

Gardening

with
Marjorie Keates

Hot weather is with us and I cannot stress too often the value of mulching. According to the Oxford Dictionary:

Mulch-in gardening, a mixture of wet straw, leaves, loose earth etc., spread on the ground to protect the roots of newly planted trees etc.

If you planted trees this spring, unless they're in a low, dank spot, it would be a good idea to water well, then mulch with hay. I prefer to use hay here rather than in the garden because if the weed and grass seeds sprout it doesn't cause a problem around the trees, but in the garden--that's another story. I like to mulch trees that I planted other years as well. Straw manure can be used here. Don't mulch pear trees with manure, though, as heavy fertilization can produce favourable conditions for fire blight.

If you have a large area to keep mowed, consider a meadow garden. Let the grass and wildflowers grow freely and mow once a year preferably August. The daisies and hawkweed (orange and yellow) will provide a colourful landscape that bends and sways with the wind.

Instead of spraying with commercial products when pests appear, why not try a "home remedy"?

Companion planting:

- plant garlic with roses to develop a resistance against blackspot, mildew, and aphids.
- plant parsley with roses as a protection against rose beetles.
- plant a few radishes with members of the cucumber family (melons, squash, etc.) to help stave off the striped or spotted cucumber beetle.
- marigolds planted near cucumbers may lure cucumber beetles away from the cucumbers, etc.
- nasturtiums may lure cucumber beetles and aphids
- sage, thyme, nasturtium, catnip, or mint can be used as a deterrent against cabbage butterfly.

If you are bothered by aphids on your plants, try just hosing them off. They usually fail to return. You can also hose out the cabbage worm from your cabbage plants.

If you want to try something a little stronger, spray cabbage worms or aphids with a solution of one tablespoon salt dissolved in two gallons of water.

Best of all, build up and maintain a fertile soil.

And on the lovely sunny afternoons gather rosebud petals to make potpourri.

Gardener's Woe

Does one admit defeat when you have purchased net to cover the strawberries to protect them from hungry birds, uncovered them to discover spittle bugs rampant as well as slugs well established, seeing a cute, but bold chipmunk munching on a bright red berry while facing you, hanging aluminum plates to discourage the hungry little pests and putting moth balls all around the plot? Never!

I wonder what a cupful of bird-pecked, chipmunk gnawed, slug infested, moth ball tasting strawberries tastes like.

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SOME POPULAR WEATHER NOTIONS

Red sunset means dull sunrise.

Red morning sky means rain or wind.

Soft, fleecy clouds mean fair weather.

Rough, heavy clouds mean wind.

Thin, streaked clouds mean wind or rain.

Seabirds, flying early and far to sea means fair weather.

Seabirds flying near land or inland means bad weather.

Swallows, flying low, close to home, means rain or wind.

Pigs carrying straw to pens means bad weather.



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August issue will be one week late. Layout night Aug. 5th