

The Green Thumb

Lawn and Garden News You Can Use

August 2008

Now is the Time to Plant a Fall Garden

As we bring in loads of sweet corn and tomatoes from the garden, we don't usually think about planting more crops. But, our supply of fresh veggies will quickly dwindle. If you want fresh produce in the months ahead, mid-August through September is the time to plant the fall garden.

Many vegetables, such as broccoli and cauliflower, are higher quality when grown in the fall rather than mid-summer. Some vegetables, such as kale and Swiss chard, develop a better flavor after a frost. But, they should be planted now.



Before seeding fall vegetables, remove all previous crop residues. Till the soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Then, incorporate 1 to 1½ pounds of all-purpose dry garden fertilizer like 12-12-12 per 100 square feet.

Plant the seed according to directions on the packet. Keep the soil evenly moist until the seedlings are up and growing; the top 2 inches of soil must be moist at all times to ensure germination.

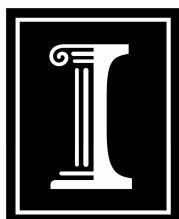
One easy way to hold in moisture is to place a board over the row until the seedlings start to emerge. Check the rows once or twice a day to make sure seeds have not yet germinated. As soon as seedlings start to break through the soil, remove the board. Protect seedlings from the sun until they are well established. Boxes placed over the plants or boards placed alongside the rows will provide temporary shade.

When putting transplants in, plant them slightly deeper than they were growing in the container. Firm the soil around each plant and water thoroughly with a starter solution. Make the solution by mixing a soluble, high-phosphorus fertilizer in water, following label directions.

In Southern Illinois, direct seed cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts by August 15. Transplants of these vegetables, when available, can be set through the end of August.

Direct seed beets, carrots, snap peas, kohlrabi, mustard, and turnips by Labor Day. You can plant spinach, lettuce, and radishes through mid- to late-September. Garlic and overwintering spinach can be planted through October.

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Divide Perennials for a Better Show

David Robson, horticulture educator



August is the month to divide perennials such as day lilies, iris, and the spring-flowering bulbs like tulips, daffodils, and crocuses. These plants tend to become overgrown after a number of years, and flowering is reduced.

Carefully dig the plants from the ground. Shake off as much soil as you can. Gently wash off the remaining soil so that you can examine the root structure. Spread the plants out to dry. Be sure to label them so you know what is what. A Sharpie™ pen can be used to write on the leaves without any serious effects to the plant.

Iris and daylilies have interesting root systems. Iris technically have rhizomes, which are fleshy, underground, horizontal stems. New shoots and roots arise from the rhizomes. The above ground fans will bloom just once in their life, but they can live for years while producing new fans and roots.

Daylilies have a fleshy root system with swollen roots storing the plant's reserve. You will not find buds or growing points on the roots as with rhizomes.

Examine the iris and daylily roots. With a sharp knife, cut out all injured or diseased parts and discard them. Then divide the plants into clumps, each having a large piece of rhizome or roots and at least two fans of leaves. Large divisions will flower next year. Small divisions may take an extra year.

Throw away the oldest rhizomes of the iris. They won't bloom again.

Bulbs are harder to divide because it is hard to remember where they are located since the foliage has died down. If you have a general idea, carefully work the soil with a spade or spading fork, trying not to pierce the bulbs.

Carefully lift the bulbs and divide. Many of the bulbs can be separated and dried on old screens in the garage. Bulbs that were damaged in the digging process are best separated from others; they may start rotting so add them to your compost pile. Sort the bulbs by size, discarding the diseased or insect-ridden ones.

Since perennials will occupy the same spot in the garden for several years, carefully work the soil, adding bone meal and organic matter to improve fertility and drainage.

If diseases have been present on the plants, dust the rhizomes and roots with a good fungicide before planting. The rhizomes should be spaced 12 to 18 inches apart and planted 1 inch deep in the prepared soil. Thoroughly water them in with a slow stream of water.

Plant the daylilies about 1 to 2 inches deep, though this might vary between plant types. Plant in groups or clumps for mass effect next spring. If the soil has been worked up well, you can practically heel in the plants with your hands and a trowel.

In hot dry weather, some gardeners cut the leaves back by half to reduce stress on the plants. Plants still have the ability to root and establish for next year's bloom cycle.

Bulbs are best re-planted in mid- to late September; store them in a cool basement or refrigerator until ready to plant.

If you are planning to start a new flower garden, plants and bulbs are available in garden centers now. Get started before the fall rush.



Question Corner

Answers provided by David Robson and Tony Bratsch, U of I Extension horticulture educators

Q. I have two beautiful *Euonymus* bushes in my garden. The problem is the one next to my back door. During May and June, prior to the blooming of the flowers, the plant smells like “dead fish.” Now in July, the white flowers are in bloom, but the bush attracts swarms of flies. Friends get shocked when they approach the back door.

Are there any reasons for these terrible manifestations – dead fish aroma and fly swarms? Are there any solutions besides chopping off the bush?

A. Are you sure it is *Euonymus*? Most *euonymus* don't have attractive flowers, and few people actually see them; they just tend to hang down and look innocuous.

It is more likely that something is rotting amongst the branches— it could be the root system, it could be mulch, or it could be something else like a neighbor's cat marking its territory.

That being said, *E. kiautschovicus* is a species known to attract flies and bees. It has greenish-white, 1½- to 4-inch-wide flower heads (cymes) in July to August. In the references we found, there is no mention of plant odor. This plant is also called Spreading *Euonymus* and is a semi-evergreen that reaches to 5 to 10 feet.

If the shrub is not too large, then flower removal is an option. An insecticide is not recommended, except as a safety concern to prevent stings. It is possible that native bee species or honeybees are attracted to the plant, and we don't want to harm them.

Q. I have two raspberry plants that are three years old. They seem healthy and bloom abundantly in the spring, but they have not set fruit. Can you give me any suggestions as to why they will not set fruit and what I might do to solve this problem for next year?

A. A total lack of fruit set and no symptoms on the leaves or stems would suggest a sterility problem that may be virus related. You can send a sample to the U of I plant clinic to identify whether a disease pathogen is present. Should a virus be the culprit, removal of the plants is the only option. Due to the expense of testing for virus, it would be more economical to just replace the plants.

Q. I have six holly shrubs planted in two beds on the west side of my house. They've been there over 10 years. They've always been extremely healthy. This year, two on one side of the porch and one on the other side of the porch are losing leaves to the point that I fear the plants will die. This started before the Japanese beetles. I don't see any sign of insect damage...just leaves falling off. The three remaining shrubs are just fine and growing well. Any suggestions for saving the sick plants?

A. Without seeing photos, it's hard to tell. It could be tar spot (a fungal disease), winter injury (snow/ice accumulation, freezing and thawing), excess moisture this spring rotting the roots, a gas leak, or root weevils. This is a case for pictures and more information.



Send your lawn and garden questions to:

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Japanese Beetles Taking a Toll on Landscape Plants

Ed Billingsley, guest columnist

Japanese Beetle Fact Sheet

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regions/sifamily>

Click
Around the House
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Tip of the Month

Japanese beetles are back in full force. They have been eating away on plants throughout the region.

Japanese beetles are those shiny, metallic green-headed beetles that are feeding on flowers and vegetables—skeletonizing the leaves and leaving only veins.

The beetles prefer feeding in full sun and rarely feed in heavy shade. Adult beetles will be present through August.

Generally, pesticide sprays of carbaryl (Sevin) can provide some control up to two weeks. Sevin is toxic to bees and other beneficial insects, so be careful with it. Synthetic pyrethroids can also be effective. Again follow all label directions.

Picking off the beetles by hand is another option. When disturbed, the insects fold their legs and drop. So, you can pick them off and drop them into a container of soapy water or rubbing alcohol to kill them.

Japanese beetle traps are not recommended because they increase the population near them and, thus, increase plant damage. Just because you are catching beetles doesn't mean you are reducing the population.

Japanese beetles rarely kill plants, so use the control method best suited for you. For more information, download our **Japanese Beetles Factsheet** at <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regions/sifamily>. Click on *Around the House* and then *Tip of the Month*.



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