



## **July Tip of the Month Let's Talk BUGS and DISEASE in Your Plants**

July: HOT, HUMID, a little rain once in a while, and lush beautiful plants ~ what a reward! Growing plant material in July can be fun, easy-going and, actually, fairly low maintenance if you take care of your plants early in the season. If every customer was told when they purchase a plant in May and June, "Hey don't forget to check under those skirts in the middle of June to look for critters!", then every gardener would reap the rewards!! Take the time during June or early July to nurture the bedding and perennial plants in your yard with a little extra TLC, such as Bloom Booster. Use a fungicide to PREVENT any powdery mildew or black spots, and always inspect for insects.

More than likely, it's all going to hit home during July if you haven't taken time by the end of June to do a bit of preventative care! Inspecting under foliage is the place to start. That's where grey mold can develop: when the foliage is close to the ground and the development of leaves has created a bit of lack in air movement and mold spores start to develop. Ever walked into the garden one day and thought, "goodness, everything is wonderful" ~ just the way you planned it, and then the next day, "oh my goodness, what happened here?" is all that can come out of your mouth! A little investigative work during late June or early July will work wonders.

Start by looking for ways to open up air flow throughout the heavy vegetative areas, without ruining your presentation. Sometimes perennial foliage that has gone by during the first flush of flowering will benefit from having a slight hair cut to stimulate new growth, ultimately creating more space for air to flow through out the garden. Let's take a look especially at Monarda (Beebalm), Phlox (primarily the upright varieties), or Polonium (Jacobs Ladder) ~ all of these varieties will start to develop Powdery Mildew during the warm, damp evenings of July. You can take simple measures to help deal with that and keep a beautiful garden all season long. If you don't like using a chemical application such as a fungicide, there are many other ways to prevent fungus from developing. Organic preventatives are always an option. Simple procedures will save tons of headaches in the end!

Now, let's talk Bugs, Bugs, Bugs!! They are there ~ you may be kidding yourself if you don't think they are. Take a good look around. Again, warm temperatures, wet conditions and morning dews are perfect environments for infestations of insects, and

they can do more damage in your garden in one week than a pack of neighborhood dogs out for an afternoon stroll. Take time every week to be a BUG SPY!! Aphids are the number one pest that is going to SUCK THE LIVING JUICES RIGHT OUT OF YOUR GARDEN!! Luckily, they are the easiest to prevent. Just take either a Safer Soap product, or an insecticide (it can even be Hot Pepper Wax spray) and do a bit of preventative work before you see them on the buds of your plants. Safer products and Pepper Wax seem to work better as a preventative than as a control once the problem exists. Look around everywhere... in your veggie garden (Aphids love Peppers, Cold Crops (Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower); they adore eating all kinds of your HERBS; and of course, your Roses, Fuchsia, Cosmos and on and on and on!! Most greenhouses conduct preventative sprays on Annuals to keep material clean, or use non toxic preventatives on Veggie crops, such as Herbs and Tomatoes, Peppers, etc., so they should be clean when they arrive home with you. However, the critters right in your backyard on your ornamental trees and shrubs don't take long to say..."Hey look at those fresh new guys over there to hang with" and bingo, there they are!!

So look around, and if you don't know what you are dealing with, bring some leaves into your local garden center in a SEALED TIGHT sandwich bag... Don't open it inside, the expert there will be easily able to see what the problem is, even without a magnified glass, and quickly come up with options for you to combat the problems!

Happy Disease and Bug Free Gardening!!