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The summer is ending, and none too soon for many gardeners. Even though the calendar shows it is September, we probably have another good month of hot weather. Some gardeners have had a great season, while others did not. From early heavy rains to high winds to huge rainstorms, heat, humidity, insects and diseases, we have had more than our share of hardships this year. Many gardens could use a shot in the arm. Don't ignore the garden now, or you may have more problems to deal with next spring.

Water is still the buzz word, and the most important thing you can do for your garden this season. Container gardens do need water daily. Plants in the ground should not need daily water, but will need weekly applications if we don't get rain. It is impossible to have a set amount or length of time to water that would be applicable to all gardens, since there are so many variables---type of plants growing, soil make-up, amount of sunlight and slope. Learn your landscapes needs and try to meet them. If possible, water early in the day to prevent water loss to evaporation and to allow time for the water to penetrate before the heat hits. If you live in a city municipality, you may want to avoid the peak demand hours of 5:30 a.m. – 7:30 a.m., when so many households are taking showers, doing laundry, etc. This can impact water pressure.

Don't be alarmed if you see trees shedding leaves. Trees use vast quantities of water to thrive, and when it gets dry, they start shutting down a little early. Large, established trees will usually not suffer as much harm as shallow-rooted ornamental trees. Dogwoods are not particularly drought tolerant, nor are Japanese maples. Keep in mind that all plants that bloom in the spring—trees and shrubs, have either set or are setting flower buds now for flowers next spring. If the plants get too stressed, or shut down early, you may not see as many blooms next year. Mulching is something that can really make a difference in conserving soil moisture and moderating soil temperature.

One thing that has not been hindered by the weather is weeds! From chambers bitter, nutsedge, and mulberry weed, weeds are all over flower beds and vegetable gardens. It almost seems they double in size overnight. Try to weed often, hopefully getting to them before they set seeds or you will have more weeds next season. Mulching can also reduce the amount of weeds you see. If woody types of weeds are present—poison ivy, honeysuckle, briars, and the like, late season is a good time to kill them. Keep in mind, you want them as healthy as possible before you spray, so they take up as much chemical as possible. Glyphosate (Round-up) products can be effective, and on tougher plants, try Remedy RTU. Use caution around desirable vegetation, and as always, read and follow the label directions.

Vegetable gardens are still producing, if they have been cared for. Many tomato varieties slowed down in production when it got hot, but they should be bouncing back with slightly cooler weather. Fertilize with a light application of a water soluble fertilizer to aid in new growth. There is still time to plant fall crops. Many garden centers are selling transplants of cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower now, along with Swiss chard

and purple mustard. You can also seed lettuce, spinach, and greens now. Fall gardens can be a bit of a challenge to establish with hot weather, but if you are willing to water, you can have a producing garden all winter long. Along with watering, watch for insects and diseases.

Spring blooming bulbs are beginning to appear in local nurseries and garden centers. It is a bit early to be planting these, but if you want to buy early to get the size and variety of bulbs you want, by all means do so. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place until planting time—usually mid to late October through November.

If your summer annuals took a nosedive when it got hot, go visit your local nursery and see what they have in stock. You can often find some good bonus buys on summer annuals or tropical flowering plants this late in the season. It is not too late to plant. These heat lovers will get established quickly, and give you at least two more months of color. Don't try to put pansies or violas in this early, or they will get leggy before you know it. You can actually start planting fall ornamental edibles too -- kale, Swiss chard, or Bull's Blood beets. Establishing these plants in September should give you a stronger root system and some early color. Do watch for leaf eating insects, they devour these as quickly as the edible ones in your vegetable garden—after all, they are edible too!

Many of us took a bit of a siesta from gardening in late July and August with the heat, but it is time to get back in the garden and start growing.