

BRISTOL GARDEN CLUB
Dishing the Dirt in the Garden
Horticulture Report for Summer 2023



Bulb catalogs are coming in. Order now because you get “Sold Out” posted on all the tulips you really wanted if you wait until August.

Weeding 🌱🌱🌱

The plant curse of the northeast (and a lot of the world) is [Japanese knotweed](#). Always look under your evergreens and hollies and anywhere a weed can hide and get a foothold. Learn what Japanese knotweed looks like because once it has even one root hair in the ground, it is SO hard to get rid of! The nasty stuff can grow 3 inches a day! In two weeks the fake bamboo has grown over 3 feet tall.

“The rhizome accounts for 2/3 of the plant's entire mass and can travel up to 20' horizontally with some accounts of up to 60', and go 6-10' deep.”

I am now trying to eradicate vining vinca/periwinkle that has gone weed; it's invasive and out of control. I've cut it down and am putting wet cardboard and old rugs over it to try to starve it dead. It will take around six weeks to kill it.

The lawn doesn't need weeding. Keeping the grass 4 inches tall seems to discourage weeds.

[Bugs](#). 🐞🐛🐜

Right now my biggest battle is with red clover mites. They suck the life out of plants and there are a bazillion of them per square foot it seems. I start out using neem oil but then switch to Dawn and water in one of those pump action sprayers. I do this about 2x week. Clover mites will eat your lawn-they love green grass-and they can get into your

house. They hide in mulch and in stone walls and in evergreens. And while they have many predators, they breed faster than they are eaten! But they go into hibernation during the heat of dog-days, thank heavens!

Big bugs like Japanese beetles and tomato horn worms are easy to flick into a jar of soapy water.

I have holes in my flowers. This is okay because I love butterflies and butterfly larvae feed on plants. So holes in your plants are sort of a badge of honor. I say "sort of" because I don't do all that gardening just to feed bugs and if they get greedy, invite their friends, and get out of control, I will get out the insecticidal soap.

Keep the neem oil ready for that day you go out and find all of your petunias and geranium petals eaten. I try to find the little worms and flick them off where birds can snack on them but I just don't see well enough to find them anymore.

I never plant the same thing in the same spot so that bugs specific to certain plants, like cabbage worm for instance, will starve away when deprived of their meals. I have peas growing where my leeks were last year but that didn't save them-rabbits ate my peas down to stubs! Thankfully, now that there is netting around the raised beds, I am seeing new leaves on the plants.

Planting 🌱

If you hurry, you can still get your beans, cauliflower, cukes, eggplant, collards, peppers, sweet potatoes, and watermelon in.

You can also start late season broccoli, carrots, peas, and kale.

Come July you can plant beets, celery,

The first week in August set out turnips, and spinach.

I plant lettuce any time and all the time.

Because it is hot now, water new plantings 2x a day!

Reviving potted and hanging flowers

For flowers like petunias this is halfway through their season. They were started way back in spring in hothouses so they would be big enough to attract buyers. That long term fertilizer is good for three months and is used up by now. I use Peters Petunia Food on mine and the geraniums like it, too. Peters Petunia Food has lower phosphorous (the middle number on the fertilizer label) and phosphorous can get in the way of some plants ability to take in iron. Iron hungry plants like petunias, verbena, vinca, bacopa, and pansies do well with this fertilizer.

I don't fertilize New Guinea Impatiens because I get beautiful leaves and no flowers. Go figure.

Again, because we are halfway through the season with hanging plants, it is time to prune them back. Petunias love to be cut back but I never liked that week of leaves and hardly any flowers so I take half of the long leggy stems and cut them back and then, in a week or so, I go for the others. Go back a third of the way down the stem until you find a new growth branch. Cut just above this.

Mandivilla also enjoys a trim. Cutting those long skinny and trailing branches back will encourage more blooms.

Pruning

Your tree pruning days are over. That being said I still trim hedges but I don't cut branches-too easy to let in disease. Wait until next February and March to prune those. I will prune my weigela and deutzia after they bloom.

I like chrysanthemums in late October and early November so I cut mine down twice a season. The first time around 4th of July and then later in August.