



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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*Volume 2, July 2012*

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### Greetings,

It has been a hot summer so far. There are special concerns in the garden during periods of intense heat. We have included some of them in the articles below.

## July 4th 1/2" Rain...July 15th 3/10" Rain ....Not Enough!

### Our Gardens Need 1" of Rain Weekly

Plants are similar to humans in many ways. Don't we seem to get a cold or flu when our immune system is weakened due to lack of sleep, stress, or improper diet? Drought can weaken the overall vigor of a plant allowing pests to move in and take over. On trees, wood borers, bark beetles, spider mites, aphids, and lace bugs can do a lot more damage in times of drought. A tree also has a hindered ability to compartmentalize small wounds thereby allowing pathogens to colonize. Stem cankers (a localized area on a stem where bark is sunken or missing) are a common result.

## Summer Pruning!

If we haven't contacted you about summer pruning, please e-mail [Priscilla](mailto:Priscilla) today!

The hot dry weather is bringing with it the increased likelihood of drought conditions. Drought stress occurs when water loss surpasses the capacity of roots to absorb water and when the plant's water content is diminished enough to interfere

with functional plant processes. The effects of drought can be both short term and long term. Short term effects can include leaf scorch, defoliation and wilting.



Signs of Drought Stress

Even after drought conditions cease and the rain returns, wood plants can show secondary symptoms of drought stress for years down the road. These long term effects can include branch dieback, stunted growth, and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases. Sustained drought can cause dieback in the canopy of a tree. This is directly related to the loss of adaptive fine feeder roots. In drought conditions,

these small absorbent roots develop in the upper layers of soil to try to capture what little soil moisture exists. If drought conditions persist, the feeder roots die off creating a deficit in the amount of water that can reach into the upper portion of a tree. To compensate for this deficit, branch die-back will occur in the canopy and could eventually lead to tree death. Resources for leaf and flower buds will be diminished too. The effects will be noticed the following year as a loss of fruit and flower production.



Monarda fistulosa at one of the gardens on Priscilla's tour.

## **Gardens of the Nashoba Valley**

There is still time to sign up for the course that Priscilla is teaching for the New England Wild Flower Society. You will visit Priscilla's garden as well as other beautiful Nashoba Valley gardens.

Please visit our [website](#) for more details.

When assessing drought conditions, it is important to not only look at the total amount of precipitation received but also the frequency and pattern of rainfall. In other words, a massive fall storm cannot make up for weeks of drought conditions in the summertime.

Climate change is making it harder and harder to predict what a typical growing season will look like. 2010 brought us weeks of drought in the summertime, while 2011 brought tropical storms that wreaked havoc throughout New England, causing flooding, downed trees, and standing trees with broken limbs.

The past two years have been rough on woody plants. Therefore, it's more important than ever to take steps this year that will supplement the health of your trees and shrubs. Siting trees and shrubs in the proper location, amending the soil with compost and compost tea, applying mulch, weeding around the base, and watering deeply once weekly will help create a buffer against drought related damage. Anything planted this season will need more frequent water. See Pumpkin Brook's [Summer Watering Tips](#) for more information.

Container plants need daily watering - morning or late afternoon is the best time. Group pots together for ease of care.

## **Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Pets from Lyme Disease with Our Tick and Mosquito Spray Program**

Many of us are aware of the danger of Lyme disease and the importance of good prevention tactics like wearing long pants and shirts, tucking pants into socks, and wearing bug spray. This time of year it is especially important to check your body for ticks, particularly in areas where they like to burrow like armpits, the backs of knees and the groin area.

From May through August, deer ticks are in their immature

nymph stage, when they are about the size of a poppy seed. This is the time of year when most cases of Lyme disease develop as a result of not being able to see and remove the tiny tick. This stage also coincides with the time of year that we are more likely to be outside and exposed to tick habitat. So please, we urge you to take the extra few minutes to practice prevention techniques and body monitoring!

In addition to these common sense practices, we encourage you to consider our tick and mosquito spray program. We have found it to be highly effective. If you live near rock walls, on a forested edge, or have a large deer population in community, you should

really consider our program as you are at a higher risk for developing Lyme disease. If you live near a wetland or pond, our organic spray can help keep mosquito populations down.



This is how small a tick could be!

We use a natural liquid cedar concentrate applied at the perimeter of your yard that repels not only ticks but also mosquitoes, fleas, black flies, gnats, and a host of other pests. The spray can also be applied around the perimeter of your house to deter termites and ants. The pleasant smelling spray remains effective on pests for up to a month or more. Generally, four applications are enough for the entire tick and mosquito season. In cases of heavy infestation, more applications may be required. We have lowered the cost of our service this year to encourage more people to participate in this invaluable prevention method. The spray is 100% safe for humans, pets, and plants. We also sell individual canisters or the cedar oil spray for \$10 each. For more information, please e-mail [Carmin](#) or give him a call at 978-870-0423.

## **Pest to Watch Out For...Japanese Beetle**

We deal with these summer insect pests in two ways, with one strategy for the adults and another for their larvae, called grubs.

For immediate relief from skeletonized leaves, we hand pick the adult beetles using a jar of soapy water to drown them. This job is best done in early morning or late afternoon when temperatures are cooler and the beetles are more sluggish. In the mid-day heat, they move very quickly and avoid capture!

Additionally, the neem oil product we use called Aza-Direct is listed for control of adult beetles. However, caution needs to be taken with applications of neem products in hot weather, as

it can quickly burn tender new growth tips. The neem coating on leaves make them taste "bad" to the beetles, and if applied early enough in beetle season, can deter feeding.

This August, we will be applying two strains of microscopic organisms called beneficial nematodes to gardens and adjacent lawn areas where Japanese beetle adults have been seen feeding on plants. Their favorites are most often in the rose family. We will plan to do this on a rainy or overcast day when the soil is saturated with water.

Nematodes need moisture to dive down into the soil to either a shallow level or a deeper 5" depth (that's why we choose two strains with two different levels of feeding preference). They will attack the beetle larvae in their "soft shell" or most vulnerable stage. The nematodes then reproduce and begin to colonize your soil, thereby attacking subsequent generations of Japanese beetle grubs, among other pests such as black vine weevil, corn earworm larvae, cutworms and fungus gnats.



Call us if you see these on your roses!

One other thing to do is to apply [Milky Spore](#) (a product containing a fungal disease that affects the beetle larvae) to the garden and lawn near where the beetles were seen feeding. This can be put down as soon as the Japanese beetles go back underground in late August. Again, the object is to attack their larvae in the soft-shell stage.

Sounds bizarre? Actually these are some of the most cutting edge, completely safe methods of preventing insect problems. Join the wave of 21st century organic gardening and try these wonderful new methods!

## July Is the Time for.....

- Keeping all plants well hydrated in periods of heat
- Deadheading annuals and perennials to promote rebloom and good habit
- Dividing tall bearded iris
- Pruning shrubs and trees
- Weeding
- Filling birdbaths to provide a ready source of water
- Topping off mulch in beds where it has become too thin
- Harvesting vegetables and replanting summer squash and beans for a fall crop
- Deadheading rhododendrons and mountain laurels
- Cutting back reblooming roses above a set of five outward facing leaves
- Cutting back vegetative canes of climbing roses (all

- Cutting back vegetative canes of climbing roses (all leaves, no buds)
- Refreshing containers with new plants as needed
- Making notes about perennials to divide or transplant in fall
- Touring other gardens for inspiration

I hope you will join me on Saturday in some beautiful Nashoba Valley gardens. The weatherman is predicting that the humidity should be lowered, and we should have a beautiful summer day. Visit our [website](#) for more details. To sign up, visit the [New England Wild Flower Society](#) website.

**Sincerely,**  
Priscilla

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