



Days of the Dog Star by Bob Dailey

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“You have to love a nation that celebrates its independence every July 4th, not with a parade of guns, tanks, and soldiers who file by the White House in a show of strength and muscle, but with family picnics where kids throw Frisbees, the potato salad gets iffy, and the flies die from happiness. You may think you have overeaten, but it is patriotism.”

- Erma Bombeck



Your Edible Garden

Bob Dailey, *Master Gardener*
Wednesday, July 25, 2012
6:30 to 7:30 p.m.
South Regional Library
2101 Lake Robbins Drive
Call 936-442-7727, select option 2
for reservations

Soil: The Living Layer of Life Building Good Soil and Growing Fall Vegetables

Tom LeRoy, *Author, Horticulturalist*
Saturday, August 18, 2012
9 a.m. to noon
The Woodlands Township
2801 Technology Forest Blvd.
Seating limited; reservations
required.

[CLICK HERE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS!](#)

We are now officially in “The Dog Days of Summer,” the time of year, roughly between the July 4 and the end of August, when the weather is believed to be the hottest. The phrase actually came from ancient Romans and referred to the Dog Star, Sirius. The (erroneous) theory was that because Sirius approached the sun during this period, the weather became hotter. The Romans called it Dies Caniculares (Days of the Dog Star).



Chinch Bugs

Chinch bugs tend to be a problem with St. Augustine lawns in The Woodlands, and each summer sends residents scrambling in all directions. The best way to control chinch bugs is to have a healthy lawn. Don't remove more than one-third of the grass blade when mowing. Improve soil conditions by applying organic compost in the fall and spring. Only water lawns when they need it (one inch a week is recommended) and use slow-release organic fertilizers. A healthy lawn will attract beneficial insects like ladybugs, lacewings and big-eyed bugs, which will then feed on a large number of chinch bugs.

Trees

This is the absolute worst time to plant trees. Trees should be planted in the dead of winter when they're in full dormancy. However, it is a good time to decide if you want to add trees to your landscape. Trees that have survived droughts and stress have leafed out. Look at the trees in your environment. Take time to see the smaller, understory trees and the part they play in the overall appearance of a garden or wildscape. Then, attend the Arbor Day celebration on Saturday, January 19, 2013, at Rob Fleming Park, and get some free, bare-rooted trees and plant them in the space of your choosing.

Native versus Non-natives

This time of year is excellent to see the difference in how native and non-native plants deal with heat and stress. Look for

flowers drying and dropping off, yellowing leaves, brown spots and brown stems.

Much of the damage will be to non-native or non-adapted plants, mainly because they are not accustomed to the climate. Now might be a good time to purchase a good book on native plants. It might also be time to think about replacing some of those beautiful but needy and costly-to-care-for plants with beautiful but hardy native flora.

Vegetables

It's far too hot to plant vegetables now, but it's not too hot to get ready your garden ready. Pull all spent plants and compost them. Do not compost diseased plants in your home composting operation. Industrial compost operations do get hot enough to kill off pathogens, so you may put them in green waste left at the curb.

Consider planting a cover crop of southern peas (crowder, black eyed or purple hull), soybeans or another type of legume right now; not for the crop, but for the nitrogen they provide to the soil. You'll want to plant your fall garden in September, so now's a good time to let nature do her work.

If you'd prefer not to plant a cover crop, then mulch your vegetable garden area with hay or pine straw. The mulch will help keep weeds in check, keep the ground moist and cool (for those microbes and earthworms to continue doing their thing) and will add organic material to the soil.

