



Gardening notes for July:

Well here we are in midsummer - where does the time go!

For many of us our thoughts will be turning to school holidays and perhaps time to be with family or away on a break somewhere.

With that in mind it's a good idea to plan the care of your plants whilst you are away, or busy with other fun activities. The easiest way to have the watering covered if you are away, is to have a reciprocal arrangement with a neighbour. However, there are automatic watering options available – these range from sophisticated timers to simple solutions using gravity, adapters for water bottles for individual pots or capillary matting – which can be set up in a bathroom for houseplants.

Ways to make watering more efficient, are to water early or late when it's cooler, group pots together to create a micro climate and to mulch pots or beds to keep moisture in. But mulch on wet ground to seal moisture in. Established shrubs and trees should not need watering and watering lawns is a waste of a valuable resource, so focus on what's newly planted. On the veg plot prioritise salads and fruits, tomatoes, soft fruits, peas, squashes etc.

Other jobs on the veg patch, pin Strawberry runners to the ground so they root, using bent wire or a stone will do the trick. Once rooted they can be moved in the autumn to where you want them- or potted up and given away to a friend. Keep picking veg especially courgettes, to keep them cropping.

Remember to feed plants through the summer, tomato food is a good all-rounder. This is especially important for hungry veg like squashes and tomatoes, and plants in pots. Don't forget that plants in pots have a limited resource to draw on and that every time you water some of the nutrients will be washed out of the pot.

For the wildlife at this time of year, it may be a time of plenty, but water may be scarce, so keep the bird bath topped up and provide a dish of water on the ground. And don't forget the birds, they are exhausted from raising their families and so some extra food would be most welcome.

A lovely way to start or finish your day is to wander round your plot with a pair of deadhead snippers or secateurs and remove dead and fading flowers, it will keep things looking tidy and encourage your plants to flower for longer.

Finally, as always relax, enjoy your plot. Perhaps treat yourself to a garden seat or reposition an existing one so you can sit and admire your favourite spot. Why not invite friends and neighbours' round for a drink in your garden, or perhaps a BBQ so they can enjoy it too.