

MID SUMMER

Lazy summer days have a funny tendency to zoom right by and, before you know it, the garden is getting ahead of you. Luckily, it's still early enough to get a jump start on a few things that will help your garden grow while also cutting down on your work load later in the season.

First up: regular harvesting. All plants are determined to produce seed and sprout another generation. Harvesting as soon as the seed-bearing fruit is ready signals to the plant that it has to keep trying. If fruit rots on the vine instead, the plant will think it's a job well done and either start to slack off or call it quits altogether (e.g. cucumbers).

Of course, there'll be no harvest to pick at all if the garden isn't well watered, so even with the lovely rain we've had, use your finger to check the soil daily. You want no more than the top inch or two of soil to be dry—less if you've started new seeds in that square. (Tip: For fall harvest sow carrots, kale, beets and chard seeds now.)

With regular harvesting and watering to keep your garden growing, you'll want to keep after pests and weeds to cut down on your future to-do list. New pests arrive all season long, so observe your plants carefully. Look for egg sacks on the undersides of leaves and smudge them out. Flick unwanted beetles or worms into soapy water before they double their population while happily devouring your plants. Check your Growing Guide for help identifying common pests.

And when it comes to weeds, they're ruthless competitors for water and nutrients, so pull up the large ones first and once they're out of the way, rough up just the top inch of soil around your plants with a cultivator tool or with your finger tips. This will upset the small weed sprouts and keep them from developing into full grown plants.

GROWING GUIDE | PAGES

Pests | 67-72

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An Illustrated Guide to Organic Gardening: How to Garden in Harmony with Nature | By Bob Thompson

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