



What to do in the garden: Summer Term

Welcome to our 'Get Growing' newsletter which will give you ideas and inspiration about what to do in the garden with children throughout the year. The summer term sees you harvesting fruit and vegetables and watering through the lovely long summer days. This newsletter gives you ideas for activities outdoors with your children and how to prepare your garden for the summer holidays.



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General tasks

- Continue to stake plants that need support. Use sticks or bamboo canes and some string to help support the plant. Make your own cane toppers, they will help prevent any injury to eyes and faces when you are bending down around your plants. You can get creative and use air drying clay or old yoghurt pots or decorated little plant pots will do the job – see below for instructions on how to make these.
- Continue to weed flower and vegetable beds and make sure you pull all the roots out.
- Water your plants in the hot weather either first thing in the morning or last thing in the afternoon / evening, and feed your plants every couple of weeks during the growing season. Plants in containers and hanging baskets will need extra attention as they will dry out quicker and use up nutrients in the soil. Never feed your plants when the soil is dry as the plant food can burn the roots. Water the plants first then apply the feed as per the instructions on the packaging. This will keep your plants looking great right through to autumn.
- A decent rain-shower can provide enough water to keep established plants in the ground going, but you'll need extra for your pots and hanging baskets as the rain often bounces off foliage and fails to reach the plant at soil level. Windy weather is very drying, it sucks the moisture out of the plants and the soil, and so regular checks are advised.
- Newly-planted plants in the ground will also need regular watering until they become established.



- Got problems with aphids? These sap-sucking insects can be found on a very wide range of plants. They are more commonly known as 'greenfly' or 'blackfly'. Remember diluted washing up liquid is really good organic method to get rid of aphids and other common garden pests. For more information on how to deal with them download this useful fact sheet from Garden Organic- <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/factsheets/pc10.php>
- Brighten up your summer salads by adding edible flowers. Common daisy, chive, borage, pansy and marigold flowers can be used. Nasturtium flowers and leaves are edible, and if your rocket has bolted, just eat those flowers too. For more info on edible flowers check out the Garden Organic fact sheet: <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/factsheets/gg45.php>
- Keep adding to your compost heap, mixing greens (kitchen and garden waste) with browns (egg boxes, cardboard, cereal boxes etc.) Cover the heap to retain moisture.
- Make the most of your garden in July as children will be going away on holiday over the summer. Make sure you pick every last vegetable that is ready and do as much cooking as possible.



Vegetables:

- When you start back at work after the Easter holidays gradually bring your seedlings out which have been growing inside so they can get acclimatised to the weather. Put them in the shade during the day and back in at night for the first week, then gradually leave them out all the time within 2-3 weeks.
- Keep looking out for signs of pest and disease on your crops such as holes in the leaves. Clear away any diseased and spent foliage on and around your vegetable plants to keep them healthy
- Continue to support Pea, Climbing Bean and Sweet Pea seedlings using canes or garden netting.
- Sow the following seeds outside in June: French and Runner Bean, Late Beetroot, Sprouting Broccoli, Late Brussel Sprout, Calabrese, Maincrop Carrot, Late Kale, Kohl Rabi, Late Leek, Lettuce, Late Pea, Radish, Rocket, and Spring Onion. It is the last chance to sow Courgette, Cucumber, Pumpkin and Squash. Also sow herbs: Coriander, Dill and Summer Savoury. Keep sowings and emerging seedlings well watered in dry spells.

- You can start to harvest some of the first crops you planted. This includes early varieties of Beetroot, Carrot, and Potato (see next paragraph) and also Broad Bean, Summer Cabbage, Garlic, Kohl Rabi, Lettuce, Salad Leaf, Onion, Pea, Radish, Rocket, Shallot, Spinach. Harvest one or two rather than picking all of them to make sure they are ripe. Some plants such as peas and beans will continue to grow more crops as you pick them so don't let the vegetables go over.



- Continue to earth up your potatoes as the foliage grows through the soil. Early varieties will be ready from now through to July, around nine to ten weeks after planting. Flowering is usually a good indicator that the tubers have reached an edible size, but not all varieties produce flowers. Dig up one plant or investigate with a trowel to see if the tubers are ready. They are best harvested as needed, leaving the rest to grow on.
- If any of your plants have failed to grow this is your last chance to get replacements. See if colleagues / parents have any spare plants. Another good place to look for spare vegetables is at car boot sales.
- As early peas 'go over' cut the top growth away at just above ground level, but leave the roots in the soil to provide nutrients for subsequent crops.



- If you are growing climbing or runner beans, make a 'wigwam' using bamboo canes or sticks. They look good if you have to fill gaps in your flower borders. You can make a wigwam in containers too. Direct sow two beans per cane to provide you with some tender, late summer pods.



- Make sure all your indoor raised plants are planted outside by the end of June.
- Tomato plants intended for outdoor cropping can now be planted out, along with sweet and chilli peppers and aubergines. If you are growing peppers and aubergines outside, find them the warmest, sunniest, most sheltered position possible.
- As tomato plants grow, continue to tie in your Tomato stems and pinch out the side shoots (see picture). If you're growing bush type tomatoes just leave them to grow, no pinching out is necessary. If the plant has produced 4 or 5 trusses (bunches) of fruit, pinch out the main growing point to stop the plant growing and encourage fruit ripening. Cut off any leaves growing below the lowest ripening fruit trusses to improve air circulation and prevent diseases. Do not allow plants to dry out as this can lead to blossom end rot



Tall tomato plant



Bush tomato plant

- If you spot any cabbage white butterflies visiting your vegetable patch, start checking cabbage and other brassica plants for signs of eggs and caterpillars. Remove any you find.
- Nip off the growing tips of squash and courgette to encourage branching. Pick your courgettes while they are young as regular picking encourages more fruit
- Plants, mainly vegetable or herbs are said to bolt when their growth goes rapidly through their life cycle and they produce flowers and seed. When garlic and onions bolt they produce flower stalks. Garlic flower stalks should be cut off and the garlic will continue to grow. You can use them if you are making homemade pesto. If any of your onions have bolted (produced flowers), harvest them immediately because they won't grow any larger. You can harvest garlic & onions when the tops start to bend over and turn yellow.
- Continue to feed and water your crops as this will help them produce more vegetables and to ward off pest and disease. Use a soluble plant feed such as 'Miracle-Gro Organic Choice Fruit and Vegetables plant food'.
- You should now have lots of vegetables to harvest. Make sure you harvest regularly to encourage more food to be available.



Fruit

- Loosely tie in strong new raspberry canes as they grow. Once Raspberry canes have finished fruiting prune these stems down to the ground
- Net soft fruit to stop the birds from eating the fruit. This is especially necessary on Raspberry and Gooseberry plants. The netting should be kept away from the leaves and secured with wooden pegs so the bird can't stand on the netting and reach through.
- Keep an eye out for pest and diseases on fruit. Pull off any mouldy fruit growing (especially pears and plums) and thin out apples if there are too many growing on each stem.



- Spread straw under strawberries to help retain moisture levels in the soil and prevent soil splashing on the fruit which can spoil it. It may help keep slugs out too. When you are watering your strawberry plants, water from the bottom as water from overhead can rot the crown and fruit. During the growing season, give strawberry plants a liquid potash feed – such as a tomato feed – every 7 to 14 days
- From June onwards, strawberry plants will start producing 'runners'. This is the name for the tiny plants produced on long stems (stolons), which grow from the main plant. Use some to produce more plants for next season. Remove the rest as they may sap the energy of the mother plant and reduce the crop.

It is easy to make new strawberry plants as the runners root very easily. Either:

- Cut runners off the main plant and put them in a pot to root and grow.

Or-

- Use a length of bent wire to staple the runner, still attached to the plant, on to the soil to take root.

Flowers and herbs

- Make sure you have planted out all of your seedlings you raised indoors.
- Keep sowing the following flowers directly outside: Calendula, Nasturtium and Nigella. Continue to thin out the rows as they grow so the plants have room to develop.





- Calendula (marigolds) flower petals make good dye for rice, scones or butter. They also look great in salads and omelettes.
- Continue to tie in Sweet Pea plants as they grow. As sweet peas start to flower, keep cutting the flowers to encourage more to appear. Once the plants set seed they tend to produce far fewer flowers
- Continue to sow basil, chervil, parsley, rocket and coriander seeds direct, in the ground or in containers.
- Dead-head faded flowers, unless seed is to be collected.
- Continue to take softwood cuttings. Many herbs can be propagated using this method, including lavender, rosemary, thyme and sage.



Pots and containers

- Continue to plant up your pots, containers, window boxes and hanging baskets with vegetables. At the end of June start to feed the containers with soluble plant food such as Miracle-Gro Organic Choice Fruit and Vegetables plant food.
- You can still sow French bean, Sprouting Broccoli, Kohl Rabi, Lettuce, Late Pea, Rocket, Salad Leaves and Spring Onions in your containers.

Wildlife

- Make a wildlife corner by putting logs and clay pipes and pots in an area. Get children to check under them once in a while to see if any bugs are living there.
- Keep a lookout for birds' nests around your garden or on walks out to parks.
- When to feed birds: If the weather turns cold or wet during spring or summer, severe shortage of insect food can occur, and if the weather is exceptionally dry, earthworms will be unavailable to the ground feeders because of the hard soil. During the summer months, birds require high protein foods like black sunflower seeds, pinhead oatmeal (the chunkiest grade of oatmeal), soaked sultanas, raisins and currants, mild grated cheese, good seed mixtures without loose peanuts, and, soft apples and pears cut in half. Bananas and grapes are also good. Avoid using peanuts, fat and bread at this time, since these can be harmful if adult birds feed them to their young ones. Home-made fatballs can go soft and rancid in warm weather, and should be avoided.
- If you have a wild flower area count how many different types of flowers there are growing and look for insects and animals living in there.



Seasonal activities with children

Many plants need support as they grow tall and your cane or stick will have a sharp point. You need to cover this point to stop people, especially children from injuring their eyes. You can decorate plastic flower pots, or have a go at making the following:

Recycled cane topper

Recycled Materials:

Empty plastic drinks bottles

Rainproof materials for decoration e.g. ribbon, recycled packaging Glue or sticky tape

Scissors

What to do:

- Decorate a plastic drinks bottle using materials and fabrics that won't go soggy in the rain, you could make animals, insects or a brightly coloured pattern.
- Don't forget as you decorate, that the bottle will fit on the cane upside down!
- Place the bottle on the cane and stand back to admire your handiwork.



Clay cane topper:

Materials:

Air Drying Clay

Paints

Varnish

What to do:

Create clay cane toppers using simple shapes such as a sphere or cone. If you add pieces onto your shape they tend to fall off when dry.

Make sure that you make a hole in the clay for the cane before air drying the clay and varnishing. You could use a pencil or cocktail stick to draw a pattern in to the clay.

These activities are taken from the Royal Horticultural Society website: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Children/Families/Activities/Make-a-cane-topper>



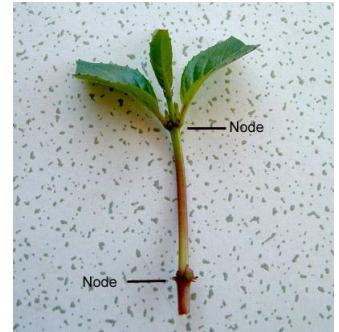


Softwood cuttings

'Softwood' is the term given to the type of cutting taken from young growth in the spring and early summer.

June is a perfect month for taking cuttings. Herbs are producing lots of lush fresh new growth, ideal for 'softwood cuttings' from mints, rosemary, sage, variegated lemon balm, French tarragon, thymes and marjoram.

Softwood cuttings can be used for *carnations (pinks)*, *wallflowers* and *geraniums/pelargoniums* and a wide range of shrubs, such as *Buddleja*, *Fuchsia*, *weigelas* and *hydrangea*. Here are the main points to follow:



- In the morning, when plants are well hydrated, use a sharp knife to cut just below a leaf bud on a non-flowering shoot, removing about 4in (10cm) of stem.
- If cuttings are not to be dealt with immediately, place in water or a polythene bag and leave in shade.
- Trim the cutting to just below a node (where leaf joins stem) and remove any leaves from bottom third of the stem. This will reduce water loss as well as the possibility of fungus on leaves touching the soil.
- Make a hole and push the cutting in. Firm compost around cutting.
- Water, and drain well. Do not leave pot standing in water.
- Covering with plastic bag or cloche can aid in rooting in some cases. Be careful that the compost is not kept too wet, as cuttings can rot. Remove the covering for a short time daily to give the plants some air. Grey leaved plants should not be covered with plastic.

Special Feature: Planning for the summer holidays

The school holidays can be a difficult time for garden care. Some plants will run to seed if not picked; others produce giants (courgettes) or become coarse and tough (beans). In dry spells, plants can stop growing, or die completely. Weeds will also grow quickly. So it's best to have a plan.....

- ❖ Before the holidays, harvest all the crops that are ready. Other plants will last through the holidays if they are healthy and are growing well, e.g. pumpkins, potatoes and winter cabbages. Some crops like tomatoes, courgettes and beans, will need regular attention, i.e., watering and picking.
- ❖ Get out your tools and have a few good weeding sessions in the run up to the end of term.



- ❖ Do you have a caretaker or site manager who can help out? Or can you organise someone to pick vegetables while you are away. Beans, peas and courgettes in particular will tend to stop producing new fruits if the crop is not picked regularly. Offer helpers the fruit and vegetables they harvest, as a reward.
- ❖ If you have plants in containers, can you transplant them into the ground where they will cope better with too much rain or not enough! If not, group containers together. By grouping several pots together, they stay moist longer. They also create a nice little pocket of humidity, which benefits the majority of plants.
- ❖ Mulch your containers. By adding a one to two inch layer of organic mulch, such as grass clippings, shredded leaves, shredded bark, or straw to your container gardens, you will help retain soil moisture and keep the soil cooler.
- ❖ Mix in some water gel crystals into your containers. (Follow instructions on the packet). The crystals will swell with water and as the soil dries, the water is released. This works well for outside plants and indoor plants.
- ❖ If your containers are situated in an area that gets full sun, move them to someplace where they will be in the shade for part of the day.
- ❖ Can you find folk to take potted plants home for the summer holidays and bring them back (if they are still producing) in September?

Hammersmith Community Gardens Association has been delivering educational sessions for over ten years. We have a team of school gardeners who provide environmental education sessions in schools on a weekly basis. These include formal curriculum-linked activities as well as lunchtime and after school clubs. Our staff are highly trained in environmental education, food growing and wildlife gardening.

We have built up a collection of activities and have worked with many schools and nurseries in the borough, running one-off workshops, short-term projects and longer-term contracts around growing, food and environmental art.

We also guide groups on how to make their premises more environmentally friendly and give technical growing advice. We have designed growing and wildlife areas in several local schools and our teams of volunteers have undertaken the landscaping work during school holidays.

We have been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge for our educational work on-site at our community gardens.

For further details about arranging one-off or regular sessions please contact info@hcga.org.uk or 07890 514 050