

What to Do in June

By: Jackie Sledge

Past President of the Big Country Master Gardeners

Isn't June wonderful? The plants we added to our landscapes earlier in the year are growing, and there are flowers of all colors, shapes, and sizes popping out to make us know we had made the right choices a few months ago. Most plants look magnificent right now, especially since we have had some rain, but that doesn't mean they will continue to look that way by the end of the month.

As the temperature gets warmer, or hotter, and if there isn't any rain, the plants will need more attention. I'm checking my landscape and using the monthly tasks from *Lone Star Gardening* by Neil Sperry and *Texas Garden Almanac* by Doug Welsh to get the lawn and flower beds in good shape so they won't look stressed by heat, dryness, and wind.

Planting Tasks:

- Plant new lawns. Plant Bermuda from seed or sod. Plant St. Augustine, zoysia, or buffalograss only from sod. Be sure to water it daily for the first couple of weeks to give it a good start.
- Plant landscape plants. Watch for sales on spring-flowering plants to help with costs. Be sure to plant them immediately and then hand water them every other day during the summer.
- Plant annuals that will tolerate the summer heat. Some examples are moss rose, pentas, angelonias, gomphrena, wax or dragon wing begonias, flowering tobacco, or ornamental sweet potatoes. Be sure to check the plants you purchase for sun or shade requirements so you plant the right plant in the right place.
- Consider planting an area with plants that have low water needs to conserve water, especially if we have a hot, dry summer again this year.
- Plant an indoor dish garden with herbs such as basil, chives, oregano, and rosemary. Put it in a sunny window and enjoy gardening in an air-conditioned area.

Pruning Tasks:

- Mow the lawn at the recommended height.
- Prune shade trees if needed. Wait until mid-July to prune oaks to lessen the chance of spreading oak wilt.
- Remove spent flowers, seed stalks, and brown leaves from spring-blooming perennials.
- Remove flower stalks before buds open on coleus, caladiums, lamb's ear, and basil.

What to Feed:

- Feed the lawn as well as landscape and garden plants. Follow the instructions on the label, and water deeply after applying the fertilizer.
- Feed hanging baskets and outdoor pots.

Troubleshooting Tips:

- Wrap trunks of newly planted red oak and Chinese pistache trees to prevent sunscald and borer problems.
- If you applied a pre-emergent weedkiller in March to prevent crabgrass and grass burs, you need to do a second application in early to mid-June.
- After vegetable crops have been harvested, pull all weeds in the garden area. Work organic matter into the soil to prepare it for the fall garden.
- Watch for sunken, browned areas at the flower end of tomatoes. This blossom-end rot is usually caused by letting the plants get excessively dry before watering.
- Control Bermuda and other grasses that compete with fruit and nut trees for water and nutrients.
- Mulch, mulch, and add more mulch. Mulch provides the highest-impact, lowest-tech water-conserving improvement to the landscape.
- Water between sundown and sunrise when the wind and temperatures are lower.

Be sure to have fresh, cool water plus some food available for the butterflies and birds.

Last, but certainly not least, Neil Sperry has the following advice for gardening in hot weather: “(1) water deeply, less often; (2) hand-water new trees, shrubs; (3) pay special attention to needs of potted plants; (4) eliminate water-grabbing weeds; (5) mulch beds; (6) be on the lookout for insects that attack stressed plants; (7) fertilize to perk up plantings.”

BCMGA will offer several free education programs in June. There will be a program on Gardening with Kids at 6:00 pm on June 13 at the Abilene Public Library South Branch in the Mall of Abilene and the same program at 10:00 am on June 16 at the Abilene Public Library Downtown Main Location. We will also have the BCMGA Saturday Seminar from 9:00-12:00 on June 24 in the Taylor County Extension Office Conference Room.

If you have any questions, call the Taylor County Extension Office at 325-672-6048 or email us at mgardeners@yahoo.com. We hope you will like us on Facebook and visit bcmgtx.org for all Big Country Master Gardener information and events. We are here to help you!