

Gardening Articles for week ending 26th SEPTEMBER 2015
Written by Wally Richards. [Photo]

GARDEN INFORMATION SEPTEMBER 2015

We are at that point of time when we will get up an hour earlier so we can do more gardening before nightfall, called day light savings. It makes no difference to our plants as they get up at sunrise and rest at sunset anyway. It reminds of the Native American Indian who said; 'Its only the white man that believes if you cut a length off one end of a blanket and sew it onto the other end, you make a longer blanket!' He was referring to daylight savings.

There are a number of important things to remember now its spring and one of those is your spring bulbs. They will have been flowering, still flowering or finished for the season.

It is now that the foliage gathers energy from the sun to store in the bulbs so that they will flower well for you next spring. Remove the foliage and you will lose the show next season.

Likewise until the foliage dies down naturally, do not lift the bulbs. Instead you can sprinkle some sheep manure pellets around and give them a dose of Fruit & Flower Power.

After the foliage dies down you can lift the bulbs and store to plant next autumn.

Some of the spent flowers may have formed seed pods and if you are adventurist you can harvest these when they dry and plant in seedling trays to germinate. An inexpensive way to obtain different flower colours in the future.

The days are warming and with new seasons growth you will need to start watering a bit more often.

Dont over water young plants, apply sufficient moisture to prevent water stress only.

Those gardeners that unfortunate to have chlorinated water in their town supply should seriously look at

putting a housing and carbon bonded filter on their taps to remove this chemical which effects the soil life including earthworms. This leads to leaf diseases as the plants are not as healthy as they should be.

Root pruning; it is not too late to root prune any container plants that have been in their containers for two seasons or more.

A simple job, wet the mix and then lift the plant out of the container. Lay on the ground and with a cross saw, saw off the bottom third of the roots. Place fresh compost in the bottom of the container up to the height that is equal to the third that was removed from the root zone. Also place some Rok Solid, sheep manure pellets and Neem Tree granules on this mix mix and return the plant to its home.

It will develop new roots and new top growth and look a whole lot better for your efforts.

Strawberries will be starting to make new season's growth so a quarter of a teaspoon of Wallys Secret Strawberry Food per plant and repeat every 6 weeks till end of harvest next year. This can significantly increase the size of many of your berries. Most importantly, start your Mycorrhizal spraying of the foliage and repeat every two weeks. This natural product will increase your overall crop by 200 to 400% which means a lot more berries for a longer season.

Otherwise keep the growing medium or bed moist with non-chlorinated water.

If there are any signs of insect pests spray the plants with Wallys Neem Tree oil, under and over the foliage last thing in the day, just before dusk.

When the fruit start to ripen it can be a case of trying to beat the birds unless you place bird netting over the plants held above them with hoops of number 8 wire.

The other week we talked about using the new silicon products to toughen up the cells of your tomato plants, reducing the ability of the psyllids to feed on the plants which can cause the plants to die eventually with poor crops before hand.

Feeding of your tomatoes is very important as they are heavy feeders needing ample nitrogen to produce good growth and plenty of potash to set fruit and have good flavor.

Too much potash can cause problems and that is why Wallys Secret Tomato Food with Neem Granules has 3 different releases of potash to give the right continual supply the plants and the fruit need to do their best.

Having Neem Tree Powder with the food also offers protection against some insect problems.

Numerous gardeners have told me that the Neem has made a big difference with whitefly problems on their tomatoes including crops in glasshouses.

Its important that you start off using at planting time, a little in the planting hole and some on the soil surface in the root zone. Repeat about every 6 weeks.

I saw recently another push for honey bees in New Zealand with packets of wildflowers and bee flowers for gardeners to plant in their gardens to attract and feed the bees.

This is very commendable and a great thing to do for our pollinators but no where in the write up did I see any warnings about the harmful chemicals that are killing off bees all over the world?

Not much use in planting up bee friendly flowers when you or your neighbors are spraying any of the family of chemicals called neonicotinoids which includes Confidor.

I received some interesting information on this subject this week which I will share with you;

'The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was wrong to approve the pesticide sulfoxaflor two years ago, a federal appeals court has ruled, forcing the chemical off the market.'

A three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled last week in favor of a lawsuit brought by Earthjustice and others, saying the EPA erred when it approved the pesticide in 2013.

"Because the EPA's decision to unconditionally register sulfoxaflor was based on flawed and limited data, we conclude that the unconditional approval was not supported by substantial evidence," Judge Mary M. Schroeder wrote for the court.

Sulfoxaflor, marketed as Closer and Transform, is in the family of pesticides called neonicotinoids that affect the central nervous system of insects, resulting in paralysis and death.

Honeybees have been dying out in unprecedented numbers since 2006.

Land use and other factors are no doubt part of the problem, but pesticides have been one of the suspects from the beginning.

The EPA admitted that it was aware that sulfoxaflor was "very highly toxic" to bees, but reasoned that rules for its application could be devised that would mitigate any harm.

The court said the EPA had no basis for saying that.

Dow Agrosiences, maker of the insecticide, and the EPA argued to the court that although there were studies linking the product to bee deaths, they were not conclusive.

That line of reasoning did not impress Schroeder, who wrote: "Neither logic nor precedent can sustain this position. We have previously held that an agency cannot rely on ambiguous studies as evidence of a

conclusion that the studies do not support."

The ruling supported the view of many environmentalists who believe the long-term effect of insecticides on entire bee colonies should be taken into account, not merely a dose of chemical on an individual bee.

"This is a huge opinion," Peter Jenkins, an attorney for the Center for Food Safety, which has also sued the EPA over its regulation of neonicotinoids, told the Star-Tribune in Minneapolis.

"There was not enough data that the EPA could point to support its conclusions." End.

I see that the same neonicotinoid, sulfoxaflor is found in the insecticide GF2032 which gained approval for use in NZ also in 2013.

Likely this approval was based on the approval of the US EPA.

As a result of the court findings in America the use of any neonicotinoid in NZ should be re-considered by our EPA to save our pollinators.

I also note that in America because of public pressures many retail outlets have stopped selling any neonicotinoid insecticides to the home garden market which would be a great move by our retail chains to adopt.

