

# Gardening Reminders

## By the Royal Oaks Landscape Committee

**July** arrives like a blast furnace, earning summer its reputation as the “second dormant season.” The big stories this month are water and heat. This is not a time for wimpy plants. Many of the plants that looked great in spring are turning to toast, but there are many truly heat-tolerant options, so triple-digit temperatures are no reason to give up on color. Our landscapes can still be beautiful in summer if we choose plants that can take the heat.

- Plant Begonias, Impatiens, Verbena, Zinnias, Marigolds, Periwinkles, Sun Coleus, and perennials like Hibiscus and Salvias. The Butterfly Milkweed (*asclepias tuberosa*) provides nectar to all types of insect pollinators and it's a host for Monarch butterflies.
- Water early and deep.
- Check sprinklers and drip systems.
- To encourage more flowers, cut off developing seed heads of marigolds, rudbeckia, zinnias and dahlias.
- Mulch 3” to 4” to retain moisture, stop weeds and protect roots.
- Feed trees and shrubs.

In **August**, plants need plenty of water to keep going in the heat. This can mean watering twice a week for many areas of the lawn and landscape. Established annual and perennial flowers will do fine with a half-inch of water twice a week.

- Plant Marigolds, Mexican Sun Flower, Petunias and perennials like Ornamental Grasses, Mexican Butterfly Bush, and groundcovers.
- Water early and deep.
- Mulch, Mulch, Mulch !!!!
- Treat for Fire Ants.

**September** brings the “second spring” in Texas. The weather starts to cool off and fall rains begin to arrive this month, especially along the coast where tropical storm season is underway. Even though it is still very hot out, now that the worst of summer is over we can start the main fall planting season in flower and vegetable gardens. Don't miss out on the best gardening season of the year. Take advantage of the cooler morning hours to get your fall garden underway.

- Plant Petunias and Dianthus. *Muhlenbergia cappillaris* (Pink Muhly Grass) is native to Texas and Florida, and grows and amazes in our cool foggy climate! The plant bursts into 3'x3' clouds of shimmery little pink flowers from September to December.
- Apply lawn food.
- Apply pre-emergent weed preventers.

Happy gardening!

*Sources: “Month-by-Month Gardening in Texas” by Master Gardener Robert “Skip” Richter, “Gardening Reminders” by Cornelius Nursery, and Internet websites related to gardening in Houston.*