

Rx for a Healthy Yard and Garden?

We love to see our yard green and our garden full of plants. However, there are always those plants that do not thrive. Do we give them more water? Should we add more fertilizer? Or do we spray on some chemicals? Before taking any action, we need to find out what is wrong. There are three possible causes for unhealthy plants: environment, disease, or pests.

Environmental needs are different for every kind of plant. Learn what they are before you plant. How much sun, water, space, and drainage does it need? Find out the pH required and test the soil. Amend soil as needed. Plant properly and water to establish. Use fertilizer as recommended, but it is not a substitute for proper care and planting. Mulch and water correctly.

Diseases are caused by fungi, bacteria, and viruses and can be aggravated by environmental problems. Prevent disease by spacing plants to allow air circulation, avoiding plant damage, removing damaged leaves and stems, and cleaning your tools with a disinfectant solution. When diseases occur, identify the disease and find the proper treatment.

Pests are insects, weeds and animals. Pests cannot be eradicated but can be controlled. Learn to recognize pests and when and how to deal with each. Minimize pest damage by having a variety of plants that are well spaced. For control, use biological agents such as ladybeetles **or *Bt* (for gypsy moths)**; also use insecticidal soaps and oils. Use pesticide at the recommended time of year, following the label instructions carefully, and use the right safety procedures and equipment. To do otherwise could be useless, dangerous or environmentally damaging.

Rutgers Master Gardener Resources are available for all your horticultural questions:

- ❖ **Helpline** 732-349-1245
- ❖ **Diagnosis** Plant, pest and disease identification and recommendations. Bring samples to Ocean County Agricultural Center.
- ❖ **Soil Tests** Bring samples to Agricultural Center or send to Rutgers Soil Laboratory.
<http://ocean.njaes.rutgers.edu/garden/documents/SoilpHTest.pdf>
- ❖ **RCE Fact Sheets** <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/category>

Checklist for August

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Harvest vegetables (peppers, squash, tomatoes) to encourage more produce. Please see University of Missouri Extension "**Vegetable Harvest and Storage**".
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/g6226>
- ✓ Start plants for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and onions in a half-shaded area for setting out in September.

Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Check for gypsy moth egg masses; remove and destroy.
- ✓ Deadhead butterfly bushes and Rose-of-Sharon to prevent seed production. Please see Penn State Extension Fact Sheet "**Deadheading**".
<http://extension.psu.edu/plants/master-gardener/counties/chester/how-to-gardening-brochures/deadheading>
- ✓ Fertilize roses early in the month for the last time this year. Control fungal diseases with appropriate sprays.

Lawn

- ✓ Ideal turf seeding time – August 20 to October 10. See Rutgers Fact Sheet #584 "**Seeding Your Lawn**" for more information.
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs584/>
- ✓ Start lawn renovation. See Rutgers Fact Sheet #108 "**Renovating Your Lawn**" for additional information.
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs108/>
- ✓ Test soil and amend, if needed.