

Week of July 3

EXPLOSIONS IN OUR GARDENS

By Sage Sassafras

Fireworks signal a second chance our short Vermont season gives us to create on-going explosions of color in our gardens for the rest of summer. It's kind of like vacuuming before the company arrives. I know my garden has much entertaining to do in the weeks ahead and I don't want it to be embarrassed.

Here's my July 4th garden to-do list:

- Dig up the tulips. Because they're not perennials only 40 percent will come back next year, so I just chuck them and replant in the fall.
- Trim up the leaves of other bulbs so they don't look sloppy and fertilize with an organic bulb fertilizer.
- Dead head plants that have already bloomed because some, like Jacob's Ladder, will bloom again. You may see new green growth on the base of the plant so you can cut off the old foliage to this new growth and watch it take off.
- Your Ragusas probably had their best hit of color in June; if you want more to come, carefully prune away the spent flowers. I stop doing this in August so any remaining blooms will turn into rose hips for the fall.
- Secure staking against wind, rain and hail for the rest of the season.
- Prune shrubs such as lilac, azalea, rhododendron and viburnum. They will soon start working on next year's blooms. If you wait too long you will cut off next year's flowers. If you are not sure when to prune a plant, a general rule of thumb is to do it right after it has bloomed.
- Fertilize the garden with a sprinkling of organic fertilizer like Pro Gro. Heavy feeders like delphiniums (which will bloom twice in a season if cut down after the first flush) need more food. For my roses I use an organic rose food like Rose Tone and make sure I give them an extra hit so they will keep going all summer long. I actually feed my roses twice a month until late August.
- Weed and edge the garden.

Now you sit back and relax.

Mother Nature needs all the coddling we can give her. www.WoodstockGardenClub.org

