



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## Helpful Garden Tips for August 2025 (August 2, 2025)

by Peyton Ellas, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

August can be an easy does it gardening month, but this year, I feel ready to dig in on some big projects around my garden. Maybe because (so far) the summer has been kind, and my vegetable garden is happy, and I'm eager for fall planting in a new bed I'm creating out of what used to be scraggly lawn. How's your summer going?

**PLANTING:** August is a good month to plant seeds for cool-season vegetables, either in the ground or in containers to transplant later. Examples include Asian greens, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leek, lettuce, pea, spinach, and Swiss chard. Direct-seed another crop of beans. You can plant some ornamentals, but it will be a lot easier on you and them if you wait until fall.



**MAINTAINING:** Citrus requires even steady moisture during these hot months and must be watered regularly. Other plants, like many California native, Mediterranean, and desert-origin species, can manage on less water, but keep them from completely drying out. If your garden includes narrow-leaf milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) or another California native milkweed, you may be noticing it in full bloom or producing seeds vigorously. Many milkweed species love summer weather. If you don't see monarch caterpillars on your milkweed, don't be discouraged. I've seen them as late as September. Don't worry about aphids, red milkweed bug, or other insects on your milkweed; it can handle it. And you don't want to destroy monarch eggs by going after pest insects.



Spider mites love dusty plants. If you see cobwebs but no spiders, it's time to hose off the plants. In gardens with drip irrigation, this is a big problem because overhead sprinklers aren't washing plants off. Follow your water district's water guidelines, but wash your plants at least once during August. It's one of the best tasks during the hot summer months. To avoid rust and other fungal diseases on lawns, don't water your turf in the evening, or hose off plants late in the day if the lawn will get wet as well. This is a job I like to do in the hot afternoon; the latest science from experts is that it does not hurt your plants to get them wet on a sunny day.

Cut back and divide your iris if you haven't already done so. This is the season of iris swapping. After you divide your corms, you may end up with extras. If you know the iris variety, write the name on the trimmed leaves with a marker so your friends and family will also know the name.

Continue pruning spring-blooming shrubs and repeat bloomers like lavender and butterfly bush (*Buddleja*). Prune apricot, olive, and oleanders, but avoid pruning so much that you get sunburn on newer branches, and never prune during a heat wave or when one is expected. Continue to deadhead roses and remove suckers and unwanted branches. Open rose bushes to increase air circulation through the shrub. Continue to prune hedges. Keep your pruning tools clean and sanitized with a 10 percent bleach or a white vinegar solution. Remember to dry your blades before using them on your plants! Clean up fallen fruit. Support heavy, fruit-laden tree branches. Remember to use *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) anywhere there will be standing water, even in plant trays, to avoid mosquito breeding.

Skip the fertilizer during the hottest part of summer, especially high-nitrogen products. Let everything rest a little, including yourself.

If you spray with post-emergent broad-spectrum herbicides, apply them when the temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit or less, and when there is no breeze, to avoid phytotoxicity and vapor drift. Using a product with surfactant is important to improve penetration on toughened summer weeds. Towards the end of the month, you can start using a pre-emergent to impede the germination of cool-season weeds. If you have only a few weeds, hoe or dig them out instead of spraying, or investigate where the water supporting the weeds is coming from, and make a change in your irrigation practices if you can.

Ornamental plants can tolerate much insect damage, and those insects can be bird attractants (food). The exception is Argentine and other non-native ants; control those throughout the garden with ant bait products, switching the active ingredient every few months.

**CONSERVING:** If you want to remove all or part of your lawn, August is a good month to do it, especially if it is Bermuda grass. We can support a wider range of native and beneficial wildlife, including pollinators, if we include a greater variety of shrubs and perennials, especially native ones, in our yards and reduce our monoculture turf. If you need a green patch in summer, consider using a ground cover like *Lippia nodiflora*. Removing the lawn is a big project, so before you plant a new lawn, think about how much you actually need for recreation, rather than planting turf as a default space-taker. Lawns will always be a part of public parks and school grounds. If you're not using yours, consider reducing it and increasing habitat value.

Planning any upgrades or changes to your garden for fall? Consider creating a rain garden, seasonal creek, or swale to capture and hold onsite storm water. Gardens with a big picture approach to both drought and flooding--in other words, California's usual weather swings-- are resilient and provide value to humans and wildlife every year, no matter what the weather. Consider making your garden, even in the city, a connection for migrating beneficial wildlife. Can you map out a path that migrating Monarchs might be able to take through your neighborhood? Is there a neighbor you can give a native milkweed to?

It's okay to leave dried flowers on native plants. Finches and other birds will thank you for the seed. If you want to attract more birds and pollinators, it's fine to be less fussy about trimming every plant and removing every brown stem. I invite you to push your own boundaries, to improve the efficiency and usefulness of the garden, and to share it a little more. It's less work, too.

With creativity and planning during these summer months, you can create a tidy, even modern garden, and still have tremendous habitat value for humans and other living things in addition to beautiful and interesting plants.

The days are getting shorter. Soon, it will be autumn. Meanwhile, we can rejoice and celebrate the plants that love all this heat and are not looking forward to cooler weather!

**Are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener?** Our next class will begin in January 2026 and run through May 2026, with weekly classes. For more information, visit: <https://ucanr.edu/site/tulare-kings-master-gardeners/become-master-gardener>. If interested, please fill out a survey: <https://surveys.ucanr.edu/survey.cfm?surveynumber=10225>.

**Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:**

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

Visit our website for past articles, sign up for our e-newsletter, or email us with your questions:

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mgtularekings14/> ; Instagram at: @mgtularekings