



Some plants thrive as summer heats up. If your perennial beds lack colour, try a few of these plants that flower through sweltering August afternoons. All are drought-tolerant once established.

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia* spp.) brightens the garden with cheery yellow blooms perfect for cutting. It's a good choice for a wildlife garden. Flowers beckon butterflies; seed heads are a goldfinch favorite.

Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) unfurls silvery foliage accented with lavender blooms.

Threadleaf tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*) opens daisylike blooms in shades of yellow, white, or pink. Low-maintenance plants have fine foliage and open flowers.

Yarrow (*Achillea*) sounds a steady note of drought-resistant color in the summer garden. Look for flowers in many shades, from white, to red, to peach, to yellow.

August Watering Tips

Avoid watering during midday, when more water will evaporate than soak into soil.

It's not uncommon for plants to wilt on hot afternoons even though soil has adequate moisture.

The wilting occurs because plants are losing water faster than their roots can absorb it. Leaves should revive by early evening, after the sun is no longer directly on leaves. If not, water deeply.

Some shrubs need weekly deep watering now. Rhododendrons are beginning to form flower buds for next year's show, and adequate water is vital. Fruiting plants, such as hollies and firethorn,

need water to ensure berries mature and don't drop.

Garden-Fresh Flavours from the Herb and Vegetable Garden

Peppers: Pick peppers at any stage of development. The longer fruits stay on a plant, the more intense flavor becomes -- sweet peppers grow sweeter, and hot peppers develop a stronger burn.

Herbs: It's best to pick herbs before they flower. Harvest herbs on a dry morning, after dew has dried. The exception is mint, which you want to pick at midday, when essential oil concentrations in leaves are greatest. Avoid harvesting herbs following a rain, when foliage is wet.

Tomatoes: Even though tomatoes continue to ripen after picking, fruits develop greatest flavor when allowed to ripen on plants. The exception is cherry tomatoes, which are prone to splitting. Pick these tasty morsels as soon as fruits start showing color.

August Garden tasks

Pull annuals that are past their prime and aren't likely to recover. Cover bare soil to deter weeds. Take cuttings of plants you want to overwinter. Choices may include fuchsia, scented geranium, coleus, or wax begonia. Stick 3- to 4-inch green stem cuttings in soil. Place pots in a shaded spot, and keep soil moist. Make sure mower height is raised so you're cutting grass higher. When grass is taller, it shades soil beneath, which reduces water evaporation from soil. Taller grass generally has deeper roots, which helps it withstand drought better. September is peony planting time. That means August is the month to order peony roots.