

**2019-2020
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**MASTER
GARDENER****In this issue**Tasks to Ponder **P.1**Tomatoes **P.2****Tasks to Ponder for June-July**

June is the month when we typically see big leaf hydrangeas, oak leaf hydrangeas, and gardenias bloom if they haven't been winter damaged. These are three plants that bloom in the summer but set flower buds in the fall. So for that reason, if you grow any of these three plants and they need pruning, make sure it gets done as soon as the flowers fade. The single-flowered gardenias (Daisy and Kleim's Hardy) tend to bloom all at once and are done quickly. They can be pruned as needed once all the flowers are gone. Many of the newer gardenias do re-bloom later in the season, so later blooms may be delayed or non-existent, depending on how much pruning is done. For big leaf hydrangeas and oak leaf hydrangeas that need to be pruned, remove older, thicker canes at the soil line after the blooms have faded.

Warmer temperatures means PESTS, both insect and disease. Pay attention to your gardens and monitor for insects and diseases. If you find something you are unsure of, take a "good", "clear" picture and send it to your county agent or drop a sample by the office (there is a box to put them in outside the office door.) Early detection coupled with proper identification of a problem can lead to a fast solution.

They're back!! "**Fire Ants**", believe it or not, do have some good qualities. For instance; they help control other insects like ticks and fleas. They are good scavengers of dead critters and dropped or spilled food items. They even help aerate our soils. But they also disturb our lives by shorting out the A/C unit, or other electrical items, or dulling the lawn mover blades with their mounds, or killing our trees by mounding up around them, or through their viscous bites and stings. Those attacks create allergic reactions for some people that may cause serious issues.

So, the question arises: How do we control them? Because, at this time, you will never get rid of them. Arkansas Extension recommends a two prong control method: broadcast a insecticidal bait and follow a couple of days later with a contact insecticide. Here is the internet link to our fact sheet on controlling Fire Ants <https://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-7036.pdf> For you organic producers, there are organic choices.

As always, you can contact your local County Extension Agent if you have questions.

June-July

Calendar:

- Most everything is still cancelled or postponed but “The Rison Farmer’s Market” opens Thursday, June 4th.
- Stay tuned for updates.

June-July to do list:

1. Blueberries begin to ripen in June.
2. Keep moisture levels even around tomatoes to prevent blossom end rot.
3. Deadhead annuals and perennials to keep them blooming.
4. Fertilize annuals regularly.
5. Hot months mean water, water, water.
6. Fertilize beds and potted plants every two weeks.
7. Don’t forget to deadhead.
8. July is a good month to divide irises.
9. Stay on top of insect pest management.

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Tomato Season!!

“Flowers are restful to look at. They have neither emotions nor conflicts.” [Sigmund Freud](#)

Tomatos; I like mine sliced with salt and pepper at the end of a hot summer day. They’re also divine combo’d with toast, bacon, lettuce, and mayo (I prefer the popular salad dressing over mayo but you get me.)

So tomatoes: well, they belong to a group of plants in the nightshade family. Its edible relatives include Irish potatoes, eggplant, peppers and tomatillos. Today, 95 percent of all American gardeners grow tomatoes; they are the most popular garden vegetable in Arkansas. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, four out of five people prefer tomatoes to any other homegrown food. Tomatoes rank number one in terms of their contribution of nutrients to the American diet, simply because we eat a lot of them.

There are literally hundreds of cultivars for home gardeners today. They range widely in size, shape, color, plant type, disease resistance and seasons of maturity. Most of our favorite varieties of tomatoes will take close to 80 days to produce that prized ripe tomato.

Most of us currently have plants with tomatoes on them, although it is not to late to plant tomatoes right now, and are probably ready for that next round of fertilizer. If your tomatoes are the size of golf balls, one tablespoon of nitrogen fertilizer per plant would be good. Make two more applications three and six weeks later. Make sure you don’t get fertilizer on the leaves.

Pruning: staking and pruning tomatoes is essential for the best production. I know of 3 different methods for pruning tomatoes. These methods are all dependant on which growth habit your tomatoes have (are they a “determinate” or “indeterminate” variety) and the production you want out of them (less, larger fruit versus more and smaller fruit). Staking is essential to keep your fruit and plants off the ground, upright and happy.

Tomatoes should be harvested when they are firm and changing color. They are of highest quality when they ripen on healthy vines and daily temperatures are about 80 degrees F. When temperatures are higher (90 degrees F or more), the softening process is accelerated and color development is retarded.

Pests: Of course our beloved tomatoes do succumb to many pests including the notorious tomato horn worm and the tomato fruit worm. We also have issues with stink bug damage which freckles our fruit and makes hard places. Diseases are also an issue, particularly with our older heirloom varieties. So you need to be diligent with pesticide applications if you garden in the same place year after year. Check out our Tomato Fact Sheet FSA-6017 for more great information. Here is the link for you computer savy people:

<https://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-6017.pdf>.