



Horticulture

Lawn Care Tips Save Water During Drought

Blue Flowers for the Garden

Blue is a cool and calming color. Many gardeners look for plants that have blue flowers to plant with other complementary colors, such as white, violet, grey, pink and yellow. Here are a few plants that will grow in Southeast Nebraska that have blue flowers.

Virginia bluebells (Mertensia virginica) This woodland flower blooms in the spring. This perennial has nodding clusters of blue, bell shaped flowers. It grows best in shady areas of the garden. The plants grow 1 to 2 feet tall and spread about a foot. They go dormant in the summer, so I like them near hostas or other perennials that cover the space later. Virginia bluebells are cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9.

Heartleaf brunnera (Brunnera macrophylla) This spring bloomer prefers moist, shady areas. The leaves are heart shaped and the flowers are light blue. It will grow 12 to 15

inches high with a 15 inch spread. Brunnera is cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8.

Crested iris (Iris cristata) This little iris is native to North America. It prefers part shade and well drained soil. Clumps of crested iris grow 3 to 6 inches tall. Crested iris is cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8.

Balloon flower (Platycodon grandiflorus) This reliable perennial emerges in late spring and blooms all summer. Bell shaped flowers open from balloon shaped buds. It grows best in moist well drained soil. Plants reach a mature height of about 2 feet.

Other blue flowering plants include monkshood (Aconitum napellus), blue corydalis (Corydalis flexuosa), bugloss (Anchusa azurea), blue false indigo (Baptisia australis), bellflower (Campanula spp.), delphinium (Delphinium elatum), gentian (Gentiana spp.), Stokes' aster (Stokesia laevis) and veronica (Veronica spp.). (MJF)



Virginia bluebell



Balloon flower

Dreaming of a perfect lawn this summer? A drought year is not the time to think about it. Water conservation should always be our goal, but drought conditions make it especially important this year. Most conservation measures require little aesthetic sacrifice, although they may take time and patience.

Property owners can take simple steps to conserve water and still enjoy their lawns this year.

• Minimize or stop fertilization — Lush lawns look great, but heavily fertilized lawns use more water and are more susceptible to drought stress. Most commercial lawn fertilizers call for multiple steps, including a second application of fertilizer about six weeks after the first one. For this year, apply less fertilizer or save the fertilizer for fall. Fall is the most critical time to fertilize a lawn.

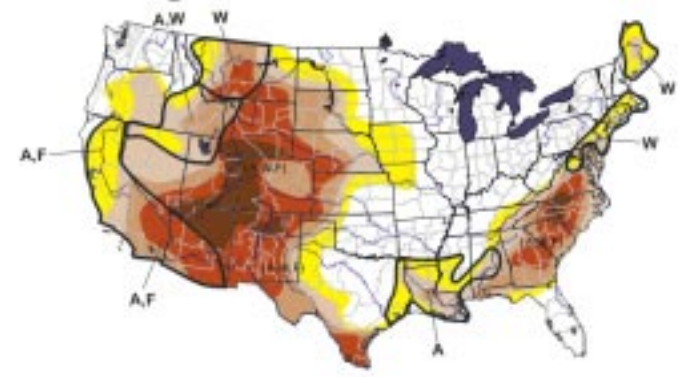
• Maintain lawns properly — A good rule of thumb for mowing is never remove more than one-third of the grass at one time. Raise the mowing height of your lawn mower at least one setting higher than the one you are using now. Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue can be mowed at 3.5 inches during the summer.

Try mulching, even if you do not have a mulching mower. Let clippings remain on the grass. Lawns tend to lose more water and nutrients through evaporation when clippings are removed.

If you did not aerate your lawn in spring, consider doing so in the fall. Aeration creates small holes in the ground that allow water to soak deeper into

Latest U.S. Drought Monitor Map

As of July 2, Lancaster County is in moderate drought.



For the most recent map, visit www.drought.unl.edu/dm

the ground and help promote root growth.

• Maintain lawn care equipment — Sharpen mower blades at least twice this summer. Dull blades tear grass, forcing grass to use 40-60 percent more water trying to recover from stress.

Check in-ground sprinkler systems for leaky valves and heads that may be wasting water. Change timing settings, if appropriate. Identify dry spots by putting a garden stake in the ground. Place portable sprinklers there or readjust in-ground sprinklers so they reach dry spots.

• Water lightly — During the summer the roots of many cool-season grasses, such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue, tend to become shallower. It is important to apply water to the depth of the roots to avoid wasting water. Taking a soil plug should give homeowners a good idea of how

deep their grass roots are.

Watering from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. is ideal. Irrigating during the day wastes water, because much of the water evaporates in the heat.

If water limits are imposed in your community, follow them. Watering on alternate days can save 40 to 50 percent of water. Turf does not need to be watered every day.

Kentucky Bluegrass and fescue will not retain their color without watering, but they can survive about a month without water. It is recommended to water lawns lightly after three dry weeks, as long as your community allows watering.

For more information, consult NebGuide G99-1400-A, "Watering Nebraska Landscapes," available at the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County or at <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g1400.htm> on the Internet. (MJF)

Fall Webworm

Adults are a satiny, white moth often marked with brown spots and a wingspan of 1 to 2 inches. The larvae have long, silky, gray hairs and are either pale yellow with red heads and reddish-brown spots or yellow-green with black heads, a broad black stripe and black spots. Fully grown caterpillars are about one inch long.

Adults emerge in spring and begin egg laying. After 10 to 14 days the larvae hatch out and begin feeding. Larvae have chewing mouth parts, allowing them to eat entire leaves, skeletonize them or leave holes in them. Leaves are completely consumed except for the midrib.



Adult fall webworm

The caterpillars feed in large groups, usually creating a protective tent that encloses branches and foliage on which they feed. The webs become filled with partially eaten leaves, cast skins and excrement and are very unsightly. Significant defoliation of the tree can also occur. There is one or two generations per year.

Use a rake or broom handle to pull the webs out of small trees. Limited pruning could also be effective. When necessary, control the larvae with an application of Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) or Dipel when damage is first noticed. (MJF)



Larvae fall webworm webs.

2002 July/August Garden Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Control bean leaf beetle	2 Remove faded flowers from annual plants	3 Check garden plants for spider mites	4 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	5	6 Plant fall garden
7	8 Control squash vine borer	9 Check tomatoes for blight	10	11 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	12 Pull weeds	13
14	15 Keep garden well watered	16	17 Pick flowers to dry or press	18 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	19	20
21	22	23 Divide iris	24 Prune suckers on maple trees	25 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	26	27
28	29 Store extra seeds	30	31 Turn compost pile	1 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	2 Raise mower height to 3 or 3.5 inches	3 Use drip irrigation to conserve water
4	5 Cut herbs to dry	6	7	8 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	9	10
11	12	13 Pick summer squash & zucchini	14 Remove old or non-producing plants from the garden	15 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	16 Stop fertilizing roses	17
18	19 Control yellow nutsedge	20	21 Over seed tall fescue	22 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	23	24
25	26 Divide peonies	27	28	29 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	30	31 Divide daylilies

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJF)