowly, but steadily drip into the soil without wetting the leaves or above ground parts of the crop. Keeping the top of the plant dry is key to reducing leaf diseases. If you would like to learn more about drip irrigation see OSU Fact Sheet [BAE-1511 - Drip Irrigation Systems](#). Some other advantages of drip irrigation include being able to carry on other gardening chores while irrigating, watering just the crop row not all the space between which will reduce weed competition with the crop.

If you are using overhead sprinkler irrigation then consider watering only in the morning, not at night since morning irrigation will reduce the amount of time your garden plants are wet and will reduce leaf diseases compared to sprinkler irrigation in the late evening or night time.

Weed control is another key part of successful gardening. Weeds compete with our garden crops for water, plant nutrients, and sunlight, and can be sources of plant pests such as insects and disease so it makes sense to do a proper job of managing weeds. As mentioned in the watering discussion above, weeds and their growth are affected by the irrigation method you choose. Several other aspects of managing weeds include pre-plant control of stubborn weeds (bermudagrass), organic and plastic mulches, cultivation, and other potential methods.

Last month we covered the need for labor for garden maintenance with weed control being a big part of the need for help. I would like to revisit this by sharing that a smaller garden can be very productive and more enjoyable since it requires much less weeding and fussing over. A small garden if checked each day might require just a few minutes a day for weeding and when you add to the system some type of mulching or other weed management tool even that time may be reduced.

Picking a vegetable crop that will compete well with weedy species is another excellent management tool for weed control. If the crops that you will be growing establish and grow quickly they will shade out many weed species and reduce the need for weeding. Cucurbits (melons, cucumbers, squash, etc.) will often shade out weeds, as will several of the leafy crops. The key here is to select crops and grow them in the season they will thrive. Nothing increases weed problems like a very slow growing un-vigorous crop.

Organic mulches such as straw, paper, etc. can go a long way toward controlling weeds and have the added benefit of helping to keep soil temperatures down during the heat of summer months. Organic mulches should not be applied prior to good soil warm-up (>70°F) as they act as insulators of the soil. One other thing that should be pointed out about organic mulches is that organic materials that have a high carbon to nitrogen ratio (C/N ratio) can rob your crop plants of nitrogen since the critters that break down carbon are in the front of the queue for nitrogen. I've witnessed some real train wrecks with materials such as bark or ground wood products robbing crops of nitrogen. For more information on mulching check out fact sheet

[HLA-6005 - Mulching Garden Soils.](#)

Synthetic mulches such as plastic films and landscape cloth can also be very useful from a weed control standpoint and black plastic mulch is also useful in helping to warm soils in the spring. I believe that mulches are a great tool in the battle for weed control, but remember it does not matter what methods or technologies you use there will be a need for some hand weeding if you want to keep your garden in good condition. One added benefit to mulches are that they help to conserve water which not only saves money, but is also makes your garden more sustainable.

This year in our garden we've had a go at using a "living-mulch" which is essentially last winter's cover crop that we knocked down with my trusty shovel which mostly stopped its growth and created a great mulch. I like to think of it as "grow in place" mulch. It has the same attributes as the other organic mulches, but if your garden is out in the open you won't have to concern yourself with the mulch blowing away as you never really separate the top of the cover crop from the root system.

Last, but certainly not least is the need for weeding on a regular basis. Weeding in a garden several times a week means that you are controlling weeds that are very small and easy to hoe or pull. I probably pull weeds most days in our home garden, but never spend more than 5-10 minutes a day on this effort. I'll end with this: Think of managing the weeds in your garden, you will likely never eliminate them all, but over time if you stay with the process you will see fewer and fewer weeds as the years go by.

Pruning and Staking Tomatoes

David Hillock

Every gardener has his or her own method for pruning tomatoes and also, an opinion on whether or not tomato plants require pruning. Staking tomatoes helps manage disease problems by increasing air circulation in the leaf canopy and reducing contact with the soil. A structured training system can also make tomatoes easier to harvest. Pruning can help boost yields, by exposing more of the leaf canopy to full sun and reducing competition between suckers and the developing fruit.

Several different tomato training systems exist; the type of support to be used depends on tomato growth habit. Tomatoes can be divided into two types, determinate and indeterminate. The determinate varieties have short to medium vine lengths. Plants are heavily branched and growth stops when they start flowering. Every branch tends to end up with a flower cluster. Determinate varieties are not heavily pruned as most of the fruit is produced on the branches. Indeterminate varieties continue to grow and produce leaves as well flowers throughout the entire growing season. Pruning methods will depend on the type of support system used.

The three most common training systems for tomatoes are stake and weave, trellis, and cage. All three of these techniques can be used with indeterminate tomato varieties, but only cages and stake-and-weave are used with determinate varieties.

Trellised tomatoes are the most heavily pruned. A trellis system consists of sturdy posts anchored in the ground about 20 feet apart. The top of the posts should be set so the tops stand six feet or more above ground level. Stretch a piece of wire between the tops of the posts. Then attach a length of sturdy twine or string above each plant in the row. Tie the twine to the base of each plant and wrap plants around the twine as they grow or tie them to the twine with plastic ties. You can train one or two stems per plant, using a separate cord for each stem. Plants are pruned back to these main shoots, with 2 to 4 side shoots along the main stem.

When we prune tomatoes we remove small side shoots from the main stem. This reduces competition between vegetative growth and the fruit. Pruned plants produce larger and an earlier fruit as most of the

plant energy is channeled into the fruit. Prune shoots when they are four inches long. It can be more difficult to remove larger shoots and you are more likely to damage the plant when removing large shoots. Remove a sucker by grasping it between your thumb and second finger and bending it to the side until it breaks. It is advisable to do this early in the day when the plant is still crisp. Do not cut suckers with a knife or pruners as this can lead to spread of diseases. Limit the branches of indeterminate varieties to two to three fruit producing branches by selecting the main stem, the sucker that develops immediately below the first flower cluster, and another sucker below that. Remove all other suckers, and periodically remove additional suckers that develop on the selected branches. The stake and weave method is commonly used with determinate tomato varieties, but also works with indeterminate tomatoes. Staking plants requires metal or wooden stakes.

The wooden stakes need to be at least one inch square for support. You can also use rebar or t-posts as stakes. Determinate varieties require three to four feet long stakes and indeterminate varieties require stakes that are five to six feet long. Set a stake between every other plant. Lines of twine are strung between stakes on either side of the plants to provide support. Twine must be resistant to weather and stretching, and have sufficient "grip" to wrap tightly around stakes. String the first line 8-10 inches above the ground by securing the twine to an end stake, and wrapping the twine around each stake until the row is completed. Loop around this end stake and complete the stringing on the other side of the plant row. Run the next row of twine 6-8 inches above the first row before plants begin to fall over. Prune plants back to keep them more or less contained within the stake and weave system and from crowding one another. Remove the lowest branches, as these are most likely to become infected by soil-borne diseases.

Caging is a support system that requires less work than staking or trellising, but provides similar benefits in protecting plants from contact with the soil. Caged plants may not produce ripe tomatoes as early as staked or trellised plants, but the fruits they produce are less likely to suffer from cracking or sunburn. It will be necessary to lift branches and direct them upwards through the cage. Again, prune the lowest branches to reduce disease.

It is important to decide on type of support before setting plants in the garden. Plants grown on a trellis system can be planted closer together than those grown in cages or staked. Check your plants regularly to continue training them to the support system and prune as needed.

Tomato Blossom Drop or Poor Fruit Set

David Hillock

Source: Oklahoma Gardening segment, June 4-5, 2011

Poor fruit set or blossom drop occurs on tomatoes for any of several reasons. Tomatoes do not set fruit well when the night temperature is below about 60°F or above about 70°F or when the day temperature is consistently above about 92°F. When these conditions occur, flowers will drop or fruit will be misshapen. Hormone-type "blossom-set" sprays can reduce spring bloom drop from low temperatures. "Blossomset" sprays have very little effect upon the set of tomatoes during high temperature conditions. Avoid excessive nitrogen fertilization.

Dry soils can also lead to blossom drop; blossoms dry and fall when the plants don't receive enough water. Too much shade can result in only a few blossoms when the plants receive less than six hours of sunlight a day. Excessive nitrogen in the soil often promotes leaf growth at the expense of blossom and fruit formation.

To avoid or correct these problems take these measures.

1. Plant early-, mid-, and late-season varieties at the appropriate time of year.
2. Water tomatoes regularly, never allowing the soil to dry out; mulch with straw, black plastic or other material to reduce moisture loss.
3. Plant tomatoes in an area that receives at least six hours of sunlight each day. If the yard is too shady, plant the tomatoes in a container and set them on a sunny porch or patio.
4. Reduce nitrogen applications if necessary. Be sure to follow the fertilizer application recommendations.

Poisonous Landscape Plants

David Hillock

Since the beginning of time, people the world over have lived near hundreds of plants that can cause irritation, illness or death. Over the years, many new plants have been introduced into gardens from their native meadows and mountains. A few of these plants are extremely poisonous; a far greater number of them are moderately poisonous, producing varying degrees of illness or irritation. Some plants cause dermatitis, hay fever, or other illness as a result of the allergic sensitivity of the person rather than the direct toxicity of the plant.

There are a large number of poisonous plants that are useful and will doubtless continue to be used so it can be helpful to understand the potential danger of these plants. Small children are curious and tend to put things in their mouths and, consequently, are the most common victims of poisonous garden plants.

Being familiar with any poisonous plants growing in your yard or neighborhood will help to avoid any potential poisoning. Teach children not to eat any plant parts (leaves, seeds or flowers) other than those given them as vegetables. It is your responsibility to protect your children against poisoning by teaching them not to eat or drink medicines, pesticides, cleaning solvents, shoe polish and plants. In California, less than one-half of one percent of all inquiries reaching poison control centers are about plants.

In spite of education and precautions, accidents do happen. Therefore, be prepared in case of emergency. The following steps are recommended as first aid treatment for swallowed poisons.

- Do not give the victim anything to eat or drink before calling the Poison Center or calling a doctor.
- Do not make the victim throw up or give ipecac syrup unless a doctor or the Poison Center tells you to.
- If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911.
- Oklahoma Poison Control Center, <https://oklahomapoison.org/>

Below is a partial list of some common landscape plants that may have some degree of toxicity to humans.

- Allamanda
- Anemone (pasque flower)
- Boxwood
- Buckthorn
- Burning bush
- Castor bean
- Daphne
- English ivy

- Elderberries
- Euonymus
- Four o'clock
- Foxglove
- Holly
- Hyacinth
- Hydrangea
- Impatiens
- Juniper
- Lantana
- Larkspur, delphinium
- Lily-of-the-valley
- Mountain laurel
- Narcissus, daffodil
- Oaks
- Oleander
- Privet
- Rhododendron/azalea
- Wisteria
- Yew

Six Must Have Plants for the Shade Garden

Casey Hentges, Oklahoma Gardening Host

To me a well-designed woodland garden makes me feel like I am walking into a life-size fairy garden. The cool shades of green with subtle pops of color here and there create a calming effect where you could spend the evening watching fireflies.

While it may not be appropriate for every soil type and location. If you have a shady location with rich soil you might think about adding these six plants to create more of a woodland effect.

Variegated Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum odoratum* var. *pluriflorum* 'Variegatum' – Solomon's Seal grows 18-24" tall on arching branches that grow individually from the ground. It produces dainty, white, bell-shaped flowers that hang from the curve of the stems in pairs. You will notice when they start blooming in late spring, by the sweet lily fragrance they release. These flowers eventually give way to black-colored berries. Typically, the most common cultivar you will find is 'Variegatum' which has nice white streaks running through the leaves. Hardy in zones 3-8, it is a good perennial for Oklahoma, but can handle cooler moist conditions better than hot conditions. When you find a good location for it make sure to give it a little room as it spreads by rhizomes.

Bear's Breeches, *Acanthus mollis* – It is easy to like a plant when it has new growth coming on, but what I love best about this plant is its foliage looks just as amazing in August, when many of our other plants are starting to look a little tired. Bear's Breeches has lush green, almost tropical looking foliage, but is hardy from zones 7-10. If you live in northern Oklahoma, you want to let the thick foliage die back and remain as a cover over the base of the plant during the winter and then remove it in early spring to allow the new foliage to come out. The foliage of Bear's Breeches is actually said to be the model for leaves that adorn the Greek and Roman Corinthian columns.

While this plant is worth growing for the foliage alone, it also produces a flower spike that is just as

impressive. In late spring, it will produce a massive 3-5' tall spike with white flowers that each have a rose-colored hood resembling a giant snapdragon flower. When you are walking through a garden and see this plant in flower, you can't help but give it the recognition it deserves.

Japanese Rose, *Kerria japonica* – They call this plant the Japanese rose for a reason. If you look at the overall shape it has a bit of a shrub rose appearance as do the flowers. This is a low maintenance plant that has some interest all year, whether it is during the growing season when it continues to produce dainty yellow flowers or in the winter when it maintains bright green stems. Unlike a rose however, it actually prefers more shade than sun. It should be given plenty of room, as it does tend to sucker and can get anywhere from 6-10' tall. 'Pleniflora' is one of the most common cultivars with double pom-pom like flowers. Most Kerria tend to be yellow but there is a white cultivar 'Alba'.

Sensitive Fern, *Onoclea sensibilis* – You can't have a woodland garden without including a fern. The sensitive fern needs consistent moisture and in fact can grow in swamp-type conditions where it will get taller providing even more beautiful fern foliage. It will fill an area as it spreads by rhizomes and may become aggressive in optimal conditions. It is called "Sensitive Fern" because although it is winter hardy the first frost of the season will set this plant back as well as any drought conditions.

Hardy Garden Orchid, *Bletilla striata* – When talking about woodland plants, the last plant to come to mind might be an orchid, but a hardy garden orchid enjoys the rich, moist soil and shady conditions of a woodland garden.

Sometimes referred to as a Chinese ground orchid, it has strappy, pleated orchid leaves that come from corm-like root. Given a happy home, this plant will naturalize and spread by rhizomes. In late spring, it produces these cattleya-like flowers that come in pink, purple and white. In the winter, the foliage will die back to the ground, but returns as it is hardy zones 5 to 9.

Toadlily, *Tricyrtis hirta* – Toadlily is another must have in the woodland garden. Hardy from zone 4-8, it has a purple and white flower that is speckled, some say like a toad. While it might look like an orchid it is actually in the lily family. It gets about 2-3 feet tall, but should be planted near a path in order to appreciate the delicate flowers. Because it blooms later in the summer when many other woodland plants are not this is a great one to incorporate.

The lush green foliage of each of these plants will add not only some interesting texture, but also offer just the right pop of color turning your woodland garden into a fairytale.

Oklahoma Gardening Video - <https://youtu.be/QOq5rPMgpQI>