



by Peggy Koppmann

July is the high-water mark for gardeners. Everything is growing, thriving and blossoming, (except for what the voles ate!). The Garden Walk and Open Gardens season is here and all is right with the gardening world. Oh, it's also National Ice Cream month so the proper celebration is a visit to one of the area garden walks, followed by a hot fudge sundae. Now, that's summer at its best.

**Fading Beauties** – Most perennials bloom for only a few weeks, while some will bloom continuously or rebloom under the right conditions. Cut the flower stalks on Daylilies, Iris, Primrose, and Pulmonaria back to the base. Shasta daisies, Achillea, and Salvia require two cut-backs. The first is to take the flowers off to the next set of leaves, (don't leave a stub); the second is after a couple of weeks when the flower stalks look sickly, cut the entire stalk back to the base. Coreopsis and perennial flax get sheared back by ¼ after they are about done blooming. Catmint, Lamium and Cranesbill can also be sheared back after blooming. Remember that plants that are cut back to basal foliage, (ex. Daisies, Penstemon) will leave a gap in your garden design. Try to intersperse them throughout the garden to keep gaps to a minimum. Once again, The Well-Tended Perennial Garden, Di-Sabato-Aust, is an excellent reference for when and what to cut back.

**Staying Put-** Oriental poppies do not like to be moved but there are some ways to increase their numbers in your garden. Mature plants will often show side plants with their own root system that can be detached and potted up. Root cuttings may also be taken from mature plants by lifting the plant and cutting off a section of the root system. You can place the entire root in moistened medium or snip the root into 1 – 1 ½ inch cuttings and place in a tray filled with potting medium or compost. See [gardenersworld.com](http://gardenersworld.com) for good directions or take a look at the YouTube videos that demonstrate the method. Either way, adding poppies in the garden is a great idea.

**Sick Ward** – Your beautiful clematis has just wilted for no apparent reason. There's a good chance that it's been hit by a fungus called clematis wilt, (*Ascochyta clematidina*). It can kill most or all of the top growth but roots generally survive. You might see reddish lesions on the stems but it invades a plant quickly before you can act. Sometimes a few stems of the plant can survive. The disease is spread by spores carried by the wind or that remained in the debris of last year's vines. Damp, humid weather and thick vines that remain wet into the day are thought to be factors.

Cut any affected stems right back to ground level and dispose of them rather than composting them. A sulfur fungicide, applied properly, may be used in the spring, but the best prevention is to clean up all vines and leaf growth in the fall and dispose of all materials. Keep the clematis roots watered after cutting back and watch for new growth to appear.

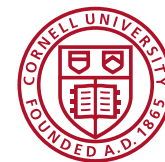
**Better Late Than ...** – It's time to think about late season planting of vegetables and herbs to be harvested right into the fall. Beans and lettuce can be reseeded now along with peas and cole crops. The important factor is how long you have before the first frost. Zone 5 has a first frost date of October 1-15 while Zone 6 has a frost date of October 15-31. See

the USDA website at <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov> for full details and some interesting maps. Then check out midsummer planting for fall harvest at [extension.umn.edu](http://extension.umn.edu) for a comprehensive list of vegetables and herbs and their days to maturity. Do the math first and then plant accordingly.

## And Then -

Water the soil, not the plant; pinch back asters and chrysanthemums one last time; let the lawn go dormant; fertilize roses; fertilize needle evergreens and azaleas with an acid-loving formula; propagate shrubs from softwood cuttings; keep up with the deer repellent; divide bearded iris; protect grape clusters from birds; keep cucumbers and tomatoes watered; remove side shoots from tomatoes; share some of your harvest with a local food bank; mark your calendar for garden visitations to be followed by bouts of envy and then admiration for the work of the talented gardeners of Western New York.

Photo credit: Howard F. Schwartz, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org



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