

Full flower summer

Keep on watering, planting and pruning

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Special to Tallahassee Democrat
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Temperatures soared in late April. Coupled with long periods without rain, the high temperatures have made gardening challenging.

Frequent watering, especially of new plantings, is a necessity when it's so dry. Lawns even needed watering the last of April. Expect more of the same for most of May.

Even after the rain starts, though, be attentive to new plantings during dry periods. The plants, which had probably been receiving daily watering in the nursery, have limited root systems and can dry out quickly and even die. It usually takes a full growing season for new plant roots to become well established.

Consider micro-irrigation

I'm a big proponent of micro-irrigation for new plantings of shrubs and flowers. These are efficient, inexpensive and flexible watering systems that the average home gardener can set up themselves. They can make watering so much easier and put the water exactly where it's needed.

If there are periods that you won't be home to water new plantings, it's critical that you have some type of watering system on a timer to periodically and automatically water your plants.

Lawn fertilizer ratios

If you're like me and have completely forgotten to fertilize your lawn, there's still time. Unless you have had a soil test indicating otherwise, the general recommendation is to use a no-phosphorus fertilizer with half of its nitrogen in a slow-release form.

For example, readily available is 15-0-15 with 7.5% slow-release nitrogen. You would apply that at the rate of 6.67 pounds per 1,000 square feet of lawn area and immediately water it in lightly. If you happen to use an 18-0-18 or 20-0-20 fertilizer, to determine the rate just divide the percentage of nitrogen, for

example 20, into 100. This would mean that you would apply 5 pounds of 20-0-20 per 1,000 square feet, but only if the fertilizer label specified that it contained 10% slow-release nitrogen.

If it was all quickly released water-soluble nitrogen, you would only apply 2.5 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Don't apply more fertilizer than I've specified here as the excess nitrogen can run off into our water systems or even leach into ground water.

Ornamental grass

If you have bare areas in the lawn, this is the time to fill them in with grass plugs or sod. Before going to that trouble, though, think about the root cause of the thinning. Be realistic about factors such as whether there's enough sunlight, too much soil compaction, or too much foot traffic for grass to grow.

One of the most trouble-free areas of my lawn is where I sprigged perennial or ornamental peanut into a sunny area of centipede grass years ago. Over time the low-growing perennial peanut with cheerful yellow flowers has taken over. I just mow it as I do the grass, and I have found that it does quite well.

Shrubs and pruning tips

If you have overgrown shrubs you need to prune, try to complete it before it gets hotter. It's much more pleasant for you and gives the plants longer to recover.

Continue planting new shrubs and trees even as we move into summer. Just be sure, as mentioned earlier, to be very attentive to watering.

We're about to enter crepe myrtle season and perhaps you're considering adding one or more of these summer-flowering trees to your landscape for the bright color they add.

I caution you to make sure you select the suitable type for your planting site. Some crepe myrtle cultivars stay relatively small. Other cultivars grow quite large. Some grow very wide, yet others have a narrow form. Just do your research on the mature size and form of the cultivar you're considering. And don't forget to look up and think about any utility lines that may be overhead the planting site. Don't select a variety



Firebush is a perennial shrub that flowers summer through fall and is very attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds. PROVIDED BY DAVID W. MARSHALL



Zinnias are heat loving and have red, pink, yellow or purple flowers. PROVIDED BY MOLLY JAMESON

that will eventually reach the lines. Trying to keep the tree pruned below the lines is impractical.

Flowering plants and the garden

There are many lower growing flowering plants that provide good summer colors. Examples are SunPatiens, pentas, zinnia, verbena, marigold, melampodium, rudbeckia, purple coneflower, shrimp plant, African bulbine, and African bush daisy.

Slightly taller are agastache, Thunbergia battiscombeii, agapanthus, cleome, cigar flower, plumbago, firebush, hydrangea, and Turk's cap.



PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

‘Sesame Street’ has a new TV home on Netflix

Anna Kaufman
USA TODAY

Following months of upheaval, a sense of calm is coming to “Sesame Street.”

In a series of announcements May 19, Sesame Workshop, producer of the beloved children's show, revealed it will begin airing original episodes on PBS for the first time in nearly 10 years – and that both new and old episodes would be available later this year on Netflix, replacing an expiring pact with HBO.

“I strongly believe that our educational programming for children is one of the most important aspects of our service to the American people, and ‘Sesame Street’ has been an integral part of that critical work for more than half a century,” Paula Kerger, president and CEO of PBS, said in a statement.

“We’re proud to continue our partnership in the pursuit of having a profound impact on the lives of children for years to come,” Kerger continued.

The decision comes as President Donald Trump's administration moves to cut funding to PBS and the Ready to Learn Grant, which has historically been allocated to children's programming.

That may be why the nonprofit Sesame Workshop inked the PBS deal alongside the new one with Netflix. The program's 56th season will air later this year on the streaming giant and be made available alongside 90 hours of previous episodes.

“This unique public-private partnership ensures children in communities across the U.S. continue to have free ac-

cess on PBS KIDS to the ‘Sesame Street’ they love,” Sesame Workshop CEO Sherrie Westin said in a statement. “This combined support advances our mission and ensures we can help all children – everywhere – grow smarter, stronger and kinder.”

The announcement is a welcome reprieve for fans of the furry creatures, first introduced in 1969, after news broke late last year that Warner Bros. Discovery had opted not to renew its contract to air the program. HBO, which began airing new episodes in 2015, after the show's original PBS exodus, also announced at the time that its streaming service Max would no longer premiere new seasons and would halt streaming older episodes in 2027.

With the future of beloved characters like Big Bird, Elmo and Cookie Monster in jeopardy, some fans began to fret that a program once widely available to children across social classes would soon become obsolete. The twin announcements from Netflix and PBS offer a different path forward, however, promising a “reimagined” 56th season with one 11-minute storyline driving each episode.

Netflix also teased a “Sesame Street” video game, part of a growing effort to make the show interactive. PBS Kids digital platforms will also offer games.

“Sesame Street,” alongside shows like “Dragon Tales” and “Clifford the Big Red Dog,” has become synonymous with a golden era of children's television

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