August garden/landscape chores

August is a tough month for gardening. The heat, humidity, molds, mildews and bugs have taken their toll. August is not generally thought of as a great time to garden in Florida. But there are things to do now that can make a big difference in your landscape and garden in the near future.

Now's a good time to cleanup your roses for fall flower production. Many gardeners neglect their roses during the busy summer months. You may need to have your roses on a regular spray schedule for diseases like black spot and powdery mildew. Do some pruning to remove diseased and dead shoots and prune back weak, leggy branches. If the roses have not been fertilized recently, an application of fertilizer is suggested. With some care, you'll be surprised how well neglected rose plants respond and bloom during late summer and fall.

Late summer and early fall is an ideal time to lift daylily clumps, divide and replant them. Retain as many of the roots as possible with each division. Cut back the foliage to 1/3 its original height. Make sure to prepare the soil in the bed adequately by loosening it and amending it with organic matter such as compost or peat moss. Daylilies should not be planted too deep. Set the new divisions as deep as they grew originally.

Now is a good time to force crape myrtles to flower again. Just remove (deadhead) the spent flowers or seedpods, pruning just the terminal seed cluster. This forces new growth and repeat flowering. It will probably take four to six weeks before you'll be enjoying a second flush of blooms on your crape myrtle. This technique also works on chaste trees (Vitex).

Want to grow a late crop of tomatoes but can’t find plants in the garden centers now? The easiest way to solve this problem is to cut small suckers from spring-planted tomatoes and let them grow to full-sized plants. On tomatoes, suckers are found in the axil of the stems. They should be four to six inches long and have a growing point with several leaves. Cut the suckers from the plant, remove the lower leaves and place these cuttings directly in a jar of water for an hour or two. This will start the rooting process and reduce the shock. Plant them in pots for later transplanting or directly in the garden. Firm the soil around the suckers and water them heavily for two or three days or until they have taken root. Make sure to pick a variety that has performed well for you.

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