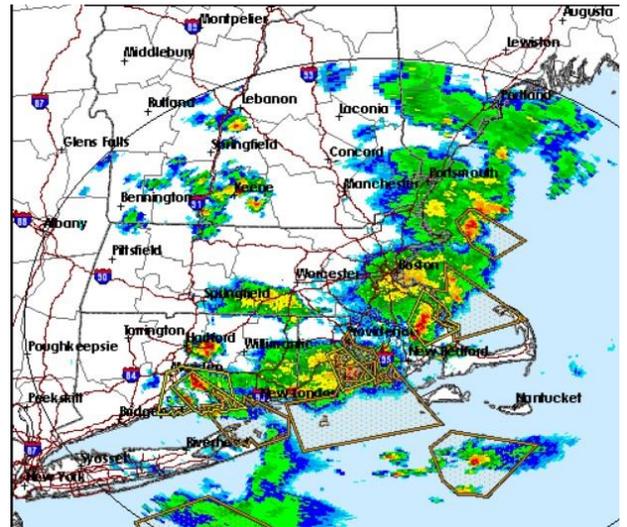


Garden Club Horticultural Hints July 2019

Finally! Summer is here!

We have had a very wet spring and summer – meaning the need for irrigation has been nearly non-existent. June rainfall was above average across the Northeast, and the lack of excessive heat has meant less evaporation than normal. In short, there are no drought conditions anywhere across New England. If you have an automatic system, save water, water bills and your plants by adding a rain gauge that overrides any automatic watering. Grass, perennials, shrubs and trees are all happier when they don't get water when it's not needed.



Gypsy moth caterpillars usually hatch in July. Expect to see fewer this year

Good news on gypsy moths

Late June brought exceptionally hopeful news on gypsy moths. Our cool, wet spring activated *Entomophaga maimaiga*, a fungal pathogen fatal to gypsy moths and specific to that New England pest. Multiple research stations reported die-offs of up to 70% in the latter half of June. According to researchers, "Given that gypsy moth caterpillars were at a much lower density this year, this could be the final straw that drives them to low, non-pest densities that we hope to enjoy for at least the next few years (possibly decades if history is any indicator)."



Weed your perennials in July! This blue-eyed grass's nutrients are being sapped by weeds like oxalis and violets. Use a hand tool to slice weeds at the roots so as not to disturb the plant.



Deadheading and pruning spent flowers can seem like make-work, until you realize that it will lead to more flowers, as well as a more attractive garden. Remove fading flowers from annuals, perennials and bulbs, putting them into your compost pile (as long as there is no sign of disease). If they aren't allowed to go to seed, many summer-flowering plants will rebloom. Annuals particularly benefit from being cut back before producing seeds; the shorter, more compact plants will often continue flowering until cold fall weather arrives.



If you see aphids on your plants, try spraying them with a hose before resorting to insecticides

A strong spray from a hose will knock aphids and other insects to the ground where they often become someone else's dinner. Spraying with pesticides should always be the last resort – and done with great caution because they will kill many beneficial insects and are harmful to other animals (including humans).



An assassin bug - a beneficial insect - corners a cucumber beetle

Watch for signs of pest infestations or the advent of disease. Don't panic when you see an insect on a favorite plant – it may be a pollinator, or resting and never cause a problem. Or there may be a predator insect a branch a way who will eat it and its kind. Or, the one you see may be beneficial, eating aphids and other bugs or pollinating your plants.



Growing plants consume nutrients in soil, so replace them naturally with good compost as mulch. You'll get two jobs done (mulching and fertilizing) in one. And, unlike chemical fertilizers, they improve soil health at the same time.



Clethra - summersweet or sweet pepperbush - will start its long bloom this month