

Flora & Fauna

Gardening in August

It may seem like there's not much to do in August. For many gardeners, this time of year begins the downhill slide into off-season. But your garden is heartier than you think and there's still a list of tasks that need to be done to keep it looking great into the winter.

Your main priority, this month will be **watering**, especially if it's hot where you live. Be sure to water thoroughly and deeply in the morning or early afternoon so that the lawn has the chance to warm up before the cool evening sets in. A good way to check if plants are getting enough water is to take a trowel and carefully lift the soil in your borders. The soil should be moist to about 3-4 inches deep. Don't forget to check hanging baskets and potted plants, they will suffer most from the heat.

Make sure any **flowers** still on your plants are well looked after this month. Keep removing the dead and old flower heads from the plants - this will make a big difference in the appearance of the garden.

Any perennials which flowered in the spring will now be ready to divide, but be sure you do this during the coolest part of the day and water thoroughly afterwards. Stake tall perennials with bamboo canes to support them. Flowering shrubs that have finished flowering should be pruned back into shape.

August is also time to start planting **autumn and winter vegetables**. Starter onions, carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, radishes and winter cauliflower can be put directly into the garden early this month. You should also look after your potato crop this month, as they can suffer badly from potato blight. Consider spraying them with a chemical fungicide.

Pick raspberries, and gooseberries this month. Prune raspberry stems back to soil level, and cut back the main shoots and side shoots of gooseberries to five leaves to encourage them to produce fruiting shoots for next season.

Keep watering your **houseplants** and watch them for disease and bugs. If it's warm and dry, you'll need to water and mist the plants in your hose more often.

Poinsettias and Christmas plants should be brought indoors to prepare them for flowering over the holiday. If you want the plants in bloom for the holidays, they must be kept at about 65 to 70°F and subjected to at least six weeks of 14 hours of total darkness per day (mid to late September). This may be accomplished by placing the potted plant in a closet or unlighted room, or by covering the plant. The plant must then be returned to the light each day and given a minimum of 4 hours of direct sun, or 10 hours of bright light.

Get ready for the spring planting season by ordering your spring bulbs now. You can also start saving seeds and taking cuttings for the next planting season, too.

A few **other bits and bobs to remember** - keep on top of the weeds, this month. You're aiming to get them all before they have the chance to flower and go to seed again. Otherwise, they'll be coming back for several years. Keep the water in the birdbath clean and topped up, so that it doesn't become a harbor for mosquitoes. Watch out for slug and snail damage and tackle the problems as they arise.

August is mostly a time to sit back and enjoy the fruits of your hard labor in the garden earlier in the year. But make sure you continue caring for your garden so you can enjoy your plants throughout the year!

GUARANTEE@ SYSTEM.

**1518 Steele Ave SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
Phone: 616-451-0787
www.guaranteesystem.com**

Cleaning Corner: Keeping a Clean Fireplace

If you plan to use your fireplace this fall, keep these tips and tricks in mind to make sure that you keep it clean and safe.

- Use a clean burning wood. Oaks, ashes, hickories and other hard woods burn cleaner than soft woods. (Stay clear of pine, cedar and fir!)
- Don't build a fire that's too large for the space. It will produce a "smoky" fire due to lack of oxygen. Small fires produce more heat and less smoke.
- Use a fireplace screen to ensure safety.
- Trim the branches of trees around the chimney area as often as necessary to help minimize the risk of fire. Also, keep the roof area free of leaves, pine needles and acorns.
- Installing a flue or stovepipe thermometer will help to monitor the temperature inside the flue.
- Always use a supporting grate when burning logs. Place large logs on the grate at the rear for cleaner burning fires.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen or chimney cap to prevent hot sparks from escaping and small animals and debris from entering.

August

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1693 | Dom Perignon invents champagne |
| 1790 | Congress authorizes the nation's first official census; counts 3,939,214 people |
| 1831 | The London Bridge opens for traffic |
| 1861 | The U.S. Army abolishes flogging |
| 1873 | Cable car service down Clay Street begins in San Francisco, California |
| 1914 | The city's first traffic light is installed in Cleveland, Ohio |
| 1924 | The comic strip "Little Orphan Annie" debuts in newspapers across the nation |
| 1949 | The National Basketball Association is formed |
| 1961 | The Beatles accept their first pub gig: 2 years as the house band for Liverpool's Cavern Club |
| 1984 | Prince's "Purple Rain" album tops the charts and stays at #1 for a record 24 weeks |
| 1988 | The temperature in New York City tops out at 88°F on 8/8/88 |

Health Tips: Autumn Tips for Safe and Healthy Families

Autumn requires us to make changes in our lifestyle due to weather, daylight changes, school activities and upcoming holidays. Greet the fall with ways to help keep you and your kids safe and healthy. Take steps to make sure your kids develop healthy habits that will help them now and throughout their lives.

Have an afternoon of food-tasting. Gather your family together to research at least 3-5 varieties of one type of food (i.e. fruit, vegetable, nut, etc.). Talk about the unique qualities of the food and a little about its history (i.e. when it was discovered, what it is known for, etc). Lead the family in a taste test of the different varieties of the food, or prepare the food in different ways and have everyone choose their favorite. For example, an apple could be prepared as apple snack wedges, applesauce, apple cider and baked apples. You could also present similar types of vegetables, such as collard greens, spinach, kale and mustard greens. Talk about differences in their taste. Pick fall favorites, or be adventurous and try new things.

Be active outdoors and indoors. Make fall yard work fun. Have kids come up with different ways to pick up leaves or pinecones (i.e. squatting, bending, leaning, stretching, balancing on one foot, etc.). Sing, dance and explore. Provide kids with rakes and other tools that are kid-sized for comfort and safety. For indoor fun, play board games and computer games that encourage physical activity. Have a song-and-dance talent show. Draw, color and explore with health in mind. Remember that children and adolescents should get at least 60 minutes and adults should get at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week. Don't forget to apply sunscreen and insect repellent to protect you and your family from the sun, mosquitoes and ticks.

Check the safety of toys and other products. Check to see if any of your family's toys, jewelry, clothing, appliances, furniture and other products have been recalled due to lead paint or other potential hazards. As you begin thinking about toys and gifts for upcoming events and holidays, make sure they are age-appropriate. Make sure playground equipment is safe. For fall festivals, events and Halloween, make sure that you take steps to keep kids safe and away from potential dangers.

Do as you say. It's easy to tell your family what to do. But, it's even better to show them what to do and how to do it. Start the fall off with healthy habits. Eat healthy, be active, get check-ups, get appropriate vaccinations (including flu), be smoke-free, manage stress, wear seatbelts, wash hands and wear helmets. Help your kids build healthy relationships and know how to avoid and reduce conflicts.

Get involved in school. When parents and educators work together, safety becomes a lifesaving priority that benefits the entire community. Safety should be on every student's back-to-school list. Whether it is by car, bus, bike or walking, the minute a child leaves home, safety becomes a concern. Safety is important at school, both in the classroom and during activities. Also, make sure your child knows what to do in an emergency.

Start with a healthy pregnancy. Take steps before pregnancy to help improve your and your unborn baby's health. Combine the best medical care, healthy behaviors (i.e. being tobacco-free and taking folic acid), strong support, and safe environments at home and at work.

Kid Corner: The Violence in Video Games

More and more kids are playing video and computer games - especially ultra-violent ones that are top sellers. Research shows that children are also spending increasing amounts of time playing them: an average of 13 hours per week for boys and five hours for girls.

According to the American Psychological Association, violent video games can increase children's aggression. The number one negative effect is that children tend to inappropriately resolve anxiety by externalizing it. So when kids have anxiety, instead of soothing themselves, calming themselves, talking about it, expressing it to someone or even expressing it emotionally by crying, they tend to externalize it. They can attack something, they can kick a wall, they can be mean to a dog or a pet. Additionally, there's an increased frequency of violent responses from children who play these kinds of video games.

Furthermore, the American Psychological Association says playing violent games correlates to children being less caring and helpful toward their peers. And these effects happen just as much for non-aggressive children as they do for children who already have aggressive tendencies. Children spend a great deal of time with violent video games at exactly the ages that they should be learning healthy ways to relate to other people and to resolve conflicts peacefully.

And, according to the National Institute on Media and the Family, it's not just a concern when it comes to young children. Teenage brains are in the midst of growth spurts, making teens very impressionable. Just when teens are wiring the circuits for self-control, responsibility and relationships that they will carry with them into adulthood, violent games activate their anger center while dampening the brain's "conscience." And think of the more subtle impact: What do you think the effect is when your kids spend time with violence simulators that glorify gang culture, celebrate brutality, lionize crudeness and trivialize violence toward women?

How can parents minimize any potential harm? Psychologists have found that when parents limit the amount of time as well as the types of games their children play, children are less likely to show aggressive behaviors. Other research suggests that active parental involvement in children's media usage — including discussing the inappropriateness of violent solutions to real life conflicts, reducing time spent on violent media and generating alternative nonviolent solutions to problems — all can reduce the impact of media violence on children and youth.

Following are the guidelines that were established by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board:

EC is for "early childhood." May be suitable for ages 3 and up. Contains no material that parents would find inappropriate.

E is for "everyone." May be suitable for ages 6 and up. May contain minimal violence, some comic mischief and/or mild language.

E10+ is for "everyone 10 and older." May be suitable for ages 10 and up. Titles in this category may contain more cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language, and/or minimal suggestive themes.

T is for "teen." May be suitable for ages 13 and up. May contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

M is for "mature." May be suitable for persons ages 17 and up. May contain mature sexual themes, more intense violence and/or strong language.

AO is for "adults only." Have content suitable only for adults. May include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Adult Only products are not intended for persons under the age of 18.

RP is for "rating pending." Titles have been submitted and are awaiting final rating.

Ingredients:

2 medium sized zucchinis	1 16-oz can of sweet corn, drained
2 medium sized yellow squashes	1 16-oz can of stewed tomatoes, drained
2 jalapeno peppers	2 “loaves” of packaged polenta
1 large yellow onion	1/2 cup of shredded cheddar cheese
2 cloves garlic, smashed	1/2 cup of shredded Monterrey Jack cheese
1/2 cup of coarsely cut mushrooms	1 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
	2 tbsp of chili powder

Preparation:

1. Preheat the oven to 500°F or turn on the broiler. Heat the olive oil in a very large pot.
2. Chop the zucchinis, squash, onions and peppers into small chunks and put into the pot. Add the smashed garlic and mushrooms. Stir frequently and cook for 10-12 min or until vegetables are slightly soft.
3. Add the corn, stewed tomatoes and chili powder. Cook another 2-4 min.
4. Transfer vegetables into a casserole dish. Cut the polenta into ½-inch slices and layer across the casserole dish so the vegetables are covered entirely. Sprinkle the surface with cheese.
5. Place in the broiler or oven for 5-7 min – or until cheese is bubbling. Serve hot!

Fall Weight-Loss Tip:

Take advantage of the weather. Fall can be a treat for the senses: the crisp air, apple picking, pumpkin carving, a gorgeous canopy of fall foliage, and the crunch of leaves underfoot. These months are a great time to exercise outdoors and enjoy cooler temperatures.

How to Make Houseguests Feel Welcome

You certainly can't turn your spare room into a room at The Ritz, but there are some things you can do to make it just as comfortable for your guests.

Sweet dreams are what it's all about. You should really make an effort to give your guests a bed that you'd be willing to sleep in. A too-short sofa bed or foam pad just won't do it. Invest some money in a good sleep surface, and they'll thank you for it in the morning. A good pillow is like icing on the cake!

Fresh-as-a-daisy linens are a must! It's crucial that you provide crisp, clean, and coordinated linens for your overnight guests. They'll feel especially welcome and it's an easy thing to do. Don't pull out your family leftovers if you don't have to. An electric blanket or fluffy down comforter will keep your guests cozy on the chilliest nights. Be sure to have an extra blanket tucked away in a closet should your guests need more warmth.

Have a place to relax. You may not want to be entertaining your guest all the time they're with you, and it's important that they feel they have someplace to get away for a little private relaxing time. A comfortable chair and ottoman are just the answer. Even a small slipper chair and stool will do the trick, and your guest will have a quiet place to be on their own.

Get rid of as much clutter as you can. If you use your spare room for other things when you're alone, you may have some work to do when you're expecting guests. What to you might be decoration, may be “stuff in the way” for your visitor. Have a bare tabletop, empty drawer and closet space available for your guest to put things away. They'll feel more at home and not be concerned about having their things in your way.

A reading light is essential! Many people like to read for a while before going to sleep. Be sure to have good light in your guest room. But more importantly, have a good reading light that can be turned on and off without getting out of bed. A night light near the door and one in the guest's bath will be helpful and appreciated too.

Create a “home away from home.” If your guest is staying more than just overnight, they'll feel out of place without a table or desk to write on. Paying bills, clearing out a wallet, making arrangements for the rest of the trip—these can all be done easily with a desk available. Including pens, pencils, paper, stamps and a phone will make them feel right at home. If you can provide a TV, you get bonus points!

Finishing Touches Who doesn't love fresh flowers? With so many varieties available at the local grocery store, there's really no excuse for not having them to dress up your guest room. A carafe of water and glass, a clock radio, a bottle of lotion—what do you have by your bed? Whatever you can provide for your guest will make them feel more at home and most welcome.

You'll find that if you have everything in order for your guest's arrival and everything is ready in the special place you've made for them, the visit will be a happy one for both of you.

...Carpet Talk...

Clean Carpet Secrets You May Not Know!

Many of us wonder why friends and neighbors always seem to have their carpet care professional's truck in the driveway. Are they overly dirty or overly neat? In truth, your neighbors may be on to something by making sure their carpet is receiving the best care possible. There's a direct correlation between the care you give your floor coverings and the length of time you will own it.

Do you worry that having your carpet cleaned will accelerate the pace at which it gets grimy again? Have you had a bad experience in the past that left you wondering whether the cleaning agents used by contractors really helped or hurt the life of your carpet? Well, here's a little-known truth in the world of carpet cleaning: Often, it's the residue left behind by the product a technician uses that short-circuits the life of your rugs! That's right. Choose a fly-by-night carpet care company that has no clue about how much damage post-shampoo residue can do and the money you saved to bring them in to do the job is going to be absorbed by your having to replace your carpet long before it's necessary.

In addition to extended life, there are many health benefits to a clean carpet. Pollens, bacteria, dust mites, pesticides, dead skin cells, molds, spores, yeast and other pollutants are all tackled when a professional attacks your carpet, and since we all know how tough it is to keep our medical bills at a manageable level each year, a good carpet cleaning may be all it takes to cut your trips to the doctor, too.

In the end, the schedule you choose must be up to you, but as a general rule, homemakers most often elect to have the job done on a six, 12- or 18-month schedule, depending upon traffic. So if you see that truck in your neighbor's driveway, maybe you should use it as a reminder of your own concerns for your family's health and wellbeing!



PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GRAND RAPIDS, MI
PERMIT #1254

1518 Steele Ave SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:



Phone: 616-451-0787
Fax: 616-451-8303
www.guaranteesystem.com

Inside this issue you'll find:

- Gardening in August
- Keeping a Clean Fireplace
- Health Tips: Family Health in the Fall
- Kid Corner: Violence in Video Games
- Fall Mexican Casserole
- Making Guests Feel Welcome
- Carpet Talk
- August Money-Saving Special

Money Saving Coupon

10% off
when both carpet and
furniture are being
cleaned at the same time

If you can't use this coupon, give it to a friend!

**As always, you have my Personal Satisfaction
Guarantee. If it's not cleaned to your standards,
we'll clean it again for FREE.**

This coupon expires August 31, 2008

Guarantee System