

The Garden in June

By Rachel Anderson, Certified Professional Horticulturalist

June to me really means one thing: roses! I love roses, and this past month I have been watching carefully as their flower buds have gotten fatter and more numerous. As June gets closer I go out daily (yes, every day) to see if any have popped open, and yes, there are a few early bloomers which I admire and sniff. What I'm really anticipating though, is the explosion of big, bright, and luxuriantly fragrant roses that happens in June. I do the same thing here at the Nursery, where I'm lucky enough to have hundreds of varieties to ooh and ahh over as they come into bloom.

In the ornamental garden:

- Weed. Yes, I've said it again.
- Stake perennials with tall flowering stalks (like delphinium, phlox, peonies and foxglove), especially if you live in a windy area.
- Pinch back tall late flowering perennials like sedums and asters. This helps to create a bushy sturdy plant that can withstand wind and rain without staking.
- Now's the time to prune your rhododendrons and azaleas if you think they need it. If you prune them heavily, just remember that you may not get any flowers next season. Now is a good time to fertilize them too.
- Continue to water any newly-planted plants. Even though it's been pretty rainy lately, you need to stay on top of the watering at least through this summer and probably through the next one as well. This is especially true of new trees and shrubs, regardless of how drought tolerant they're touted to be.
- It's official. This is a tent caterpillar year. In fact, it seems to be a 'caterpillars of all sorts' kind of year. The best thing to do is to prune out the nests while the caterpillars are still young. Once they emerge as adults, then it's a little too late. Your next best defense is Bt, which is an organic pesticide that specifically targets caterpillars of all types, or another product called spinosad, which targets more than just caterpillars. Previously, I was feeding the nests to my chickens, which they devoured. However, now I've noticed that since the tent caterpillars are mature with their armor of black and orange fuzz, the chickens are no longer interested (which makes me think that not even wild birds will eat them). Now I find them crawling around in every odd location and have resorted to hand picking and killing them swiftly with the toe of my boot. Distasteful, but effective. Good luck!
- On a happier note, pick a bouquet of the summer's first roses to bring inside and enjoy.

In the edible garden:

- Snap the flower stalks off of your rhubarb.
- Check your strawberry patch regularly for the first ripening berries (as though you need reminding!) and pick them before the birds do. They're also closely monitoring your berry patch.
- Keep up on the slug bait, especially around new seedlings and strawberries.
- Thin the fruit on your fruit trees if you haven't done so already.
- If you don't have a greenhouse, then by now it should be safe to plant out basil starts.
- Protect ripening berry crops (like blueberries and raspberries) with netting to keep the birds out. This works well to prevent deer browsing as well.
- Sow beans, sunflowers, nasturtiums, and other warm weather crops directly outside.
- Set out starts of tomatoes and squash (or sow directly) if you haven't done so already.
- If you see your garlic starting to flower, snap off the flower stalks down low. This makes sure that all the plants energy goes toward making a larger garlic bulb. The flowers (called scapes) are edible, stalk and all. Garlic scapes make a tasty, spicy pesto, or simply saute them in olive oil and enjoy. I've even seen recipes for pickled garlic scapes! Yummy!

Above all, enjoy the first of your strawberries and roses!



About the author:

Rachel has been gardening since childhood, thanks to her mom, and has been part of the team at Christianson's since 2002. She's a Certified Professional Horticulturist with a passion for roses and vegetable gardening. Rachel and her family enjoy gardening together and now share their urban garden with a menagerie of ducks, chickens, two cats, and a dog.

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