

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN IN AUGUST

THE FLOWER GARDEN

- Prune most roses and spray this month or in early September. Heritage roses which flower once in spring should be pruned after flowering. Plant new roses this month. Soak bare-rooted stock in a bucket of seaweed solution and prune lightly before planting.
- Sow seeds of dianthus, stock, phlox, antirrhinum and lupin. These will need a warm situation and protection from frosts.
- Camellias in bud will respond to some extra moisture, and this will increase the size and quality of blooms.
- If you would like to add more camellias and azaleas to your garden, visit garden centres and choose plants while they are in flower.
- Magnolias will come into bloom this month. They require good drainage, acid soil and protection from hot or strong winds.
- Early spring bulbs such as hooped petticoat daffodils, crocus and galanthus will be appearing in some gardens.
- Prune and feed Daphne after flowering. Picking posies will help keep your plant in good condition while also providing the necessary tip-pruning.
- Prune Crepe Myrtle to encourage new growth, as it flowers on new wood.
- Winter-flowering shrubs will benefit from a trim as flowering finishes.
- Divide chrysanthemums - there's still time to take cuttings.
- Perennials may be divided as the weather starts to warm. Make new plants from the outer growth and discard older central growth.
- Plant summer- and autumn-flowering bulbs.
- If you prefer blue or darker blue hydrangea flowers, blueing tonic can be watered into soil around your hydrangeas. Mark your calendar for follow-up applications a month apart in early and mid-spring.

THE KITCHEN GARDEN

- Spray peaches and nectarines again for leaf curl if the leaves have not yet appeared. If the leaves have appeared and are showing diseased leaves, pick off affected leaves and bin them. Now you will need to grow your plant through the problem by applying nutrients and moisture to aid in the plant's recovery.
- Seed potatoes will be available. Buy now to have the best choice, but delay planting until the weather warms a little more.
- Plant onion seedlings. Prepare beds for other crops. Little is gained by planting any other seedlings at this stage.
- Plant Jerusalem artichoke, asparagus or rhubarb crowns.
- Fruit trees can still be planted.
- Apply manure and blood and bone. Dig in green manure crops before they seed, to prepare for spring.
- If necessary, lime vegetable plots.
- Watch for signs of scale on citrus trees. Ant activity on stems is an indicator of the presence of sap-sucking insects which produce honeydew to which the ants are attracted. A spray with White Oil or Pest Oil, repeated two weeks later, should be sufficient to smother these troublesome insects and kill their eggs.

- Tomato seeds can now be sown in a warm place, such as inside on the hot water heater. Warmth and moisture are needed, but not light at this stage. Seedlings may be grown on under glass until the danger of frosts is over.
- Check herbs. Perennials such as tarragon, marjoram, oregano and chives may need dividing and replanting. Mint is best grown in a large pot, which can then be placed near the house for easy access, or the pot put into the soil with about 5-10cm of the pot above soil level to prevent mint from spreading out and around the pot. You will still need to check it regularly.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE IN THE GARDEN

- A month of change, particularly the weather, often snow and wind followed by heavy frosts and warmer days towards the end of the month.
- Spring plants are beginning to show signs of growth.
- Most shrubs and small trees may still be moved if you need to relocate them.
- Reduce or rejuvenate lawns or prepare for turf. If your lawn is suffering and water restrictions are in force, think about reducing the size of the lawn, or replacing it with something more drought-tolerant. South African Hybrid couches such as Grand Prix or Santa Ana are seen as possible replacements for high-water use grasses. New grasses are continually being trialled. Watch for Australian native turf which is being developed.
- Water in the warmer part of the day and only where really required.
- Do not forget to water new plantings if there has been no rain. If rain has fallen, check your new plants and ensure that the soil is damp. Watering may still be required if rain has not saturated the soil.
- Clean out ponds and divide clumps of water irises, water lilies etc.
- Feed the soil. Trees and shrubs should receive ample applications of manure to help them along.
- Shredded prunings may be added to the compost heap or used as a mulch.
- Prune jasmines and late summer-flowering clematis.
- Before the warmer weather, check your mulch and whether any more is needed. Dig in old mulch to aid moisture retention. ■