

The ladybug



A quarterly vegetable gardening newsletter for Hidalgo County, TX

How to protect your plants from heat

July, 2021

No matter how hot the summer is there are some measures gardeners can take to counter the heat and keep a garden growing.

1. Apply mulch, preferably a reflective mulch such as dry grass clippings. The first line of defense against hot weather and windy conditions that can dry soil surface is to apply a liberal layer of mulch around the plants (3 in). This protects the soil from direct sun exposure, keeping it moist at the surface. Mulch also reduces evaporation of water from the soil which reduces the need for watering. Light colored mulches will reflect the sunlight and help maintain cooler surface soil conditions.



2. Water your garden and shrubs early in the morning. Heat can dry soil surface quickly dehydrating shallow roots. Water is also lost through leaves in hot weather, so your plants will need a thorough watering. This should be done early in the morning which also prevents heat scald. In extreme hot weather, small plants and seedlings may need a second watering later in the day. Watering in the morning is also a great defense against slugs, since conditions are drier overnight. Fungal diseases are also discouraged. Install a drip irrigation system to make an efficient use of water in your garden.

3. Use shade cloth: Shade cloth offers partial and temporary protection from the sun for garden plants. It is available at garden centers in a variety of sizes, shade factors and configurations. 'Shade factors' refer to the degree of blocked sunlight, and can range from 25% – 90%. Sensitive plants like salad greens may require a 50 – 60% shade factor, while more heat tolerant plants like squash and beans may benefit from a 30% shade cloth. A shade cloth is temporary but care should be taken to position it to block sunlight while not reducing aeration. Plants do not need to be enclosed in shade cloth; usually positioning it on only one side or above the plant will suffice. Care should also be taken to ensure that the cloth structure can withstand wind and won't harm the plants by falling on them.

4. Avoid applying fertilizers to your lawn or garden during heat, since the roots' ability to absorb nutrients is diminished. Wait until the weather cools down before adding fertilizers to garden crops and the lawn.

And while you're thinking of ways to protect your garden from heat, don't forget to set out some water for the birds, bees and wildlife, remember they are an important part of the ecosystem and bring great benefit to your garden!



Recipe of the month: Strawberry surprise smoothie

Ingredients:

1 cup low fat vanilla yogurt
 1 cup orange juice concentrate
 1 cup frozen strawberries
 1 cup pineapple chunks
 1 banana, frozen (cut into chunks and peel before freezing)

What to do:

1. Wash your hands and clean your cooking area.
2. Add yogurt, orange juice concentrate, and fruit to blender.
3. Blend ingredients in blender until smooth.
4. Serve immediately.

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cost per serving: \$0.38

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 3/4 cup	
Servings Per Container 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 160	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	2%
Sodium 25mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	12%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 32g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 4%	• Vitamin C 130%
Calcium 8%	• Iron 2%



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