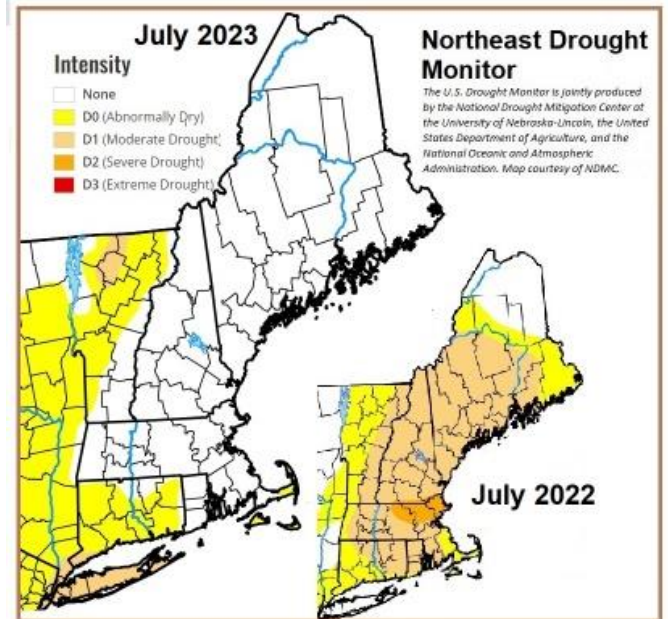


Garden Club Horticultural Hints

July 2023

Savor the pleasure of the summer garden!

A very different summer of 2023. Remember the summer of 2022? It would be hard to forget: especially the season-long watering bans and brown lawns. Thus far, 2023 precipitation is normal for the year across New England and was slightly ahead for June. Rainfall alone is no guarantee of a great perennial garden or bumper crops of vegetables, but it is a much more hopeful situation than the one we faced by August of last year.



Weeds are a luxury your garden can't afford

Weed like your plants' lives depend on it. They do - your plants will be competing with weeds for water, sunlight and nutrients in July, and the weeds are, too often, better at grabbing available resources. Your flowers and vegetables win the fight only when the weeds lie, gasping for breath, in the aisles or in a bucket.



Three inches – or higher

Leave the lawn alone. Your grass wants to go dormant in the heat of summer; don't fight Mother Nature. Trying to keep it lush and green by excessive watering or fertilizing serves only to create a cycle of chemical (and water) dependency that is both expensive and, ultimately, not all that successful.

And, leave the lawn long. 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 thirsty while also shading out new weeds. Consider replacing the grass in hard-to-grow areas (shady places for one) with perennials or shrubs that are happier in the shade and require less maintenance while providing flowers and interest throughout the year.

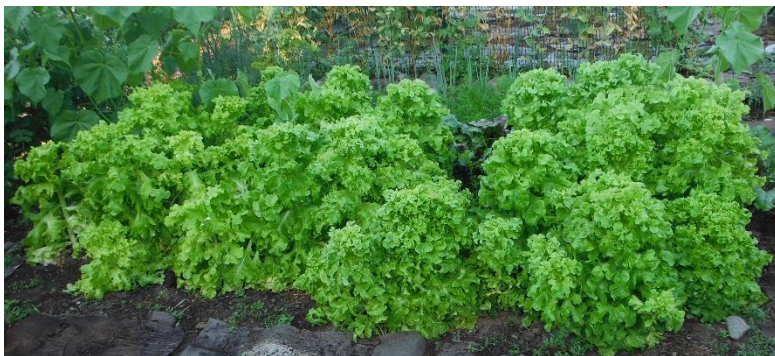


Remove spent flowers. While there are a few varieties out there that promise endless flowers without the trouble of deadheading, most plants require you to dead-head them for a for a reliably long bloom period. Picking off flowers that have passed their peak prevents seed heads from forming and stops the plant from receiving a signal that its work is over. Snap off large flowers with your fingernail. For plants that have small blossoms, or hanging plants gone straggly, shear them back by half. You'll be rewarded with a new crop of flowers and tidier plants, especially if you follow up with a light feeding.

Put your trowel down. The heat of mid-summer is not the time to be planting vegetables. You may have a strong temptation to fill in spots in your vegetable garden where cool-weather crops have bolted or been harvested. Resist that temptation until a long-range forecast (two weeks or longer) shows the heat has broken.



Be patient, whether it is blueberries turning blue or tomatoes turning red. The first sign of color is just that. Real flavor will develop over the next few days so as the berry and tomato increase in size and sugar content. With tomatoes, do not remove healthy green foliage.



Once it has bolted, it's inedible. Pull it. End of story.



Patience is a virtue with summer crops, especially tomatoes

Written and created by Betty Sanders. For more horticultural suggestions for July and throughout the year, please visit www.BettyOnGardening.com