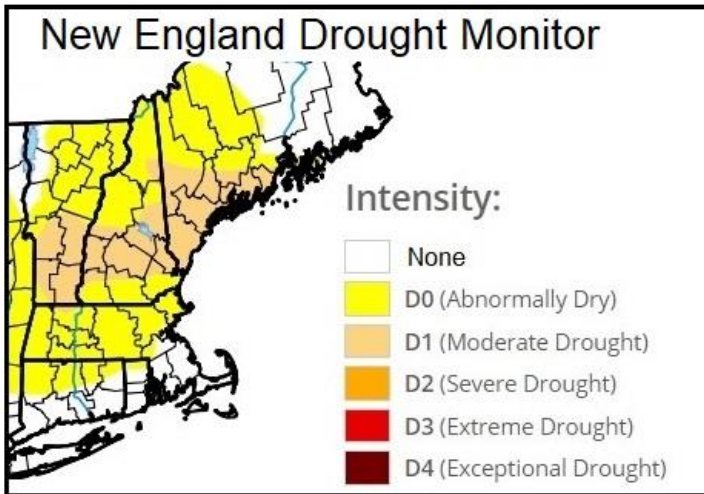


# Garden Club Horticultural Hints

## July 2018



**Watering wisely.** Even with two inches of rain at the end of June, much of New England is solidly in an ‘early-stage’ drought condition. As such, we all need to think twice before running for the hose. Most trees, shrubs, lawns and perennials do well during dry periods if they have been in the ground for a couple of years. Watering early (finished before 9 a.m.) or late in the day (after 6 or 7 p.m.) reduces water loss to evaporation. Remember to water only plants—not sidewalks, driveways or mulch beds, so water by hand and put away the sprinkler.



*Save water indoors with all the commonsense standbys—shorter showers, collecting the water run to get hot water, collecting the water used to rinse vegetables to water outdoor plants. Use mulch to hold water in the soil, but never more than two inches—too much mulch prevents water from getting into the soil.*



***Lawns.** If you haven’t already, move the blade on your mower up to 3”. The higher grass will shade its own roots, making them less water hungry while shading out new weeds. Consider replacing the grass in hard-to-grow areas (for example, shade or embankments) with perennials or shrubs that are happier in shade and require less maintenance. With watering bans now a reality, remember that grass that browns out in the summer will come back green and healthy with late summer and fall rains.*

**Vegetable Gardens** need regular watering to produce well. Dry spells stunt the plants and reduce the size of the crop they produce. But you can save water by keeping plants mulched, watering in the early morning or just before sunset when you won’t lose water to evaporation. Mildew can be a problem on basil, keep leaves dry by watering at the root level.





**Annuals** need additional fertilizer throughout the summer. If you are using a slow-release fertilizer, check the container to see how long it should last - usually three to six months. Liquid fertilizers allow you to 'dose' those that seem to need a mid-summer pick-up. If the blooms are slowing down, or the plants are getting scraggly, give them a hard shearing to encourage new growth and new flowers. A shearing just before you leave on vacation should mean you come home to lush new growth - if you have a faithful waterer tending the pots.



### **Perennial upkeep.**

Deadheading perennials not only keeps the garden more attractive, but also can lead to repeat blooms on many plants such as salvia, geraniums and even delphiniums. While you're at it, clean up any diseased leaves to prevent spreading the problem. Finally, trim back any perennials or annuals that are getting too vigorous and taking over their neighbor's space.

**Keep Weeding!** Weeds in any garden—vegetable, perennials, shrub and even lawns—steal food, water and sunlight, crowd less aggressive but more desirable plants and detract from the beauty of the garden. Cut them off at the base, dig out big roots and, as a last resort, spot treat them with herbicides. One great technique is a small container of appropriately diluted herbicide applied directly to the weed with a sponge brush from craft stores. Nearby (wanted) plants will feel no ill effects, which happens too often if you spray.



Planning ahead, you can fight mildew before it appears on plants such as monarda and phlox. A solution of one tablespoon of baking soda in a gallon of water is a safe treatment which slows down this annual nuisance.



***Vegetable Gardens.** It's too early for most tomatoes yet, but you should be harvesting green beans, lettuce, peas, beets, chard and onions among others. Plant seeds of lettuce, carrots, beets and oriental greens deeper now than you did in the spring so they do not dry out too quickly on hot days. Replant zucchini and green beans when the first batch blooms, keeping the new plants under floating row covers to exclude squash borers and bean beetles. Though row cover looks opaque, they allow plenty of sunlight and water into the plants.*