

Refreshing midsummer garden trends

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Creating a water schedule is important to keep roots fresh. / Lisa Kyle Young/Getty Images

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August can be discouraging for any gardener: Leaves look brown, flowers produce fewer buds and delicate plants wilt in the heat. Rather than throw in the trowel, revitalize your garden, suggests Burpee Seed Co. CEO and Chairman George Ball. Here are some tips from the third-generation seedsman:

Just add water.

In late summer and fall, humidity declines, causing soil moisture to evaporate quicker. Creating a watering schedule and sticking to it is more important than ever. Be sure to water in the morning, when roots are driest; resist the urge to douse plants throughout the day. "It's better to underwater than overwater, because the roots will drown," Ball says. "If the plant looks hungry or thirsty, it'll droop just a little bit. That's when you want to soak it."

Think green.

It's not too late to add fast-growing veggies to the patch. Ball's suggestion: "Concentrate on your leafy greens, like collard greens, mustard greens and salad greens." Spinach and leaf lettuce take only 30 days to mature and can be planted as late as September.

Have fun.

Why not show off the fruits of your labor with a party in the backyard, with your crops as refreshments? Ball recommends "garden-gating," a homey, family-friendly version of tailgating. "You can use freshly picked vegetables and grill them with brats and beer and watch the big game on an outdoor TV." How about garden-gating for the Olympics?