

The Summer Gardener's Dispatch

Your Essential Guide to June and July in the UK Garden

As we transition into the height of the summer, the focus shifts from the heavy planting of spring to sustaining growth, managing water, and beginning the first major harvests. June and July represent the peak of the ornamental display, and staying ahead of maintenance now ensures a productive and beautiful garden through the rest of the season.

June: The Month of Growth and Bloom

With the heaviest spring maintenance and planting mostly complete, June is about supporting rapid growth and protecting ripening crops.

- **Early June:**
 - **Tender Herbs:** This is the ideal time to plant out tender herbs like **basil**, which prefer the warmer soil temperatures of early summer.
 - **Tall Plant Support:** Stake tall-growing plants such as **gladiolas, lilies, and vines** now to prevent them from breaking or falling as they reach their full height.
 - **Mid-June:**
 - **Thinning Fruit:** Tree fruits will naturally start to drop (the "June drop"), but it is worth thinning them further to ensure the remaining fruit reaches a better size.
 - **Rose Care:** June is a prime month for choosing new roses as the first flowers appear. For climbing and rambling varieties, **tie in stems as near to horizontal as possible** to encourage a denser display of flowering shoots.
 - **Late June:**
 - **Vegetable Sowing:** Sow seeds for later crops of **leeks, Brussels sprouts, and winter cabbages**.
 - **Potato Check:** Lift a few early potatoes towards the end of the month to check their size; pick the larger ones for immediate use.
 - **Throughout the Month:**
 - **Maintenance Pruning:** Prune flowering shrubs and rampant **Clematis** immediately after they finish blooming to encourage healthy regrowth for next year.
 - **Pond Care:** This is the best month for making a new garden pond or adding **oxygenating plants** and water lilies to existing ones.
 - **Weed Suppression:** Weeds appear quickly now; hoe them thoroughly before they can set seed and apply mulch to borders to conserve moisture.
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July: The Height of Summer Care

July brings rising temperatures and a focus on watering, feeding, and propagation to sustain the garden through the warmest weeks.

- **Early July:**
 - **Lavender Harvest:** Cut lavender for drying once the flowers have newly opened for the best fragrance, then hang in a cool, dark place.
 - **Propagation:** Take **softwood cuttings** from favourite shrubs like hydrangeas, spiraea, and pyracantha.
- **Mid-July:**
 - **Final Sowing:** Complete your last batch of **peas and dwarf beans** by mid-month to ensure a successful autumn crop.
 - **Fruit Pruning:** Shorten side shoots on trained fruit trees to about five leaves from their base.
- **Late July:**
 - **Winter Colour:** Sow seeds for **winter-flowering pansies and violas** now so they are established by autumn.
 - **Fruit Maintenance:** Prune **plum, apricot, and cherry trees** during dry weather to reduce the risk of silver leaf disease. Prune **blueberries** after harvest to control height and branching.
- **Throughout the Month:**
 - **Feeding Regimes:** Feed tomatoes, peppers, and chillies weekly with a **high-potash fertiliser**. Give dahlias a liquid feed and keep sweet peas picked every few days to prolong flowering.
 - **Watering Priority:** Water early or late in the day to minimize evaporation; container plants and hanging baskets may require daily attention.
 - **Greenhouse Management:** Open vents and doors on warm days for air circulation; **damp down the floor** each morning on hot days to increase humidity.
 - **Harvesting:** Pick **courgettes** while they are young to encourage more fruit to form.

Essential Summer Maintenance Tips

- **Lawn Resilience:** During dry spells, **raise the mower height** to 1 or 1.5 inches to help the grass resist drought and heat. Leave clippings on the lawn to act as a natural mulch and return nutrients to the soil.
- **Tool Hygiene:** Sharpen and disinfect pruning shears after use, finishing with a light coat of oil to protect the blades.
- **Pest Vigilance:** Keep a close watch for **lily beetles, snails, aphids, and vine weevils**, removing them before they cause significant harm.

Happy Gardening! *Enjoy the long, balmy evenings in your thriving space!*