

Flora & Fauna

Five Important Garden Tasks for August

August is a time of bountiful harvests. The fruits and veggies you planted this spring and nurtured all summer are returning your kindness with delicious yields. And any late-blooming flowers are finally making their debut before fall. It's a time of much enjoyment for gardeners, but also a time of much work.

There's plenty that needs to be done in the garden this month, so let's review the most critical tasks:

1. Add Water and Turn the Compost

If you have a compost heap, remember to keep it moist and add water if needed (without water, the compost won't "cook" to break down organic matter and eradicate pests) and give it a good turn to aerate it. This helps speed up decomposition, resulting in more nutrient-rich compost to feed your plants all season long.

2. Save Seeds

For most fruits and vegetables, all you need to do is scoop seeds from a fully ripe fruit (oftentimes over-ripe works better; seeds from table-ready produce tend to be too immature and won't grow next year), rinse in a colander, and set them out to dry. Store them in a cool dry place for next year—be sure to label them clearly!

3. Pinch Herbs

"Pinching" is the practice of removing the top of a flowering stem. This forces the plant to direct its energy into sending out new stems below where you pinched it. For herbs, like basil, rosemary, sage, and oregano, this can mean a much more bountiful harvest and larger leaves to enjoy in your cooking.

4. Harden Off

Cut back on watering your perennials and trees to prepare them for the frost in the coming months (if you were watering 3 days a week, cut down to 2, for example). Cutting back on water now will allow them to harden-off before it gets too cold. This effectively winterizes your plants so they'll have an easier time surviving the colder temperatures in the upcoming months.

5. Weeds

This is no time to become lax with your weeding efforts. It's still important to be ever-vigilant and eliminate those pesky weeds from your garden.

This is also a good time to remove plants that are no longer yielding any crops. This will prevent them from taking up extra room and pulling nutrients from your soil when they have finished their job for the season.

Rather than yanking weeds and spent plants from the ground, leaving a gaping hole to be filled in, use a special weeding tool designed to cut the roots so plants can be more gently removed. It's less work for you, and also less likely to cause damage to neighboring plants you want to keep.

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Cleaning Corner:

How to Clean Patio Furniture

- **For plastic and metal furniture**, fill a bucket with warm water and add a few squirts of dish detergent. Use a sponge to scrub away dirt and grime, then hose everything off. Towel dry to prevent water spots.
- **For wicker and wood furniture**, gently scrub with an oil-based soap to keep the wood moisturized while removing dirt. Hose off and towel dry.
- **For fabric cushions**, check the tags for care instructions. Some cushions or fabric seats/hammocks can be tossed in the washing machine, while others can be cleaned with soapy water and a scrub brush.
- **Remove mold** by scrubbing dry furniture to remove any matter on the surface, then rinse with a hose. Next, apply full-strength white vinegar and use a stiff-bristled brush to remove stubborn mildew stains.

August

- 1775 Thomas Paine writes the first article proposing women's rights in America, which appeared in *Pennsylvania Magazine*
- 1782 After being forbidden by the Continental Congress to grant commissions and promotions in rank to recognize merit, President George Washington created the Purple Heart decoration medal
- 1815 Napoleon Bonaparte set sail for St. Helena to spend the remainder of his days in exile
- 1945 The United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. Japan surrendered unconditionally, ending WWII
- 1960 The first telephone conversation in which voices were bounced off the moon was accomplished by U.S. scientists
- 1961 Construction of the Berlin wall began
- 1985 The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame was established

Healthy Living: How to Eat “Clean”

Most people assume that eating “clean” simply means eating healthy. If a product contains words like “organic” or “natural” in the title, or has claims, such as “low sodium” and “reduced fat,” it must be healthy and “clean,” right? Well... not exactly.

What does it mean to eat “clean?”

The idea behind this way of eating is to consume foods that have been processed, handled, or tampered with the least. The more a product has been handled, the further away from “clean” it becomes.

“Processed” means:

- Products that have additives to either preserve the food or add flavor to it
- Food that has been changed from its natural form (e.g., pureed, bleached, etc.)
- Anything that contains ingredients that were made in a lab (e.g., preservatives)

This means that your favorite granola bar or spaghetti sauce, even though the label may say “all natural” or “organic,” have been mixed with fats, sugars, salts, and preservatives, so they would not fall under the “clean” category.

Is all processing bad?

No! Sometimes, processing can simply mean changing the consistency of foods to make them more appetizing (like applesauce and refried beans), or removing bacteria that are harmful to health (like pasteurizing milk).

The main idea behind “clean” eating is to steer clear of overly processed foods that might be high in flavor, but low in nutritive value (we’re looking at you, mac n’ cheese and ramen noodles!). It’s all about making better choices for healthier bodies.

Here’s what to grab at the grocery store...

To know if a food should make it on your “clean” plate, look at the nutrition label. If it’s a short label with few ingredients, it likely hasn’t been heavily processed and is safe to put in your shopping cart.

Examples of clean/unprocessed foods include fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes (such as beans and lentils), nuts, and eggs.

Minimally processed foods include whole wheat bread and pasta, quinoa, brown rice, frozen fruits and vegetables, unprocessed meat (no bacon, deli meats, sausage, or hot dogs), oil and vinegar.

Kid Corner: Beat the Back-to-School Blues

As the school year quickly approaches, children of all ages may feel pressure and anxiety at the thought of returning to the classroom. *Will I make any friends? Will I be able to find my classroom? Where will my locker be? Who will I sit with at lunch?* It can be a bit stressful, so here are some ways you can help your youngsters turn their anxiety into excitement:

Elementary School—Celebrate the Supply List

To help your little ones transition from summer mode to school mode, make a big deal about the supply list. Rather than heading to the store by yourself to pick up scissors, markers, and notebooks on your child’s behalf, take him with you so he can pick out his own supplies and check each item off the list. Talk about all the things he’ll be doing with them and explain any unfamiliar supplies, like calculators and protractors.

Especially young ones (Kindergarteners and first graders, for example), might also benefit from role-playing their first day. Pretend your living room is the classroom and take turns being the teacher and student. Talk about some classroom rules and practice raising your hands to answer questions or lining up at the door.

Middle School/High School—Confidence is Key

For older children, shopping for school supplies isn’t terribly exciting. But picking out a new outfit or pair of shoes can help them feel self-assured and ready to walk the halls and make new friends.

Another great way to build confidence is to make plans to join a club or a team. Sports teams and after-school clubs are great ways to meet people with common interests and make new friends. It’s also a great way to develop skills outside of the classroom and transform a hobby into a passion.

College/University—It’s All About the Dorm Décor

In her younger years, your child would express her style with a backpack or trapper keeper, but now that she’s a young adult, her dorm room is the vehicle of self-expression. It’s also the place she’ll be spending a lot of time in when she’s away from home, so turning it into a fun, welcoming space can also help assuage some homesickness. Take a trip to the local home goods store to pick out some new decorations together. **Bonus tip:** Give your child a little real-world economics lesson by giving her a budget for decorations.

Everyone—Help Summer Go Out with a BANG!

No matter how old your child is, a little end-of-summer celebration is a great way to mark the end of one season and the start of a new one. Be sure to invite the neighbors (hey, your kids will be riding the bus together, after all!) and kick off the year right!

Think that burgers, brats, and hot dogs are the only things you can cook on the grill? Think again! Try serving up some of these tantalizing veggie side dishes that will leave your guests in awe of your grilling skills.

Cherry Tomato Skewers with Ricotta Cheese Toast

1. Place several ripe cherry tomatoes on a wooden skewer and place on the grill until skins start to burst.
2. Place a few pieces of thinly sliced French bread on the grill, flip to toast both sides.
3. Spread ricotta cheese on a slice of toasted bread and top with roasted cherry tomatoes. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

Cheddar Bacon Ranch Corn on the Cob

1. Heat grill to medium high. In a small bowl, stir together 1 stick of softened butter and 1 packet of ranch seasoning. Rub ranch butter on corn.
2. Grill ears of corn until lightly charred, 10 minutes. Top with shredded cheddar cheese and cover grill to melt, 2 minutes.
3. Top with cooked bacon, finely crumbled, freshly chopped chives, and lightly drizzled ranch dressing.

Grilled Sweet Potatoes

1. Steam sweet potatoes by pricking all over and placing in the microwave for 8–10 minutes. Allow to cool and then slice into 1/2-inch-thick diagonal slices.
2. Brush both sides of each slice with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place on hot grill grate for 10–12 minutes, or until lightly charred and tender.
3. Garnish with parsley and serve immediately.

4 Time-Saving Organization Hacks

Lost car keys, misplaced bills, tangled cords—sometimes it's the littlest things that end up being the biggest time-wasters. Try these simple organization hacks designed to save you oodles of time in small ways.

Make Your Own Easy Key-Hook

Tired of losing your keys? Turn an old picture frame into a stylish key hook. First, spray paint the frame with an attractive color to match your interior decor. Next, take a few small hooks and screw them into the bottom ledge of your frame. Lastly, add a fun family photo and hang it on the wall near the door. Now all you have to do is remember to hang your keys up when you get home!

Kitchen Command Center

If your kitchen counter gets overwhelmed with papers, try this cute hack to keep your bills and receipts organized: visit your local office supply store and pick up a desktop file sorter and colorful file folders. Label each folder and place it in the sorter in order of importance (bills in the front, receipts in the back, school forms in the middle, etc.).

Throw a notebook in the back and clip a small monthly calendar to the front for important events, and you've got a great kitchen command center plus some freed-up counter space!

Hair Tie Clip

Tired of losing hair ties all over the house? Try this: place all your hair ties on a large carabiner clip (which you can find at the local home goods store in the athletic section) and then hang it on a hook in your bedroom or on the inside of a bathroom cabinet door. Sure beats finding them around the house or throwing them in a messy heap on your nightstand!

Bread Tag Cord Labels

This simple tip will make finding cords behind the TV or computer a cinch. Start saving all those little plastic tags from your loaves of bread. Label each one using a fine-tipped permanent marker and then slip a tag on every cord (e.g., "TV Power," "Mouse," "Headphones," "Printer"). Finding the right cord just got a whole lot easier!

...Tips for Caring for Leather...

There's nothing quite as luxurious as leather. From furniture to car interiors, purses to shoes, we love leather in all its forms.

To make sure all the leather surfaces in your home look their best, follow these special care tips. If the leather doesn't respond, or if the damage/soiling is too severe, give us a call for a professional evaluation.

1. **Protect it.** Always keep leather furniture out of direct sunlight to prevent drying and cracking. Apply a manufacturer-recommended conditioning agent on a regular basis.
2. **Clean it.** For furniture, such as couches, chairs, and auto interiors, dust weekly with a soft cloth or use a vacuum with a brush head attachment.
3. **To remove dirt from protected leather,** lather a moisturizing soap, such as Dove, on a soft, damp cloth, and then wipe gently. Do not over-wet the leather. When the dirt is gone, buff with a soft, dry cloth. This allows the moisturizing soap to condition the leather. ***For best results,** use manufacturer-recommended cleaners and conditioners.
4. **To remove water spots,** moisten the area again with a little water, let it dry or gently blow dry. Never place leather in the sun to dry.
5. **To remove grease,** apply some Talcum powder or corn starch to the spot and let it sit for a few hours. Do not rub it in. Let the powder or starch absorb the grease and then vacuum it away.



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This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:

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