



Gardening Tips & Techniques: Beat the Heat in the Garden

July can be a hot time in the garden. Even though we've had moderate temperatures and lots of rain this year, at some point we'll probably have a few scorching days. Here are some tips for beating the heat and making sure your plants are well-prepared for hot days as well.

Water Correctly

- You probably haven't had to do a lot of watering this year – we've gotten a lot of rain in Western PA! Keep these tips in mind for drier times:
 - Water in the morning, so the plants leaves dry by night time, and to conserve water (a lot of water evaporates if you water in the middle of the day).
 - Drip tapes or soaker hoses make the most efficient use of water.
 - When watering with a hose or watering can, soak the ground one time, then come back and water again, until puddles form. Watering infrequently and deeply helps plant roots to stretch deep into the earth, which makes the plant stronger and better able to handle drought and heat.

Mulch

- Add mulch (straw or brown leaves) under your plants to conserve water and insulate the soil. This protective layer keeps roots cool and slows evaporation of water from the soil around the plant.

Pull Cool-Season Crops

- Similar to humans, certain crops love the heat while others suffer through it. Check out our crop list to see which plants are which. If you've got lettuce that's getting bitter in the heat, pull it out to make room for a heat-lover like cucumbers, beans, or basil.

Work in the Morning or Evening

- If you have the opportunity, try to avoid working in the middle of the day in the garden. It's fun to make a quick visit in the afternoon, or do a little cultivation to kill some weeds, but long days in the sun can be exhausting! You'll be less likely to burn out if you time your garden visits for more comfortable times of day.

Prepare for the Heat

- If you know you're going to be in the garden in the middle of a hot day, get some supplies together to protect yourself from the heat. These materials can help make a hot day bearable!
 - Mineral-based sunscreen
 - Lightweight clothing
 - Plenty of cool water, juice, or sports drink.
 - A wide-brimmed hat
 - Sunglasses
 - A bandana soaked in water and tied around your neck can make you feel a lot cooler!

Remember to take plenty of breaks in the shade. With a little planning and preparation, you and your garden can thrive, even through the hot summer months.

Please see photo on the following page.



The gardeners at this community garden plot, at the South Side Community Garden at Bandi Shaum Field, have figured out a way to stay cool!