

# July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7



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# Summer Lettuce... To grow or not to grow?

By Cleve Campbell | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7



Lettuce (*Lactuca sativa*) is not usually a vegetable we think of growing in the middle of summer in central Virginia. It is typically thought of as a cool season crop, sensitive to high temperatures and dry soils. Lettuce tends to bolt in response to the stress of high temperatures and the leaves become bitter and tough as the plant puts its growth into flowering. However, you too can grow fresh lettuce during the summer by choosing the correct varieties, paying attention to the planting location, using shade or seasonal covering, and watering sufficiently. The following techniques will hopefully convince you to meet the heat challenge.

First, some basics:

## **Soil Requirements**

Lettuce will grow in a wide range of soils, but prefers a slightly acidic, loamy soil, pH of 6.0-6.5, that has been amended with organic matter. Lettuce is an excellent choice for growing in raised beds or in containers.

## **Seed Facts and Planting**

The optimum soil temperature for germination is 60-80 degrees F. According to Clemson University research, lettuce seeds will not germinate if the soil temperature is above 95 degrees F. Lettuce is easily grown by direct seeding but if your soil temperature is over 90 degrees F, you may want to consider one of two methods: 1) precool the soil by watering and then cover the area with a board for a few days, or 2) germinate seeds indoors in a flat away from the heat and then transplant the seedlings outdoors. Either way, be sure to plant seeds no deeper than 1/8-1/4" since many types of lettuce need light to germinate. Or, just "dust" the seeds with fine soil or compost, and then tamp down with a rake end so that the seeds make good soil contact. Keep the seedbed moist and thin the seedlings as necessary.

Choose a planting site that provides shade because too much sun is a problem during the heat of summer. Here are some techniques to try:

- Plant in a shady area of your garden, or on the north or east side of tall plantings such as corn or caged tomatoes.
- Take a low, hooped structure made of wire or PVC plastic hoops and place over rebar that you've driven into the ground. Top with a shade cloth. Cloths can be ordered from landscape suppliers who can provide different-sized cloths to fit your area. The cloths come with grommets and so can be tied down. These cloths should last for years.
- Repurpose lightweight bed sheets as shade cloth
- Use lightweight row covers to provide some shade; I personally think you need more shade than this alone.
- Plant lettuce in containers that you can easily move into the shade.

## Selecting Varieties

Lettuce is a fast-growing crop with varieties typically maturing within 30-60 days. Sowing small amounts every 7-14 days is the recommended summer planting schedule that will provide a continuous harvest. This is also called succession planting. Selecting varieties with heat-tolerance and slow-bolting is one of the keys to success.

In general, there are four major categories of lettuce:

- **Heading or Crisphead,**
- **Cos or Romaine,**
- **Butterhead,**
- **Loose-leaf,**

Heading or crisphead types are in general adapted to northern conditions and require the most care. They are very heat-sensitive and would not be my choice for summer plantings. If you insist, VA Tech lists ([VCE Publication 426-480](#)) 'Summer-Time' as a heat-tolerant, heading lettuce.

Cos or Romaine lettuce has long, narrow leaves with an upright growth habit forming loose, elongated heads, firmer than loose-leaf lettuces, with a crispy, center rib. Parris Island cos (29-days), and Jericho (60-days) are considered two good heat-tolerant choices in this category.

Butterhead lettuce is a soft, tender, and loose-heading type that is divided into two subgroups: Boston and bibb. Bibb lettuces are smaller and darker green than the Boston type. All have a delicate, sweet, buttery flavor. Bibb lettuce will develop bitterness if temperatures are above 95 degrees F. Three good choices are: Buttercrunch (55-days), a small, fast-maturing, dark green bibb lettuce; Tom Thumb, (35-50-days) an easy, fast-growing miniature variety of butterhead; and Red Cross (48d), a heat-tolerant, red butterhead.

Loose-leaf lettuce, with either green or reddish leaves, is the most commonly grown lettuce. Leaves may be smooth, round, wrinkled, serrated or curled. The Summercrisp/Batavia lettuces are heat-tolerant plants that initially are open like loose-leaf, but then mature to a more compact bunch or head. Good choices in this category: Muir (50-days) is extremely heat-tolerant; Nevada (48-days) has great flavor and stays mild; Sierra (45-days) is a cut-and-come-again type with tall, open heads, thick, bright green-with-red-tinged leaves, and a sweet and nutty flavor; Simpson Elite (48 days) is a loose-leaf type that is also a great summer choice similar to Black Seeded Simpson but is slower-bolting and more heat-tolerant.



Heading or crisphead lettuce



Romaine Lettuce 'Little Gen'



Butterhead Lettuce



Loose-leaf Lettuce

### Care/Cultural Practices

**Fertilizing:** Incorporate compost and lots of organic matter into the soil prior to planting. In general, the recommendation is to use 5-10-10 at 3 pounds per 100 square feet before planting. Although lettuce has low fertility needs, it does need some nitrogen for good green leaf growth. Use a balanced starter fertilizer or compost initially, and then side-dress with compost tea or fertilizer at least once during the growing season. Of course, the amount of fertilizer depends on your soil type, with sandy soils needing the most.

**Watering:** The most critical period for moisture is during germination and plant establishment. Water frequently during the first 2 weeks to keep the seedbed moist but not waterlogged. A light sprinkling of leaf compost, mulch, or straw will help to conserve moisture. Continue to water lettuce once established every 4-5 days to keep the plants healthy and producing. Clemson Extension recommends watering sufficiently enough to moisten the soil to a depth of 4-6 inches. Lettuce grown in containers or raised beds will need to be watered more frequently. Over-watering in clay soils can lead to disease issues, so be careful. Water early in the day so that foliage has time to dry before dark.

**Weeding:** Keep your bed weed-free, which will avoid water competition and help manage insects. Lettuce is shallow-rooted so be careful to prevent root injury. Tight plant spacing will help plants to quickly shade the soil and help suppress weeds.

**Insects and Diseases:** The most common pests are aphids, flea beetles, slugs, cutworms and leafhoppers.

The most common diseases include damping-off, Bottom rot disease, and aster-yellows, which is spread by leafhoppers. Both insects and diseases tend to be controlled by using cultural garden practices. You may consider using insecticidal soaps or horticultural oils, but be sure to read the labels.

In summary, you can grow lettuce in the summertime heat by:

- Choosing varieties that are heat-tolerant and slow-bolting. My 3 favorites are easy to remember: Muir, Sierra, and Nevada.



Muir Lettuce



Sierra Lettuce



Nevada Lettuce

- Choose a planting site that provides shade.
- Don't skimp on water.
- Make successive plantings to replace spent plants.
- Use sound cultural practices: inspect plants for insects and diseases, hand pick and destroy destructive insects, and remove diseased leaves or plants.
- Harvest regularly and enjoy!

Thanks for stopping by The Garden Shed. We hope you visit us again next month.

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# Daylilies

By Cleve Campbell | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7



With well over [85,500 cultivars](#) created and registered in the past 100 years, daylilies are something to write about! [Hemerocallis](#), which means “beauty for a day,” is the scientific name for this perennial whose bloom lasts just one day, thus giving its common name, daylily. But do not worry, because there are more blooms to follow on each scape (flower stalk) for at least six more days. So a good-sized clump with six buds per scape will bloom for about two weeks. Current hybridizers aim for at least 20 buds per scape, creating a long bloom time. Daylily varieties can be found for each part of a blooming season that extends from May and until September. I even had a daylily that rebloomed in November! Peak season in Central Virginia is early July.

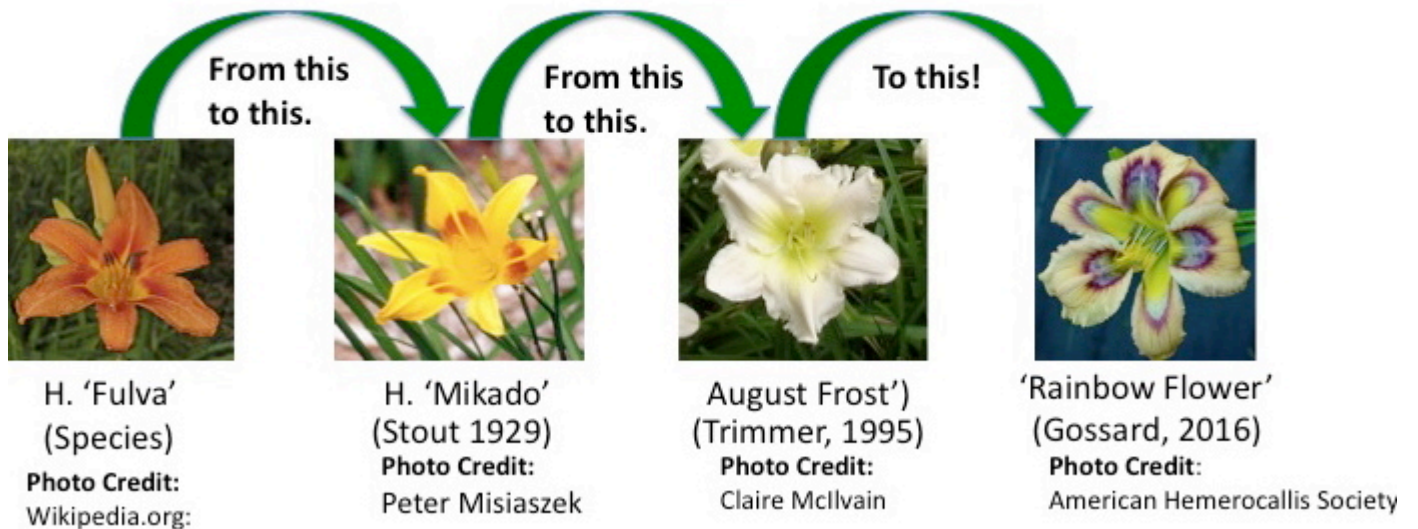


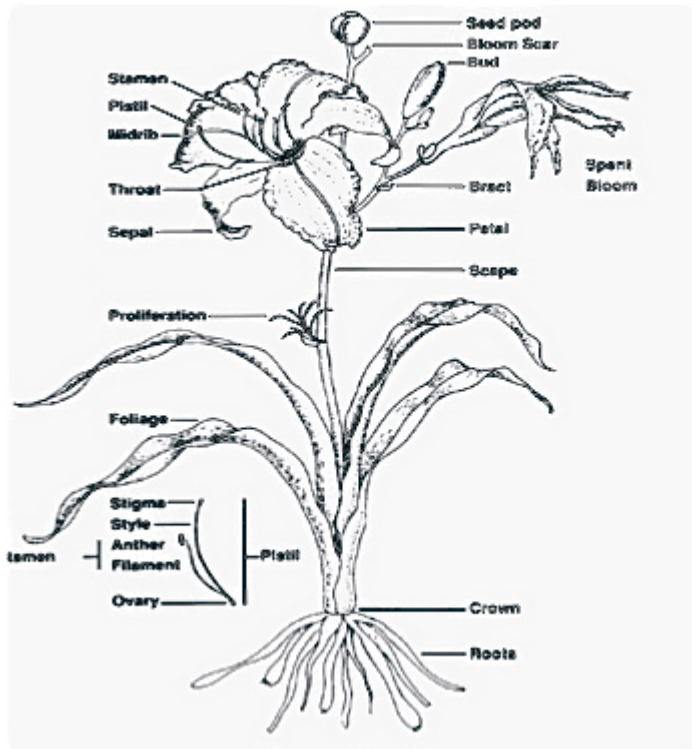
Orange "Roadside" daylilies have become a common sight along our roadways.

✘ **"You've come a long way baby!"** is an apt tagline for the daylily. [Hybridizers](#) have transformed a few basic species of daylilies into such elaborate, colorful bloomers that they have been nominated as "the poor man's orchid." Most of you must be familiar with the classic orange "roadside" daylily, *Hemerocallis fulva*, native to Asia- a marvel of vigor because it is sterile (as is its cousin, 'Kwanzo'). Arriving here with the [18th century](#) settlers, *H. fulva* has marched its way up and down and across our continent by sending out shoots, or stolons. If planted in a bed with other daylilies or perennials, it can easily crowd them out. Even a conscientious gardener trying to rein them in will often miss some stolons which will get going somewhere else in their or their neighbor's bed.

Our modern hybrids come from an *H. fulva* variant and the 18 other fertile species also originating in Asia (mainly China, Korea and Japan). [Dr. Arlow A. Stout](#), N.Y. Botanical Gardens, 1911 - 1947, is considered the father of the modern daylily. The first cultivar introduced by him in 1929 was 'Mikado,' derived from a complex of daylily species including an *H. fulva* variant. Depending on the variety, daylilies now grow in all United States regions but thrive in USDA Hardiness Zones [4 through 9](#).

**Hybridizers have transformed the species lily into daylilies with a very wide range of colors.**





Drawn by Cheryl Postlewait for the American Hemerocallis Society.

## Daylily Botany

Each daylily plant is called a fan. Daylilies have roots; a crown; a scape (flower stalk); tall, slender green foliage; buds; and blossoms. The flower, with its female pistil and male stamen, is the point at which crosses for new plants are made resulting in seed. Sometimes, a tiny plant called a proliferation appears on the scape below the blossom (similar to the baby plants of a spider plant). Proliferations may be rooted to form a plant (clone) identical to the mother plant. Often, small [roots](#) form and occasionally a [flower](#) is produced while the proliferation is still on the scape. In this case, cut the scape above the proliferation and cut about three inches of scape below the proliferation. Plant the cutting (preferably with rooting hormone) in a pot with the tiny roots just below the soil. A new clone will grow, but will be as small as a seedling when it comes back the following year.

## Hybridization

Hybridizers begin their work by creating paper labels or a marking system for their desired crosses. Early in the morning, before the bees have had much time but after pollen has dried, they transfer pollen to end of the pistil (in the center of each flower). The flower on the parent plant is then labeled with the cross.



Daylily plant with hybridizing tags.

When you visit a hybridizer's garden, you might see labels hanging all over the plants!

Hybrid basics need to be understood for those who want to get more of their favorite cultivar. Hybrid daylilies form seed readily, but the new plant **will not be true** to the parent plant because it is a hybrid. Therefore, daylilies must be divided to get another cultivar matching the original. When a good size clump of lilies develops by its 'clonal' increase from the roots, the plant is dug and the multiple plants separated. It is best to divide the clump down to two or three fans which are then planted. The best time to divide is in late summer or in very early fall, giving the new plants a chance to develop roots before winter sets in. If you plant in the spring, mulch the plants well and be sure to water them heavily at least once a week. Growers usually send you plant divisions bare-rooted. Their foliage should be cut back to about 6 - 7 inches, and they should be soaked for an hour.

When planting a daylily, dig a deep hole with soil mounded in the middle. Place the roots over the mound

and then cover them. If the plants come in a pot, be sure that the crown is at the soil surface level. Daylilies won't bloom well if planted too deeply. Water the hole well so that the water runs out and the soil falls back around the roots. Put a plastic marker with the plant's name written in **PENCIL**. Most labels made with markers fade. After the first freeze in the fall, mulch the lilies well so that the freezes won't kill their roots.

Daylilies prefer **neutral soil (pH 6.5-7.0)**. They grow very well in Virginia clay, but do best in soil heavily amended with compost/manure. Give daylilies at least 18 inches of space to grow. Daylilies, especially the lighter colored ones, bloom best when planted in full sun. Reds and purples tend to slick out in the heat so give them some afternoon shade. Once established, daylilies should be mulched in the summer. They hate hot roots and need the mulch to help retain water so that they will bloom well. When the daylily clump has plants that are all over each other and they produce fewer blooms from one year to the next, it is time to divide. Sometimes, if plants won't separate easily, you will have to fork them apart or use a shovel or garden knife to cut them apart. Cut the foliage back to 6 - 8 inches and replant as for a bare-rooted plant. Replant them in groups of two or three close to each other and give the rest away.

### **Foliage, Bloom Habit and Bloom Color**

Daylilies have three foliage habits: dormant (DOR.) daylilies die back in the winter; evergreen (EV) daylilies stay green throughout the winter (there are hardy evergreens, but most evergreens prefer the warmer states); and semi-evergreen (SEV) die back when the winter is cold but stay green in warmer climates.

Daylilies also have three blooming habits: diurnal flowers bloom for the day from dawn until dusk; nocturnal flowers bloom from early afternoon until the following morning or afternoon; and extended flowers bloom at least 16 hours - so into the evening. The lilies that bloom into the evening can be used as cut flowers, especially if they have well-developed bud on the scape. Daylily seasons are designated by Extra Early (EE), Early (E), Early Midseason (EM), Midseason (M), Late Midseason (LM), Late (L) and Very Late (VL).(5)

Hybridizers have transformed the species lily into daylilies with a very wide range of colors with good color saturation - red, maroon, gold, yellow, orange, pink, purple, near white, but no "true blue" (lacking purple tones), and no pure white colors have yet been developed. They are picoteed, eyed, striped, edged, ruffled, pleated, sculpted, and more. Normally having three petals and three sepals, daylilies are also double with hose-in-hose, and carnation-types. Some have extra petals and sepals called 'polymerous' (8 - 30). There are miniature low daylilies and daylilies over 6 feet tall! Some daylilies rebloom instantly, putting up two sets of scapes and others rest for a few weeks and then rebloom. Many are mildly fragrant. Finally, hybridizers have altered the chromosomes from the diploid with 22, to the tetraploid with 44. The *H. fulva* is a diploid; 'Kwanzo' is a triploid with 33 chromosomes. The "Tets" (tetraploids) have thicker scapes, heavier flowers, and are sturdier-looking plants. They have offered the hybridizer more genes to work with and tend to be more expensive because of the cost involved in converting the good diploid plants to tetraploids. The following photos show some of the many advancements in daylily hybridizing:



'Captivating Smile' (Rice)  
Gold Edge + Sepal Pattern



'Litchfield Tribute' (Roycroft)  
Color Breakthrough in red



'Wispy Rays' (Joiner)  
Pattern and huge size



'Green Python' (Gossard)  
Spider –narrow petals



'Francis Joiner' (Joiner)  
Double



'Poly Nation' Polymerous  
(Woodhenge Gardens)



'Planet Claire' (Hanson)  
Sculpted and flat flower



'Blue Dragon' (Gossard)  
Moving on blue color



'Isaac' (Harris) Bud-Builder  
Keeps growing new buds



'Lotus Position' (Rice)  
Recurved and pinched



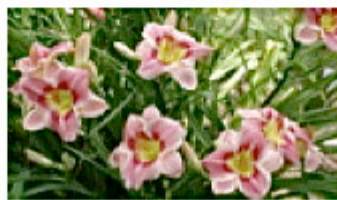
'Just for Pat' (Roycroft)  
Beautiful clear pink



'Elvira's Kiss' (Gossard)  
White "teeth" border



'Keswick Gracious Lady' (McIlvain)  
Classic daylily clump



'Carolina Trilogy' (Roycroft)  
Bi-tone, eye with eye and white edge



'Happy Returns' (Apps)  
Repeat bloom

Photo Credit: Claire McIlvain

## Edible to Both Man and Deer

Daylilies are edible and they are used in Asian recipes such as Moo Shu Pork. Having tasted the flowers, I have found that they can be mild or very peppery. Young leaves and roots are also edible. This makes them very vulnerable to deer and voles. Other pests include aphids, spider mites, thrips and slugs. Although daylilies sometimes get "spring sickness," they usually recover. Otherwise, in our growing zone with hard winters, they are disease-free. A lethal rust has effected them in zones 9, 10 and 11. If you buy daylilies from those areas, it is wise to quarantine them over the winter until the cold has killed the disease. By the way, daylilies are [poisonous to cats](#), but I have never heard of a cat attracted to them.

## Plant Growers

Because the plants reproduce by increasing the number of fans through cloning, it takes many years for a hybridizer to bring a daylily to market - especially to a large commercial market. There are hundreds of hybridizers who have transformed their production efforts into a business by selling product out of their backyards. Others have turned their efforts into sizable businesses. New hybrids can run in the hundreds of dollars, but, as the years go by, their price comes down and the once-rare daylily will sell for \$10.00 - \$20.00. The American Hemerocallis Society's website, [daylily.com](http://daylily.com), can put you in touch with these growers.

Local daylily clubs are also a good way to source growers. After a number of years, divided award winners will make their way to large commercial growers. We have several local hybridizers in our area, two of whom are nationally recognized and honored for their efforts - Margo Reed and Jim Murphy. They sell daylilies at their Woodhenge Garden in North Garden, VA. Also, Stardreamer Daylilies, owned by Carol and Dave Sarginger located in Ruckersville, is also a local source for a variety of daylilies. Your local garden center will carry daylilies which are potted in soil. These are from the large commercial growers and are well-proven for performance.

Daylilies are many gardeners' favorite plants. They are dependable perennials, they are prolific and colorful bloomers, and they are relatively free of pests, with the exception of deer. Daylilies are tolerant of drought and flooding, immune to heat stress, tolerant of most soils and grow well in full sun or light shade.

### **About the Author:**

Claire McIlvain has been a Master Gardener since 2013 and has grown and been a daylily hybridizer for over 25 years. She has also been an active member of the American Hemerocallis Society and Richmond Daylily Society for over 25 years. She also has served as the President of the Charlottesville Daylily Club.

The vendor names herein are provided for information purposes only and no discrimination and endorsement is implied .

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# Chelone – A funny name but a Sweet Flower

By Patsy Chadwick | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7



Open any gardening magazine or horticultural journal and you'll find much attention devoted to the merits of drought and heat-tolerant plants in the ornamental landscape. That makes sense in view of our past few years' warmer than normal, dry summers. But what if you don't have a hot, dry, sunny site? Some gardeners have shady conditions coupled with damp or even soggy soil. For them, the challenge lies in identifying plants that like such growing conditions. *Chelone* is an ideal choice for just such a garden.

If you're not familiar with *Chelone*, it's pronounced kee-LO-nee, which rhymes with baloney. The name is derived from the Greek word for tortoise. The common name for this plant, turtlehead, is inspired by the quirky-looking tubular, two-lipped shape of the flowers. They call to mind an animal's gaping mouth. The shape is also reminiscent of snapdragon blossoms, which is not surprising since the two plants are related.

*Chelone's* glossy, dark green, simple, oval- to lance-shaped leaves have lightly toothed margins and appear opposite one another on stiff, weather-resistant stems. The handsome foliage and the plant's tidy, upright habit present a perfect foil for the plant's white or pink flowers. The combination is particularly winsome in either dappled sunlight or shade.

One of the best attributes of *Chelone* is that it blooms later than most perennials, bringing a fresh look and appeal to the late summer garden. The flowers are borne on terminal spikes or racemes at the top of the plant. The lower flowers open first and gradually open to the top of the raceme over a period of weeks. The flowering period can last 3 to 6 weeks or longer. Although not really necessary, a little deadheading can prolong the floral display.

Besides their resemblance to a turtle's head, *Chelone* flowers have a unique botanical feature — a sterile stamen in addition to four fertile ones. The sterile stamen is useful in helping to identify the various *Chelone* species. For example, it is green in *C. glabra*, white in *C. obliqua*, and rose-tipped in *C. lyonii*.

### **CHELONE SPECIES**

The *Chelone* family includes the following species, all of which are native to the United States:

*Chelone glabra*, or white turtlehead, is the smallest of the species, topping out at about 2' to 3'. It is widely distributed from Newfoundland to the north, Georgia to the south, and Mississippi to the west. The 1" long flowers are usually white or cream but may also be pale pink, pink-tinged, or green-tinged. Wildflower enthusiasts appreciate this plant because it attracts hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. In fact, *C. glabra* is the main larval host plant for the endangered Baltimore Checkerspot butterfly.



• *Chelone Glabra*

*Chelone lyonii* is commonly referred to as pink turtlehead, Lyon's turtlehead, or Appalachian turtlehead. This 2' to 4' tall southern species is native to the higher Appalachian elevations of Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. It performs well in gardens with average or drier soil.



• *Chelone lyonii* (Pink Turtlehead)

*Chelone obliqua*, or red turtlehead, has deep pink flowers and blooms earlier than *C. glabra*. This 2' to 3' tall plant is native to the Blue Ridge areas of Tennessee, Arkansas and Michigan and the Atlantic coastal plain, from South Carolina to Maryland. This is the most heat-tolerant of the *Chelone* species.



*Chelone obliqua* (Red Turtlehead)

- *Chelone cuthbertii* is a rare species found in the Blue Ridge area of North Carolina as well as the Southern Blue Ridge plateau of Carroll and Grayson counties and the coastal plain of Virginia. It has purple flowers that feature yellow beards. While the other three species mentioned above are generally available commercially, *C. cuthbertii* is not likely to be grown for commercial distribution.

Several *Chelone* cultivars are also available commercially:

'Hot Lips' is a 2' to 4' tall cultivar of *C. lyonii*. This popular cultivar has shiny dark-green foliage, red stems, and rose-pink flowers that bloom on dense terminal spikes. Pinch it back in May to produce a bushier plant.



*Chelone lyonii* hybrid 'Hot Lips'

- 'Black Ace' is a 3' to 4' tall, white-flowering cultivar of *C. glabra*. In spring, the foliage is nearly black with green undertones. With the arrival of summer heat, the leaves lighten somewhat to an attractive dark green.
- 'Alba' is a cultivar of *C. obliqua*. It has white flowers rather than the pink flowers typical of the species and therefore looks very similar to *C. glabra*. It is 2' to 3' tall with a spread of 1.5' to 2.5'.
- 'Tiny Tortuga' is a dwarf cultivar that grows 16" tall and 12" wide and has very attractive glossy, dark green leaves and deep pink blooms. Although the plant is a dwarf, the flowers are normal

size.

- 'Pink Temptation' is another pink-blooming dwarf cultivar. It tops out at around 15" to 18" and may spread from 1' to 2'. Sources vary on whether this is a cultivar of *C. lyonii* or *C. obliqua*.

*Chelone* is fairly easy to find in the plant nursery trade. Most well-stocked commercial nurseries carry at least one or two species. 'Hot Lips' and 'Tiny Tortuga' are two of the more popular cultivars and are also relatively easy to locate.

### **CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS**

*Chelone* likes moist, neutral to slightly acid soil with a pH of 5.0 to 6.8. The soil should be amended with plenty of leaf mold and compost to help it retain moisture. Moisture is key to growing *Chelone* successfully. For drier sites, a thick layer of chopped leaves around the base of the plant will help hold moisture in the soil.

Ideally, this plant thrives best in a partially sunny site with evenly moist soil. It will, however, adapt to full sun and drier soil, particularly if the site is moist in the spring time. If grown in full shade, cut the plant back by about half in mid-spring to create a bushier, more compact plant. Otherwise, the stems may become leggy and flop over.

Give this plant some space to spread out. This low-care, native perennial wildflower naturalizes very easily. It grows slowly by rhizomes, eventually forming clumps or colonies up to 3' wide depending on the species or cultivar. Once the clump reaches that size, it generally stops spreading. Fortunately, it does not spread aggressively and is not invasive.

Leave the spent foliage in place over winter and remove it in early spring. The standing foliage helps protect the plant's crown from winter weather-related damage.

*Chelone* is a relatively problem-free perennial although slugs and snails may occasionally dine on the foliage. Otherwise, this plant has no serious pest problems. It is also a reasonably disease-free plant. However, it can develop powdery mildew in late summer if the soil dries out. Keeping the soil evenly moist helps to avoid the problem. Also, plenty of space should be allowed between plants to facilitate good air circulation.

As for deer and rabbits, most sources agree that these habitually destructive animals find *Chelone* distasteful and leave it alone. Other sources warn that *Chelone* is not immune from animal browsing. In my experience with this plant, it all depends on the specific animal population and the availability of other, more suitable food.

### **PROPAGATION**

*Chelone* is easy to propagate by seeds, stem cuttings or division:

- Seeds - Harvest brown (ripe) seed pods and chill them at about 40°F for 6 weeks. The seeds require light for germination. Be patient, as germination may take several months. If sown in early spring, the plants should bloom their second year.
- Stem Cuttings - In late spring or early summer, root 4" to 6" long (one to two nodes) soft-wood stem cuttings in a moist medium at approximately 70°F.
- Division - Divide in early spring and plant divisions about 12" to 18" apart.

Propagate *Chelone* cultivars by either stem cuttings or root division in order to retain the specific characteristics of the cultivar. Propagation by seeds will not result in a clone of the mother plant.

## **USES IN THE LANDSCAPE**

*Chelone* adds color to the ornamental garden late in the summer when many other perennials have finished blooming. It is an ideal companion for other moist soil loving plants such as leopard plant (*Ligularia*), rose mallow (*Hibiscus*), *Astilbe*, blue lobelia (*Lobelia siphilitica*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), flag iris, and various sedges (*Carex* species). Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga*), Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium*), monkshood (*Aconitum*), and ferns, such as lady fern (*Athyrium*) and regal fern (*Osmunda regalis*), are other interesting companions.

This plant looks best when planted in multiples rather than used as a single specimen. Also, it is best used in the landscape as a component of:

- Damp shade or woodland gardens
- Wildflower or native plant gardens
- Container gardens
- Rain gardens
- Bog gardens or other areas with poor drainage as well as along the periphery of ponds or streams
- The mixed border for fall color and interest. At 2' to 3' or more in height, it works best in the middle or toward the rear of the border.

While *Chelone* is a popular plant choice for any of the landscape scenarios mentioned, it also looks interesting in cut flower arrangements. The flower stalks should be cut when the buds on the top third portion of the flower spike are still closed. Once cut, the stalks take up a lot of water. However, the flowers will last about a week in the vase.

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# The Ornamental Garden in July

By Patsy Chadwick | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7





Despite July's sultry temperatures, the sunny border should look spectacular this month as the sizzling hot colors of daylilies, coneflowers, zinnias, marigolds, coreopsis, garden phlox, and much more light up the landscape.



*Gaillardia (Blanket Flower) displaying hot colors in the July border*

## **HOW TO PLANT A CONTAINER GARDEN**

If tending a large garden is not your idea of a fun way to spend your spare time, perhaps a container garden is more your speed. One of the most popular approaches to creating a container garden is the “thriller, filler, spiller” method – something for height, something to fill in the middle, and something to spill over the side of the pot. Although easy to create, they do require some careful planning and maintenance to keep them looking attractive all summer long. Here are a few pointers that might help:

- **Containers.** Many people fail to select a container that is large enough or deep enough. As the plants grow, their roots need enough room to move down into the soil inside the pot to take up nutrients and water. As the roots fill up the pot, the soil dries out faster.
- **Plant Choices.** The sky is the limit when it comes to plant choices for container gardens. Just keep in mind that, in general, drought-tolerant plants work better in container gardens than moisture loving plants, particularly if the container is in a sunny location. Drought-tolerant plants are better equipped to handle the drier soil and intensified heat of a container garden. If your container will be in a shady spot, then choose plants that can tolerate shady conditions.
- **Color Choices.** Keep the color palette fairly simple with two or perhaps three colors. More than that can look really busy at best and chaotic at worst. One of the easiest approaches is to use two shades of the same color, such as lavender and purple or pink and rose. Another easy approach is to use complementary color combinations: orange and blue, yellow and violet, or red and green. And don't forget to think about your use of foliage and how it will harmonize with the flowering plants. Consider the color of the container and how it will impact your palette.
- **Proportions.** Now, about those thrillers, fillers, and spillers. One of the easiest ways to ruin a container garden is to disregard the concept of proportion. Among other things, this means keeping in mind the mature size of all the plants in the composition. A “thriller” is the vertical element of the composition and should be in proportion to the height of the container. In other words, a general ratio to strive for is one-third container to two-thirds plant height. “Fillers,” particularly those with a mounded or rounded shape, provide the horizontal interest in the composition and balance out the overall effect. They should gracefully fill in the space between

the thriller and the rim of the pot. A “spiller” grounds the composition, tying it to the container. Spillers look best if allowed to cascade gently or trail gracefully toward the outer bottom of the pot. If it sprawls too aggressively, it can look like an escapee creeping across your patio.

- **Cultural Requirements.** Last but not least, take into consideration the cultural requirements of a container garden. Choose plants that have the same or similar cultural requirements for sunlight, nutrients, and water. As plants mature, they soak up water more readily. Monitor moisture DAILY. If the container is in full sun, you may need to water twice daily. Just don't overwater. Also, because all the plants are competing for nutrients in the limited amount of soil in a container, it's wise to use time-released fertilizers when the container is originally planted and then foliar fertilizers thereafter, as needed.

If you are interested in more information on container gardening, the University of Illinois Extension Publication on [Container Gardening](#) may be of interest to you.

### **HOW TO KEEP THE SUMMER GARDEN LOOKING FRESH AND INVITING**

As any gardener knows from experience, July's heat and humidity can dampen our enthusiasm for working in the garden. However, a good strategy is to work in the cool hours of the morning or evening. Just 10 or 15 minutes a day maintaining your garden can make a huge difference in how it looks and performs. Here are a few suggestions (for new gardeners) or reminders (for seasoned gardeners) for keeping your garden looking perky and well maintained despite the heat:

- **Deadhead spent blossoms.** A few minutes per day spent deadheading results in a neater appearance of the garden in general. For many plant species, deadheading triggers the production of more blossoms.
- **Trim plants** of old, tired, or tattered-looking foliage or damage caused by pests or disease. Large-leaved plants, such as hostas, look much perkier if you trim off the leaves that have suffered heavy slug damage.
- **Treat foliar diseases** as soon as you spot them. Don't wait until the plant is completely ruined. With this spring's wetter-than-normal weather, you can expect more fungal diseases in the garden.
- Speaking of plant diseases, try to **select disease-resistant plant varieties** when possible. For example, garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) and bee balm (*Monarda*) are two plant species that are highly susceptible to powdery mildew. However, a number of cultivars or selections show very good or excellent resistance, according to published plant trial data. To learn more, check out the following on-line publications: North Carolina State University Publication on [Mildew Resistant Garden Phlox](#) and the Chicago Botanic Garden's plant evaluation findings on [A Comparative Study of Phlox Paniculata Cultivars](#) and [Monarda and Powdery Mildew Resistance](#).
- **Selectively cut back or shear plants that have finished blooming** to spur fresh new growth and perhaps some re-bloom as well. For general information on perennial plant care, see the Virginia Cooperative Extension's (VCE) publication 426-203 on the culture, maintenance and propagation of [Perennials](#). For the new gardener who would like more detailed information on perennial plant maintenance, Tracy DiSabato-Aust's book on *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden* is a useful, well-organized resource on the subject.
- **Stake or cage taller perennial species** to keep them from flopping over or collapsing. Plants fall over for many reasons, including too much weight from flowers, too much moisture, too much shade, or overly rich soil. A number of plants may simply be cut back, pinched, or sheared to keep their height under control without loss of blooms. Goldenrod, asters, balloon flower, tall daisy species, catmint, and boltonia fall into that category. Other plants should not be cut back but staked or caged instead to avoid damaging flower buds. Lilies, hollyhocks, foxgloves, and

Crocasmias fall into this latter category.

- **Pinch back fall-blooming perennials**, specifically chrysanthemums and asters, prior to mid-July to keep their overall dimensions under control and to prevent them from setting buds before fall.
- **Neatly edge flower beds and replenish mulch** as needed. This is one of the simplest and most effective ways to make your garden look fresh and inviting.
- **Monitor moisture levels.** In the absence of adequate rainfall, provide supplemental water to plants as needed. Infrequent deep watering is generally best for established plants. This encourages them to send their roots deeper into the soil, which helps them become more drought tolerant. Plants that are becoming established in the landscape should receive about an inch of water per week. Newly installed trees and shrubs may require more water, particularly during their first year or two in the ground.
- **Select plants with glossy foliage**, which always look fresh no matter how muggy the weather is. Consider shrubs such as holly species, glossy *Abelia*, *Camellia*, or *Calycanthus floridus* (Carolina Allspice). Perennials with glossy foliage include *Bergenia* (pigsqueak), *Chelone* (turtlehead), *Asarum* (wild ginger), some *Heuchera* (coral bells) species, and some hosta species. A couple of annuals with glossy foliage include wax begonias and Madagascar periwinkle.
- **Keep the garden from looking crowded and overgrown.** Dividing some of those overgrown perennial clumps and thinning them out will improve the overall appearance of your garden. While fall is preferable for dividing most perennials, some may be safely divided in summer in the absence of a drought. If you do attempt to divide your perennials in the summer, choose a cool, cloudy or overcast day to do it. Water the plants deeply the day or evening before so that they are well hydrated. Dig them up, divide them, and plant the divisions right away so that the roots don't dry out. Give the divisions some protection from the sun while they become established. Keep them well watered for the remainder of the summer.

## **WATER-SAVING TECHNIQUES DURING SUMMER**

Rainfall is often sparse at this time of year. Lack of adequate moisture stresses our gardens, causing many of our plants to wilt, develop brown edges on the leaves, or simply die. Flowers may fail to appear or they may fade more quickly in the absence of water. Drought-weakened plants tend to be more susceptible to disease and insect damage. Even if your plants do survive drought conditions this summer, they may not be as hardy once winter arrives. Trees and shrubs, in particular, may take years to recover from a drought. To help your landscape plants thrive despite summer's hot, dry weather:

- Water plants in the cooler, early morning hours so that the water will soak into the ground rather than evaporate into the air.
- Water plants deeply, giving them about an inch of water per week. Avoid sprinkling plants from overhead. That just moistens the top of the soil but it doesn't put water down at the root level where it's needed.
- Use drip irrigation or soaker hoses under the mulch to water slowly and deeply at the base of each plant. If you don't have drip irrigation, use a hose with an adjustable nozzle or a watering can to deliver water only at the base of each plant. Don't water the foliage.
- Use a 2 to 3-inch layer of mulch to help hold moisture in the soil and to help protect plant roots from the summer heat.
- Group plants together that have the same requirements for sunlight and moisture.
- Consider replacing water hogs with drought-tolerant plants.
- Keep flower beds weed-free. Weeds compete with your ornamental plants for the moisture in the soil.

- Deadhead your flowering plants to prevent them from expending energy setting seed.
- Avoid fertilizing plants during a drought. That merely encourages the plants to develop more foliage. Needless to say, the more foliage, the more water is needed to support the plant. Another reason to avoid using fertilizer is because it needs to be watered in. If it is not watered in, it can build up in the soil and damage plant roots.
- Capture water from your roof, using rain barrels or cisterns.
- Amend the soil with plenty of organic matter to improve moisture retention as well as provide nutrients to the soil and stimulate beneficial worm activity. If you do this in the spring, your plants will be better prepared to withstand drought conditions throughout the summer.

For more information on the subject, see VCE Publication 426-713 on [Creating a Water-Wise Landscape](#).

### **WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

If you're the "cutting edge" type of gardener eager to try the latest hot new plant, the garden centers certainly won't let you down. Every year, plant developers compete with one another to see who can come up with the snazziest new color combination or hybrid. Running counter to this trend is a resurging interest in what we think of today as "old fashioned" plants such as hollyhocks, four o'clocks, sweet peas, sweet William, heliotrope, ageratum, and sweet alyssum. In addition to growing these plants for their nostalgic value, they are worthwhile incorporating into our gardens because they are generally hardy, dependable, and trouble-free. Another plus is that many of them have pleasant fragrances that have been bred out of some of our modern-day hybrids. While it's always interesting and fun to see what's new out there in the world of horticulture, just how many "new and improved" bi-color petunias do we really need anyway?

### **IT'S A BUG-EAT-BUG WORLD OUT THERE!**

Keeping insect populations under control is one of the biggest challenges gardeners face at this time of year. In general, insects fall into two camps: beneficials or pests. Here are two examples of commonly found insects that are seldom seen during the day but play a significant role in your garden after dark:

- **Ground Beetles** are the unsung heroes in the battle against garden insect pests. Of this huge family of insects, approximately 2,500 species may be found throughout the United States. Most ground beetles have shiny, sometimes iridescent, black, blue-black, brown, or green hard shells on flattened bodies with narrow heads. They are equipped with large mandibles that they use to capture their prey.

These nocturnal creatures feed at night and hide during the day under mulch, leaves, rocks, boards, or logs. They have wings but seldom fly, opting instead to scamper quickly away when disturbed. Both the adult and larval forms of ground beetles have voracious appetites and prey on a variety of insect pests, including asparagus beetles, cabbage root maggots, Colorado potato beetles, corn ear worms, cutworms, slugs, and snails. They prey on both soil-dwelling pests as well as plant and tree pests, including Gypsy moth larvae, squash vine borers, tent caterpillars, and tobacco bud worms. If you are really curious to know more about this beneficial insect, perhaps you'll find the North Carolina State University's



*Ground Beetle*

publication on [Ground Beetles](#) useful.

- **Earwigs** are considered to be either beneficial insects or pests or both, depending on your point of view. Anatomically, they are one of the stranger-looking insects in the garden. Large pinchers emerge from the tips of their abdomens giving them a ferocious look. In truth, they are generally harmless to humans. Mostly nocturnal creatures, they feed on plants at night and hide during the day in moist, dark places, such as mulch, soil, plant debris and under rocks and boards. They are considered a nuisance insect because they feed on the flowers and foliage of a wide range of plants, leaving irregular holes or ragged edges. The damage they cause is similar to that of slugs and snails. Despite their destructive eating habits, earwigs do have some useful qualities.

They are omnivorous and help break down organic matter in compost piles. More importantly, they are natural predators of aphids, mites, nematodes, insect larvae, slugs, snails, and other slow-moving insects. In turn, natural predators of earwigs include birds, toads, and insect predators. If the earwig population is out of control in your garden, place a rolled up newspaper, bamboo tube, or short piece of old garden hose on the soil near your plants just before dark. The earwigs will crawl inside during the night. The next morning, shake out the accumulated earwigs into a bucket of soapy water. For more information on this peculiar-looking insect, see VCE publication 3101-1527, [Earwigs](#).



*Earwig*

# The Vegetable Garden in July

By Cleve Campbell | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7

The weather in central Virginia is often unpredictable, ranging from an unseasonable 75-80° in February to snow in April, but we can say with certainty that in July, it is going to get **HOT!** The heat brings many challenges, not only to the garden but also to the gardeners, who must somehow protect themselves from the hot summer sun with clothing and sunscreen while remembering to maintain hydration.

**July in the vegetable garden is primarily a month of maintenance:** watering, applying additional mulch, weeding, and harvesting. The ambitious gardener may take on additional tasks, such as sequential planting of select vegetables, and planning and preparing for the planting of fall crops.

July is a good month for filling in empty spaces left from those early-spent spring crops such as lettuce, English peas, potatoes, and radishes. July planting may include beans and squash and a host of other vegetables. Take a look at the handy-dandy chart below, which was developed using the [Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication 426-331](#) "Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates."

<b>July 1-6</b>	<b>July 7-13</b>
Bush Beans	Bush Beans
Pole Beans	Pole Beans
Lima beans	Lima beans
Wax Beans	Wax Beans
Cucumbers	Cucumbers
Eggplant*	Eggplant*
Muskmelons	Muskmelons
Okra	Okra
Peppers	Peppers
Pumpkins	Pumpkins
Southern Peas	Southern Peas
Sweet Corn	Sweet Corn
Summer Squash	Summer Squash
Winter Squash	Winter Squash
Sweet Potato	Sweet Potato
Tomatoes*	Tomatoes*
<b>July 14-20</b>	<b>July 21-31</b>
Bush Beans	Bush Beans
Pole Beans	Pole Beans
Lima beans	Lima beans
Wax Beans	Wax Beans
Cucumbers	Cucumbers
Eggplant*	Eggplant*
Muskmelons	Okra
Okra	Peppers
Peppers	Pumpkins
Pumpkins	Southern Peas
Southern Peas	Sweet Corn
Sweet Corn	Summer Squash
Summer Squash	Winter Squash
Winter Squash	Tomatoes*
Tomatoes*	
<b>* Denotes Transplants</b>	
The suggested dates may vary for different areas.	

Not sure of what varieties or cultivars of vegetables to plant? A comprehensive list of recommended vegetables for Virginia can be found in the Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication, [“Vegetables Recommended for Virginia”](#) .

## Weeding

It’s important to control weeds around vegetables because weeds will out-compete vegetable plants for nutrients, water, and sunlight. The best method to control weeds is by mechanical extraction, meaning good old-fashioned weed-pulling or the use of a hoe. For small weeds, the **“hoop” or “stirrup” hoe** is highly recommended because it allows for shallow cultivation. Another plus for the hoop hoe: it doesn’t bring weed seeds to the surface of the soil! Many weed seeds require sunlight to germinate, so deep cultivation or utilizing a tiller often brings seeds to the surface of the soil, facilitating seed germination for a new crop of unwanted weeds.



*Hoop or Stirrup Hoe*

## More Tips and Tasks for July:

- To **save space** in your garden, construct temporary or permanent woven wire fences which will provide vertical support for runner varieties of beans, as well as for cucumbers. Plants can be trained to climb the fence, both saving space and making harvesting easier since the vegetables will be hanging at a convenient height.
- **A Threat to Basil** is a fungal disease specific to sweet basil called **fusarium wilt** of basil. The fungus attacks the water-conducting tissue (xylem) within the stem. Infected plants will grow normally until they are six to twelve inches tall. Then the plants become stunted and will suddenly wilt. The stem may become curved, often referred to as a shepherd’s crook, and there will be brown streaks along the stems. Once established, the fungus can over-winter and survive many years in the form of spores, ready to cause new infections of basil or other members of the mint family that are planted in the same area. Currently, there is no fungicide approved for the treatment of this fungal disease, but it can be controlled somewhat by removing all diseased plants, by avoiding planting basil in the same location, and by planting disease-resistant varieties. Additional information on fusarium wilt of basil is available at [ncsu.edu/-fusariumbasil](https://ncsu.edu/-fusariumbasil)



*Fusarium wilt of basil (*Fusarium oxysporum*, f. sp. *basilicum*). Photo: □Debbie Roos, NCSU Agricultural Extension Agent*

- **Pepper plants** are more productive if given appropriate moisture. Placing mulch (such as wood chips or leaf mulch) around plants will help retain soil moisture and reduce the need for frequent watering. In addition to conserving water, mulch provides the extra benefit of being a weed barrier.

**Continue to monitor water moisture levels around plants.** The rule of thumb is that plants need one inch of water per week to maintain productivity. Mulching reduces the need for frequent watering and improves yields. **Early morning is the best time to water.** Evening watering is less desirable because leaves that remain wet through the night are more susceptible to fungal diseases.

- **Okra blossoms** are one of the showiest blooms in the vegetable garden but they only last one day. Keep your eyes peeled if you don't want to miss them. If the flower has been pollinated, a miniature okra pod can be seen beneath the wilted flower.
- Wondering if your **blueberries are ripe enough to pick?** Just try pulling a few berries from the stems. If they come off easily, they are ready to harvest. If not, they need to ripen more. **Cover with netting** or the birds will beat you to the fruit.
- Dry weather causes **Swiss chard to bolt** or **prematurely** go to seed. Water your plants to extend the season.
- **Cucumbers** develop a **bitter taste** if the soil is not kept **consistently moist**. Leaf mulch will help maintain soil moisture.
- **Harvest cucumbers** for pickling when they reach 2-4 inches in length; for table use, harvest when no longer than 5-6 inches. Remove any over-ripe cucumbers to encourage continuous production.
- **Withhold water on potatoes when the plants begin to die down.** Water and fertilizer may disturb the dormancy stage and cause regrowth, and may also cause potatoes to crack.
- If **potatoes** are visible along the soil surface, they probably look **green**. This coloration is caused by exposure to light. Green-skinned potatoes will taste bitter. Avoid this problem **by covering potatoes with soil or mulch to protect them from the light**.
- **Pumpkin and squash** blossoms are both beautiful and **edible**. To prepare squash or pumpkin blossoms for an appetizer, pick them after they open. Wash and drain the blossoms to remove insects and dirt, dip them in a flour or beer batter, and fry until golden.
- Although **tomatoes** are self-pollinating, they **need movement to transfer pollen**. If it is hot

and calm for several days, **gently shake plants to transfer pollen** and assure fruit set. Hot temperatures can also interfere with blossom set.

- Shredded **Chinese cabbage** is a good hot weather substitute for lettuce in salads and sandwiches. A second crop may be started now for fall harvesting.
- In the summer, **dry soil** may become hard, making it difficult to work and inhibiting seed germination. Plant your succession and fall vegetables when the soil is moist, either after a rain or after watering the area thoroughly the day before you plant. Seeds may be planted in a shallow trench to conserve moisture.
- **Did you know?** Daytime temperatures above 90° F. prevent snap bean flowers from developing.
- **Too many** cucumbers, zucchini, or tomatoes? Think pickles, relishes, and tomato sauces.
- **Don't forget the County Fair!** Show off your gardening abilities by exhibiting fresh vegetables, flowers, and fruits.

Thanks for stopping by The Garden Shed. We hope to see you again next month!

### Sources:

“Vegetable Planting Guide and Recommended Planting Dates,” Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication No. 426-331, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-331/426-331.html>

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# Watercress Soup

By Cate Whittington | July 2017 - Vol. 3, No. 7







The following recipe is included in *Patrick O'Connell's Refined American Cuisine*. This beautiful cookbook features the food served at Virginia's renowned restaurant, The Inn at Little Washington. O'Connell's watercress soup is a favorite of mine for all the reasons cited in the author's note: "This is a simple but luxurious soup that can be quickly assembled. Searing the watercress briefly in hot oil and quickly pureeing it into the soup base helps retain a desirable, vibrant green color. Straining the soup gives it an airy and elegant texture. If you don't have chicken stock or want to make a vegetarian soup, water can be substituted with surprisingly good results." Watercress is easy to find at several local markets. I especially like the large-leaved hydroponic watercress found at Integral Yoga. Treat yourself to a soup that isn't often offered on restaurant menus here, but delivers robust flavor on a summer's evening. Enjoy.

### Watercress Soup

2 Quarts / 6-8 Servings

5 Tbl unsalted butter

2 medium yellow onions

1 medium Idaho potato, peeled and diced

6 cups chicken stock

4 Tbl vegetable oil

4 bunches watercress, large stems removed

½ cup heavy cream

Salt, freshly ground white pepper, sugar to taste

2 Tbl watercress leaves

2 strips bacon, diced, fried until crisp, and drained

1. In a 4 qt. saucepan, melt 3 Tbl of the butter over medium heat. Add the onions and cook until tender, but not browned.
2. Add the potato and continue cooking for 3 minutes.
3. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the potatoes are soft, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from the heat.
4. In a 10-inch sauté pan, heat 1 Tbl oil until almost smoking. Add a handful of watercress to the pan, tossing and turning rapidly with tongs. After a few seconds, when the watercress is just wilted and has turned a vibrant green color, add it to the soup. Repeat this process with the remaining watercress.
5. Puree the soup in a blender or food processor and, if desired, strain.
6. Just before serving, return the soup to the stove over medium heat, and whisk in the cream and the remaining 2 Tbl of butter. Season with salt, white pepper, sugar.
7. Serve the soup in individual bowls garnished with watercress leaves and crispy bacon.

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Time Warner Book Group

The Inn at Little Washington