



Toronto
Green
Community

MID SUMMER GARDENING TIPS

Dead Head Blossoming Flowers!

Dead heading refers to pinching off the dead flower heads on non-vegetable annuals to encourage them to continue putting their energy into producing more leaves and flowers, not seeds. Examples of plants that benefit from dead heading: basil, most flowering herbs, medicinal flowers such as calendula, marigolds, catnip. Flowers on vegetable plants usually indicate fruit production, so do not remove these flowers!

Early spring vegetables such as radish, lettuce, kale, and peas, generally start to “bolt” (start to set seed) when the weather turns balmy, in many cases producing tall flowering stalks. Leaves can still be harvested, but may become tough and bitter. You can either remove these plants to sow/plant heat-loving crops, or leave the plants in ground until they wither and dry and collect the seeds for fall sowing.

Pest Patrol

Humid, moist summers often encourage the spread of destructive pests, such as aphids, mealybugs, grubs, cutworms and leaf borers, as well as microorganisms that spread mildew and other fungal infections. Regularly inspect your plants and follow these tips for keeping pests under control:

Encourage beneficial insect predators, such as lacewings, dragonflies, ladybugs and nematodes. Purchase them at your local bait shop and release them during early morning or evening.

Practice crop rotation and biodiversity- the more diverse your garden, the less likely you will experience a massive infestation of a singular crop! Use aromatic herbs (such as thyme, oregano and sage) to deter creepy critters, and practice companion planting to lure away and/or confuse pests.

Create your own anti-pest spray! An easy to make spray of natural dish soap, minced garlic, chili pepper flakes and water, applied regularly to stems and leaves will help deter many unwanted insects. Other effective ingredients for foliar sprays include: rhubarb leaves, stinging nettle leaves and tomato leaves. Use crushed eggshells and beer cups to deter slugs and snails at soil level.

Keep the air flowing! Regular weeding, trellising vines and selective pruning will help encourage more airflow in the densest parts of your garden, helping to limit the spread of fungal and bacterial plant diseases.

If you are experiencing an overwhelming infestation with visible severe damage to your crops, remove the plants and dispose of them in the garbage, not your compost bin. If the infestation occurred in a container plant, dispose of the soil as well to prevent soil-borne disease from spreading to neighbouring plants.

Keeping the Compost Going!

Just as your garden needs consistent watering, so does your compost heap! During hot weather, your compost heap is likely to dry out, thereby reducing the number of beneficial composting bacteria. Give your compost pile a good soak when you water your garden, and remember to aerate it regularly with a pitchfork to allow air to reach the centre of the pile. The consistency of your compost pile should be that of a wrung-out sponge.

Staking and Supporting Vine Plants

Keeping your tomatoes, squash, cucumbers and zucchini plants staked and supported by trellises will help them reach for the sunlight, prevent mold by avoiding contact with wet soil and encourage airflow among your plants. Pinching off suckers from your tomato plants will also encourage them to grow upward and their stems strong.

Nourish Your Plants!

If you applied any amendments or compost to your soil in spring, by mid-summer your plants will have used much of it. Heavy rainfall and over watering also can deplete the soil of nutrients. Top-dress your soil with an inch of well-finished compost, working it into the top layer with a hand rake. Brew some compost tea by placing a bag of cheesecloth filled with compost in a bucket of water for two days, and use that tea water during your next watering. If using a dry soil amendment, such as carbonite, bone or blood meal, sprinkle around your soil and work it into the soil gently. If using a liquid amendment, such as fish fertilizer, dilute the product well in your watering can. Too much nitrogen can burn plants, so follow the manufacturer's instructions and fertilize half as much, but twice as often.

Mulch, Mulch, Mulch!

If you haven't already done so, mulching your containers or beds is a great way to help conserve water, retain soil moisture and keep weeds from growing among your plants. Mulching involves spreading dried carbon materials, usually woodchips, straw, or shredded cardboard, on the top of the soil. Mulching keeps soil from compacting and water from evaporating if you do so in the early mornings or late evenings.

Harvest Garlic!

By mid to late July, most garlic varieties that were planted the previous fall will be ready for harvesting. Look to the tips of the garlic plant- if you can count 4-6 yellow leaves, the garlic bulb is probably ready for harvesting. Gently dig around the base of the stem until you see the bulb, and if you can't see any signs of rotting or disfiguration, remove the bulb from the soil gently (never by the stem- use a hand trowel!) Immediately place the bulbs in the shade, and after gently brushing off any excess soil hang them in a cool, dry space to "cure" for a few weeks. Garlic bulbs once harvested are extremely delicate, so avoid bruising or hitting them. Leave the stems on during the curing process for the best results.

Toronto Green Community

40 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 200. Toronto, Ontario M4T 1M9

Tel: 416-781-7663

Email: info@torontogreen.ca Facebook: [tcg.ca](https://www.facebook.com/tcg.ca)

Website: www.torontogreen.ca Twitter: [@tgreengcommunity](https://twitter.com/tgreengcommunity)



**Toronto
Green
Community**