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Landscaping Newsletter and Garden Tips

August, 2012 Volume 101

Thanks to everyone for all the wonderful comments about the 100th issue of our newsletter last month. It was so much fun to put together.

Melissa and I sifted through a ton of old photographs together. We selected the ones we wanted to appear in the newsletter and archived the rest for the 200th issue.

August Garden Tips

* August is the month to sit back and enjoy your garden. This old fashioned advice is wonderful to imagine, even if it's not very practical. Can you even think about not weeding your garden? Or watering? Or picking produce if you're fortunate enough to have a vegetable garden? Actually, that part does sound enjoyable, at least to

A Personal Message

What a whirlwind summer! Even in all the heat, I've been busier than I wanted to be. Summers used to mean lots of time in our little camper trailer in Ocean City. Surf fishing out on Assateague Island. Inventing and cooking new and exotic dishes. This was supposed to be my summer of exploring Indian cuisine. No such luck. The closest I've come was picking up some Indian carry-out food as I passed through Salisbury a couple of weeks ago. By the way, guess who's visiting us this weekend. If you guess my 6 year old niece, Scarlett Rose, you are correct. We're busy going to the pool, shopping and eating ice cream. Here's a picture from yesterday morning as she got ready to start her day.

me.

* Summer annuals may be sickly looking at this time of year. Head to your local nursery to pick up something fresh for the fall. Depending on availability, some interesting choices might be marigolds, petunias, zinnias, impatiens, cosmos, California poppy, chrysanthemum and snapdragons. Other options might be stocked later in the month for fall blooms. These could be alyssum, red sage, verbena, vinca and poppies. Planting these will help ensure a full garden into October or even later.

* We'll plant lettuce, spinach and collard greens in our raised bed gardens again in August. These leafy greens will be ready to harvest again before the cold weather arrives for good. See if you can't find a package or two of seeds before they're all gone for the season. You'll enjoy spinach and other greens until November.



Scarlett models one of her fashion model outfits. Her American Girl dolls are sitting in Melissa's office chair, all dressed and ready to go with her.

Not that I'm denouncing being busy. In a summer where it's been too dry for weeds to grow, I feel blessed to be able to keep my employees at work.

It's a struggle being a small business owner sometimes. I feel a responsibility to you as my client to provide the best service at the lowest possible price.

However, I also realize I'm responsible for almost 20 employees who have families. They own houses and buy cars. And, they pay taxes with every paycheck. All of my employees are subject to a criminal background check. We also check driver's licenses.

My business has all the necessary licenses it needs to provide the services we offer. Individual employees have the licenses they need as well.

My employees are uniformed. They receive paid vacations after one year of service. Employees also received health insurance if they choose.

If it were up to me, I'd be doing all of your outdoor projects. However, if you choose another company (sigh!) I hope you'll choose one that has the proper licenses and insurance coverages.

At the very least, make sure they have worker's compensation and liability insurance. If an accident happens on your property, you don't want an employee suing you for damages. If the job goes wrong, you want an

avenue for recourse.

There are many fine landscaping contractors on the Eastern Shore who, like me, run a legitimate business. However, working with a transient company may sometimes lead to problems and unwanted consequences.

Take care who you choose to work on your valuable property.

How Drought Affects a Plant - They Dehydrate!

I'll always remember the summer of 2012 as being one of the hottest on record. It was also one of the driest. That's not good for anyone, particularly farmers and landscapers. Even if your lawn and landscape beds are fortunate enough to have irrigation, this drought has hurt every single property I've visited this summer.

Grass that was green two months ago is now brown and lifeless. Plant material, even established perennials and shrubbery, is begging for more moisture.

Plant life needs moisture to sustain itself. In a nutshell, here's how it works.

When a plant experiences a limited amount of soil moisture over an extended period of time, the stomata of the plant begin to close. Stomata are the small openings usually found on the underside of leaves.

This closure reduces the ability of water to get to the rest of the plant. Water lost to a plant from its' leaves is known as transpiration.

Transpiration cools the plant by pulling water and nutrients from the soil.

In a prolonged drought, a plant becomes unable to regulate its' temperature. It "runs hot." Nutrient deficiencies begin to occur when there is less water available to the plant..

Without nutrients from the soil, the process of photosynthesis (the process of generating food for a plant) doesn't happen. The plant can't support itself and eventually dies.

I've always thought that plants with leaf browning or that are wilting look "hot." Now that we know about transpiration, we realize that drought stricken plants really are hot.

Plants can even expire after the drought is over, if transpiration has lasted too long.

Thanks for the North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension for help with this article.

Just a reminder...

If we provide your lawn care services, we'll be in touch with you over the next month or so to review your lawn. It's been a very tough summer for grass. The drought has hurt everyone's lawn.

So, we'll be contacting you soon. My manager, Dave Lee, or I will personally visit your property to see what's happening with your lawn.

On another note, we'll also be contacting all of our tick repellent clients again this fall. We'll need to complete your fall spray so that we can keep your family safe from ticks all year.

You need to be sprayed in the fall to kill adult ticks. You don't want them to lay eggs before the end of their life cycle. You'll have the same tick problems next spring, if we don't take steps this autumn.

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