

Garden Line - July 2010

by Brent Moon - HPARD Urban Garden Manager

Now that the hot summertime temperatures are here to stay, here are some things to keep in mind for your lawn and garden:

- Raise your mower height to allow your grass to grow a bit higher. St. Augustine can be allowed to grow 3-3 ½" tall, while Bermuda can be allowed to grow to 2". Doing this reduces the stress on your turf and allows it to grow in thicker. This does two important things: the thicker turf crowds out weeds and shades the soil more, which helps to hold in ground moisture and prevents germination of weed seeds.



- A light application of fertilizer can be applied now to your turf. Don't overdo it, though, or you will be chasing your grass all summer long!

- Keep an eye out for chinch bugs, grubs, and turf diseases such as Take All Patch in St. Augustine.

- Mid-July is the time to get your fall tomato transplants in the ground. Plan to shade them temporarily using a couple of cinder blocks with a board or some shade cloth extending between them. Keep them well-watered until they are established. Getting your tomatoes in the ground now will provide you with a great harvest this fall.



- Continue to fertilize vegetables such as peppers, eggplants, okra, and other heat-loving veggies to keep them productive.
- Check weekly for pests such as aphids, spider mites, and stink bugs on your veggies. Blast them off with a strong spray of water or use insecticidal soap on them.



If you are lacking color in your landscape, consider adding some heat-loving annuals such as zinnias, vinca, celosia, and perennial verbena for a nice shot of annual color. For perennial color, look for bulbine (a South African succulent) and some of the different cigar plants (*Cuphea* sp.), which take our heat and humidity well and also attract hummingbirds. More permanent plantings could include Yellow Bells (*Tecoma stans*), Hummingbird bush (*Hamelia patens*), Pride of Barbados (*Caesalpinia*), Bottlebrush (*Callistemon citrinus*), and any of the various candlestick trees (*Cassia* sp.) These tough shrubs/trees will thrive in the heat and keep your landscape full of color all summer long!