

## Hot and Hotter!

Now that July and August weather has moved into June, we are looking at our plantings and evaluating them to determine which ones flourish without pampering. It is amazing that while we wilt when the temperature flirts with the nineties, bee balm, garden phlox, and coreopsis stay bright and beautiful without additional watering. In fact, the bee balm (Monarda) is one of those native plants that wanders into any space it can get a toe hold. It seems to get lankier as it wanders so if you prefer a more formal garden, check out the cultivars bred to behave and stay compact.

Window boxes, pots, and hanging baskets require almost daily watering, even twice a day if the pot is small and in a hot site. These are the exceptions to our need to conserve water. Actually plants in confined containers do not waste water as what you put in stays there. Porous clay and concrete pots do lose some from all sides but the plastic ones efficiently keep water in the root zone.

One simple way to save water on plantings is to provide some shade to lessen the evaporation caused by a hot sun. High shade does not inhibit blooming like dense low shade so it is a good compromise. If you are fortunate enough to have some high shade, would it be a fine project to move some of your plants? Obviously, copious amounts of water produce larger flowers.

I have a small hardy gardenia that depends on rain and it bloomed in mid-June, neatly covered in small white flowers, a delight when you unexpectedly caught the fragrance. When the flowers browned I cut the plant back about 10%, removing the shabbiest bits, and added mulch. If July lives up to its promise of rain it may have a few later blooms.

Mulch is also an asset to daylilies, Hemerocallis, another plant that may respond to additional water with more and larger flowers. My daylilies are on their own and bloom well where they have sufficient light. Daylilies do not have the long-lasting nature of 'real' lilies, but a sudden wind broke off the lily stems so they were massed in a vase to finish their allotted life span. A particularly weak stem had been tied to a bamboo stick and it survived. Those that broke were planted in pots: the few vole-survivors planted in the ground remained standing, suggesting that a longer underground stem offers greater stability.

This year more daylily blooms were protected from deer by the application of "Liquid Fence" that was not immediately rained away. My neighbors, who have gorgeous daylilies, a garden like the Biblical Joseph's coat of many colors, have discouraged deer dining using Irish Spring. This use of a cake of deodorant soap was suggested years ago and I tried it, hanging cakes of soap on sticks in the flowerbed. A really unattractive sight to be sure. The deer paid no attention.

My neighbor explained that my technique was faulty: he shaves an ounce or so of soap into a sprayer, adds water and shakes to dissolve the soap. He sprays and re-sprays after our frequent quarter-inch rains. His system works!

ECO-UPDATES:

The good news: US greenhouse-gas emissions in 2009 were 14% lower than they were in 2000. ...also...In 2010 renewables provided 11% of US energy needs, equal to the percentage of nuclear power.

The bad [news:Icesheets](#) in Antarctica and Greenland are melting faster than predicted. ...and...US in third place in clean energy effort, behind China and Germany. Currently, along the Gulf Coast, stillborn and dead whales and dolphins are washing up on the beaches at three times the usual rate.

Good or bad news, depending upon your point of view and your stock portfolio: First quarter profits for five largest oil companies up 38% in 2010 over 2009. What we find hard to explain is why taxpayers give these affluent firms billions in tax breaks? Is this another case of the tail wagging the dog?