Making August’s Garden a Step Toward 2016!

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August can become your favorite month to plan your gardens for next year. Everyone’s gardens are looking good, and it is a great time to get some new ideas. It is a good time to visit botanical gardens, walk through your neighborhood, or participate in community garden tours. Be sure to bring your garden journal, camera or sketchpad to record planting combinations that you may want to try. Evaluate the light and growing conditions in your perennial gardens. Note the plants’ response and any future changes you need to make. Make notes on what is working and what needs to be redesigned for next year. Jot down a few possible solutions based on your recent tour of gardens.

There is still time to plant. Visit your local garden centers and nurseries. Many offer late-season transplants for replacements or late additions. You might even find a bargain or two worth adding to your gardens. Bulb catalogs may begin to arrive so continue to look for opportunities for spring color.

Give August transplants extra attention during hot dry spells. Mulch new plantings to conserve moisture and keep soil temperature cool. Stake tall plants that tend to flop.

Loosely tie plant stems to a stake. Use twine or cushioned twist ties to secure the plants to the stake.

Record harvest dates and consider sharing surplus fruits and vegetables with your local food shelf. This is a great way to share your love of gardening with people, especially children and seniors in need.

Evaluate your lawn and make notes on the areas that need work. If you plan on being gone more than a week, you will need someone to cut the grass and/or water it. If your lawn is drought-stressed, do not aerate or apply herbicides or quick-release nitrogen fertilizer. Instead, raise your mower height, water your lawn, and spot seed with a high quality seed blend. Fertilize with slow-release nitrogen to rejuvenate and promote a healthy lawn.

Harvest flowers for fresh indoor enjoyment. It’s best to carry along a bucket of water to place the cut flowers in while you are scouting your landscape. Cut the flowers early in the morning for the best quality. Use a sharp knife or garden shears to cut the stem above a set of healthy leaves. Recut the stems just prior to placing the flowers in the vase.

Wait until midday to harvest flowers for drying. Pick flowers at their peak. Remove the leaves and gather a few stems into a bundle. Secure with a rubber band. Then use a spring-type clothespin to hang the bundle from a line, rack, or other structure in a dry, dark location.

Create a simple “watering hole” for birds, bees an butterflies by setting a deep saucer or pan on top of an overturned pot and add a roc as a landing pad.

Trees need a cumulative total of one inch of water once a week to keep roots hydrated.
Water the area approximately three feet from the trunk. Mulch trees in a 6-foot ring to help hold in moisture and manage weeds. If conditions are dry, be sure to KEEP watering your landscape!

If your Amaryllis has been outdoors this summer, bring it indoors before the first frost. Placed in a sunny window, it may continue to bloom. Or, time its blooming for the holidays by placing the bulb in a dark, cool location without water for 8-12 weeks.

We are continuing to host the Saturday Morning Open House at Glenwood Gardens. August 8, 15, 22, and 29 will be the final four chances for Master Gardeners and public to interact, learn, and get questions answered. The Open House runs from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

The MN Department of Agriculture and UM Extension’s Agroforestry team have introduced information about another insect-related threat to Minnesota’s tree population. Thousand cankers disease (TCD) kills black walnut, and Minnesota has approximately six million black walnut trees at risk. Black walnut is highly valued for lumber and veneer, with one to two million board feet of walnut harvested annually.

Trees are slow to show symptoms, and the disease can be present in a tree for seven years or more before flagging branches signal an infection.

TCD is caused by a fungus carried by an insect. Smaller than a grain of rice, the walnut twig beetle (Pityophthorus juglandis) enters the bark, making a tiny hole. The fungus (Geosmithia morbida) is introduced to the walnut tree as the beetle feeds on and tunnels into the inner bark. The bark and phloem are killed by the fungus, causing a canker which is visible only if the bark is removed. With thousands of beetle attacks, the number of cankers increase, eventually girdling and killing the branch or trunk.

Although Minnesota has an exterior quarantine that prohibits bringing any black walnut (except processed lumber or wood products) originating in areas known to have TCD into Minnesota, monitoring black walnut for any symptoms is an important part of preventing the spread of TCD.

~Information from the MDA Plant Disease website: http://www.mda.state.mn.us/plants