



Desert summer

Summer in the Mojave Desert means not needing to make excuses for doing nothing in the garden. When it is hot enough to boil water on the patio, who can do anything like labor? Aside from a few basics, like checking the irrigation lines, and deadheading flowering plants, you want to sit back and enjoy the great results of spring planting and preparation. It is true, however, that you can never neglect certain fundamental activities. Irrigation problems result in plant **death**, for one thing – excess water drowns plants and wastes water, and insufficient water in the summer puts the plants into a convection oven. Removing spent blossoms from flowering plants and shrubs can actually fool them into blooming for extended periods; and of course, more flowers makes them look beautiful for longer.

Deadheading



Deadheading is related to general garden grooming. You would have to be crazy to try doing any serious pruning during the high summer heat, because that can really stress plants, and it is not terribly beneficial to the intrepid gardener, either. Still, it is a good idea to trim off dead or dried out tissue, whether it is green or woody. Pick up any plant parts that have dropped onto the ground, such as fallen fruits or seedpods. That will help cut down on volunteer seedlings that can become problems later. Keep an eye out for any leaves that have been injured by insects. Cleaning them out can prevent insect infestations next season. If any leaves, fruits, or stems seem at all diseased – slimy, or covered with fungal threads – getting rid of them will limit infection problems in the garden.

With all of these, whether the problems are from disease or insects, remember to take that tissue away from the plants. If you see insects, or signs of disease, then **throw away** the affected plant material – bag it up; do not just put it off to the side, and definitely not into the compost. On the other hand, healthy leaves that simply blew to the ground in one of our hot wind episodes can go right into the compost.

One other unavoidable task is weeding. This is definitely something to do early in the morning. Getting weeds out of the ground will not only make the garden look better, it will also protect the desirable plants. Weeds are plants that have the unfortunate ability to out-compete the plants we paid for with money and toil. Learn what weeds are in your area, and when they are most vulnerable. Hoeing and pulling them while they are still small is much easier than waiting until they are big and gone to seed. That creates big future weed problems.

There are several tools for weeding, and one only needs to look on the internet to find ergonomically designed ones that are comfortable to use.

As long as the garden is a little tidy and properly watered, you know that it is going to make your heart feel good, no matter how beastly hot the weather is.

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