



July Tips

TREES, SHRUBS AND GROUNDCOVERS

Contact: Diane Relf, Extension Specialist, Environmental Horticulture

October 1996

- Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*) commonly is affected by a number of diseases, including the fatal dogwood anthracnose. Protecting your dogwoods from drought stress can go a long way toward keeping them healthy. Make sure they have been mulched in a wide ring with organic material, about 3 inches deep (do not use dogwood leaves or wood as mulch, and pull back from trunk). During prolonged dry periods, water dogwoods thoroughly.
- Trees may lose up to 10 percent of their leaves during very dry conditions. This helps reduce water lost from the tree by transpiration.
- Monitor trees and shrubs for Japanese beetles. Adults lay eggs in July and August and continually migrate to susceptible hosts. Your local Extension agent can give current control recommendations.
- *Cornus sericea* 'Silver and gold' is a variegated dogwood that withstands summer heat and humidity. It grows to about 7 feet. Silver and Gold has white-variegated leaves in summer and yellow twigs in winter.
- To plant roses now, purchase plants in containers. Sprouted, packaged plants are difficult to handle and grow poorly if stored foods are exhausted.
- Many of the trees and shrubs popular in home landscapes can be started from cuttings during July and August. But remember, it may be three to five years before they reach the size you see in the nursery. If you are equipped with a large supply of patience, propagating your landscape plants can be challenging and fun. The most common rooting medium is washed builder's sand. Other materials include peat moss, mixtures of equal parts peat and sand, vermiculite, or perlite. The exact medium is not important as long as it is well aerated and drains well, yet holds adequate moisture for the cuttings.
- Some tree-trimming companies shred their trimmings on site and give them away free-for-the-asking to anyone in the neighborhood. Don't be shy! The cost of chipped wood mulch from the garden center adds up. Coarsely shredded material looks good on pathways and borders, while fine particles compost quickly. Also, your use of the chips keeps them out of the local landfill.
- When drought hits, if you can't water rose bushes, do nothing. Fertilizing, pruning, applying pesticides, or even cutting flowers can harm plants that are water-stressed.
- Prune Bigleaf or French Hydrangeas (*H. macrophylla*), those with large, pink or blue "snowball" flowers,

immediately after flowering.

- Tip die-back of redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) may be caused by saturated soil. Redbuds are very intolerant of "wet feet" caused by prolonged wet soil and high humidity.
- Some woody ornamentals attractive to hummingbirds are crabapple, hawthorn, albizia, Siberian pea shrub, tulip poplar, buckeye, and horse chestnut.
- When you read recommendations to water newly transplanted shrubs frequently, pay attention! University of California research showed that shrubs watered every few days outgrew shrubs watered every 10 to 12 days by almost five times.
- When pruning away twiggy young growth from rose bushes, make use of the prunings by rooting them and producing new plants. Treat stem bases with rooting hormone, stick them in soil in a cold frame that is out of the sun and water them well. Keep them watered. If some die before rooting, it's no great loss. Just toss them in the compost, which is where they would have ended up anyway.
- Root holly, azalea, and camellia cuttings in a sand and peat moss mixture set in a cool, shady location. Ivy and periwinkle can be rooted now to fill in any bare spots in your beds. Don't allow cuttings to dry out.
- During dry spells, trees may shed up to 10 percent of their leaves. This leaf loss reduces water losses through transpiration and causes little or no harm to the tree.
- Inner leaves and twigs of trees normally drop from lack of sunlight, but falling clusters of leaves attached to short twigs may result from insect or squirrel activity. Girdling insects make shallow, encircling depressions, while twigs broken by squirrels have diagonally severed ends.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dorn, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines, and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist.

Visit [Virginia Cooperative Extension](http://www.ext.vt.edu)