



July 2020

THE NEW HORT THYMES

**CLEVELAND COUNTY
EXTENSION**

Serving Cleveland County, Oklahoma with the most up to date gardening, lawn, landscaping, and horticulture information.



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Summertime Blues

It's hot. I mean, really hot. You wake up early in the morning to try and beat the heat, but temperatures are already in the 80s. While the blowing wind can have a cooling effect, it also kicks up dirt and dust. Not to mention the choking humidity that fogs up sunglasses two seconds after walking outside.

I know I'm whining, but my goodness, it can be difficult to get garden motivation when it feels like a clothes dryer outside!

This time of year, I tend to enjoy indoor garden-related activities more than the outside ones. Just for a little bit of relief until it cools off. Harvest veggies early in the morning and enjoy them for dinner later that day. Snip off herbs to dry or create herbal butters. Cut some flowers from the landscaping and create a beautiful arrangement for the dining room table. Just because it's hot and nasty outside, it doesn't mean the garden can't be enjoyed!

What's Going On With My Tomato Leaf?

Tomatoes can be quite the tricky garden vegetable. They have specific temperature requirements for setting fruit and ripening, insects love to chew on them, and there's a whole cornucopia of diseases. It is critical to diagnose diseases so that controls can be effectively implemented. Diseases can attack any part of the plant, including the leaves. These are referred to as foliar diseases. So let's answer the question, "what's going on with my tomato leaf?"



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Septoria Leaf Spot

Septoria, caused by the fungus *Septoria lycopersici*, is a very common foliage disease in Oklahoma. Symptoms may also appear on the stem. Leaf spots begin as yellow areas that later become circular with gray centers

and a dark border. Symptoms usually begin on the lower leaves and work their way up. Severely infected leaves will fall off. Rotating where tomatoes are grown in the garden is an effective control. Also consider sanitizing trellising equipment. Drip irrigation is recommended to reduce periods of leaf wetness. A fungicide spray program may be necessary.

Late Blight

Late blight, an important potato disease, can also occur on tomato. Oklahoma temperatures tend to be too hot for disease development, but if conditions are unseasonably cool and wet, late blight could be a potential problem.

Symptoms develop as gray spots surrounded by white mold. The disease can spread rapidly if conditions are favorable. Late blight control centers on use of disease free transplants and certified disease-free potato seed to avoid introduction. Plant tomatoes as far away from potatoes as possible. Avoid use of sprinkler systems. A fungicide spray program may be necessary to control late blight.



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Early Blight

Early blight is a common foliar disease that can also attack stems and fruits. Infected leaves develop brown spots up ½" in diameter with a target-like appearance. Oftentimes, the area around the spots will turn yellow. Infected leaves will eventually drop from the plant. Infection occurs rapidly under warm, humid conditions. Rotating crops in the garden is an effective way to reduce overwintering spores. A spray program beginning at fruit set and continuing on a 7- to 14-day schedule should be maintained where early blight problems are anticipated.

Troubleshooting The Compost Pile

Backyard composting is an easy way to recycle food scraps and yard waste into a nutrient rich soil amendment. Compost is a natural dark brown, humus-rich material formed from the decomposition or breakdown of organic materials. Bacteria, worms, fungi, and insects need water and air to use the organic materials as food and decompose them. There is often a misconception surrounding composting that it smells horrific and can attract rodents. Composters must be able to troubleshoot the compost pile in the case any of these issues arise. Being able to recognize problems and fix them will also help create a higher quality finished product.

Symptom	Possible Causes	Prescription
<p>Bad Odor</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too wet • Compacted • Not enough oxygen (anaerobic conditions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the pile and add coarse, dry materials such as leaves or straw • Protect the pile from rain using a plastic film or other cover • Turn the pile and shake materials apart to add oxygen back into the pile • Layer pile with plenty of loose, bulky material
<p>Not Heating Up</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough oxygen (anaerobic conditions) • Cool weather • Pile may be too small • Not enough nitrogen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn the pile and add coarse material • Work in nitrogen-rich material, like fresh grass clippings and kitchen scraps • Build pile to 27 cubic feet (3'x3'x3') • Insulate with straw or plastic cover
<p>Attracting Rodents</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly inappropriate food scraps: meat, fat, bones, or byproducts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid adding these materials • Invest in a rodent-resistant bin with a top, bottom, and sides • Bury non-fatty kitchen by products deep, in the middle of the pile
<p>Contains Insects</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actually a good sign! • Pile is composting correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insects are a good sign of a productive compost pile; insects you may see include earwigs, worms, slugs, maggots, and others

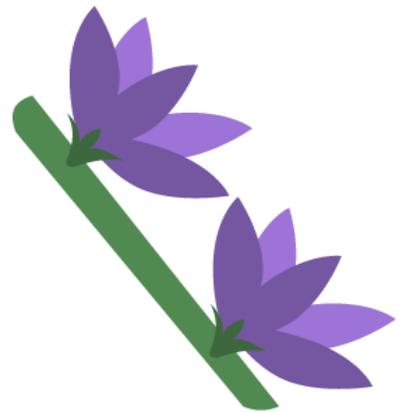


July Plant of the Month: Blazing Star

Purple wand-like flowers serve as a butterfly magnet in the garden

Blazing star, or liatris, is a native clump-forming perennial. The foliage is grass-like and sends up 2'-4' tall flower stalks in early summer. Flower heads are a sessile, fluffy spikes. It most commonly comes in a dark purple, but there are some white varieties. Butterflies and native bees frequently visit the showy flowers. It is relatively easy to grow if planted in full sun and well-drained soils. Blazing star has a very deep root system and can survive drought conditions.

Consider dividing this clump-forming perennial every few years or when it begins to die out in the center. To divide the plant, dig out the clump when leaves first emerge in spring. Using a sharp knife, cut the roots into sections. Replant about 5" deep and water promptly.



Sessile /se, sīl/: attached directly by its base without a stalk or peduncle

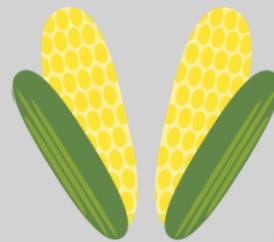
Garden Tips for July

- Water plants deeply and early in the morning; most plants need approximately 1 to 2 ½ inches of water per week
- Give flowering plants a mid-season feeding or side dress of compost to keep them through the fall
- Continue to deadhead ornamentals for more blooms later in the season
- Watch for spider mites as the weather gets hot and dry
- Monitor containers closely, especially hanging baskets; these dry out quickly and can require two watering sessions during the heat of the summer
- Add more mulch to areas where it has washed away or decomposed
- Stake tall plants so they do not fall or break
- Divide and replant crowded irises until August
- Stay ahead of weeds – pull them before flowering to prevent more work later
- Harvest fruits and vegetables early in the morning and refrigerate as soon as possible
- Make fall vegetable garden plantings in late July
- Properly identify pests so that you don't get rid of the beneficial insects
- Meet the water requirements of turfgrasses to keep a green lawn through the summer
- Fertilizing of warm-season grasses can continue if water is present for growth
- Sharpen or replace mower blades as needed; shredded leaf blades invite disease and allow more stress on the grass
- Look for brown patch disease on cool-season grasses
- Provide birdbaths, shelter, and food to turn your landscape into a backyard wildlife habitat

Eat Seasonally

In-season produce is fresher, cheaper, more nutritious, and better for the environment. These are some of the seasonal crops for July:

Blackberries



Corn

Cucumbers



Green Beans

Okra



Peppers

Summer Squash



Tomatoes

Watermelon



Upcoming Events

July 7th, 6:30pm to 8:00pm – The Good, The Bad, and The Bugly: Insects in the Garden

Insects in the garden are a given. If we plant it, they're bound to find it. That being said, not all insects that we find in the garden are bad. Some may be beneficial insects that we want to encourage in our gardens. Join us for this webinar to diagnose insect problems and to learn about the good, the bad, and the ugly of the bug world.

The class is free, but registration is required. To register, visit

<https://dasnr.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErc-yrrTluGdSvaGeurzFCojRVWT6BTGRq>

July 22nd, 6:30pm to 8:00pm – Talking Trash: Composting for the Garden

Compost is an excellent source of organic matter for garden soil. It can loosen clay soils, help sandy soils retain moisture, and even be used as a mulch. While there are many commercially available sources of compost, it is incredibly rewarding to make your own. Backyard composting can also keep yard waste and food scraps out of the landfill. Join us for a webinar to discuss how to get started with backyard composting and turn your trash into gold.

The class is free, but registration is required. To register, visit

<https://dasnr.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEkc-qtqTwiGdQuxoGsHIIIX35Cah3ZLSYVL>

August 4th, 6:30pm to 8:00pm – Fall Gardening

Fall gardens can be started as early as late July. It's difficult to think about fall in the heat of the summer. As the weather cools off, late plantings are perfectly positioned for harvest before the first frost. Join us for a webinar to learn the strategies behind fall gardening and maximize that final harvest.

The class is free, but registration is required. To register, visit

<https://dasnr.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYlc-GuqjMtGdRA89YKtazgVaCNvkdgWJHJ>

About the editor...

Courtney DeKalb-Myers has been the Cleveland County horticulture educator since August 2018. Her position handles homeowner inquiries, master gardener advisement, and other horticulture education programming throughout the state. She is originally from Norman, Oklahoma and developed a passion for gardening at a young age. She went onto study horticulture at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater with an emphasis in entrepreneurship. After graduating from OSU, she moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to attend NC State for graduate school. Her research was heavily focused on vegetable production, specifically processing tomatoes for a local salsa product. The emphasis on local products motivated her to move back to Oklahoma and she is so excited to now serve the town that raised her.

