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"Gardening in southwest Missouri"

Heat, Drought May Stress Some Plants

Extreme heat and dry weather in the Midwest has clearly defined which plants are drought-tolerant and which are not according to Gaylord Moore, horticulture specialist, University of Missouri Outreach and Extension.

"With Missouri's climate, water-efficient gardening is a great approach to conserving water and reducing demands of the garden during the hottest part of the season," said Moore.

The best method for achieving a water-efficient landscape is to choose plants that can survive short periods of heat and drought.

"Native plants tend to be more drought-tolerant. However, there are many introduced varieties of plants that perform well under Missouri's summer drought conditions," said Moore.

A few shrubs suitable for heat and low water use areas are barberry, beautybush, buttonbush, forsythia, flowering quince, juniper species, lilac, rose of Sharon, sumac and viburnum.

Perennial flowers that tolerate heat and drought conditions include butterfly weed, coneflowers, coreopsis, goldenrods, asters, black-eyed Susan, yarrows, monarda, daylilies and veronica.

"While the goal is to reach a point where no extra water is needed, newly established plants will need supplemental water until their root system become well developed," said Moore.

Mulches can also be helpful during hot conditions because they help block evaporation.

"Mulches also keep the soil cooler and that helps reduce stress to the plant. Another tactic is to not overcrowd plants. Dense plantings need more water because there are more thirsty roots to supply," said Moore.

Bed preparation and soil improvement is another key factor that impacts plant survival and performance during prolonged hot and dry spells.

"Soils where roots cannot penetrate will have poorer low-moisture endurance than those in deep, loose soils. Digging-tilling and adding compost will increase soil aeration and moisture holding capacities," said Moore.

During the soil improvement process, a soil test will reveal the pH and fertility levels. The soils should then be adjusted to be most suitable for the plants being added to the landscape.

For additional information, visit your local University of Missouri Outreach and Extension center and request Guide 6912, "Water Efficient Gardening and Landscapes." That guide is also available via the Internet at: <http://muextension.missouri.edu/xplor>.

If you have more gardening or lawn questions, or would like a list for drought resistant plants, contact Greene County's Master Gardener Hotline at (417) 862-9284.

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