



Alamosa Landscapes

Enjoying, Deadheading, Weeding, and Mulching

by Marilyn Loser

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Come on July monsoons! I'm enjoying the bounty of flowers this summer. The winter/spring moisture really helped, but we haven't had significant rain since the middle of June as of Saturday afternoon. We water our garden regularly, mostly with drip and low-pressure emitter systems.

Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum*) are just starting to bloom and one clump is so tall I don't have to bend down to smell it at all – flowers are chin high! Orange trollius (globe flower - *Trollius*) is going crazy. I don't see this easy-to-grow perennial very often and love it! Blue fleabane (*Erigeron 'Azure Fairy'*), orange/brown blanket flower (*Gaillardia*), red Maltese Cross (*Lychnis chalcidonica*), pink/red yarrow (*Achillea* species), and blue delphinium grandiflorum (*Delphinium grandiflorum 'blue butterfly'*) are at their best bloom. Annual California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) and Shirley poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) are doing well.

Early perennials such as columbine (*Aquilegia* species), penstemon (*Penstemon*), May night sage (*Salvia nemorosa*), meadow anemone (*Anemone canadensis*), snow in summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*), and bishop weed (*Aegopodium variegatum*) are mostly done. I've been deadheading them (deadheading means to remove dead flower heads from a plant to encourage further blooming and/or encourage root and leaf growth rather than seed growth). I leave some seeding heads on plants such as columbines and penstemons to ensure new plants come up next year. For plants like snow in summer and bishop weed that propagate well by spreading roots, I take the deadheads to Alamosa's recycling center.

I get some second flowering in late summer or early fall if I deadhead columbines, penstemons, and sage.

Weeding is still outrageous! I try to keep on top of it and do well with easy to pull weeds such as lambquarters (*Chenopodium album*) even though the roots of small plants can trail 10 – 12 inches about 2 inches under the soil. July is the time that ground hugging weeds such as purslane and pigweed get happy. I have to sit down and dig them out – hoeing doesn't seem to work well for me.

I don't have much of summer 'dreaded' white top (perennial pepperweed – *Lepidium latifolium*) that is blooming in lots all over town. Sadly, these are not under control in Alamosa, much like

the early variety of white top (hoary cress – *Lepidium draba*) that is shorter and blooms earlier. These two noxious weeds are only on the Colorado Noxious Weed list B species which means, according to the website “are species for which the Commissioner, in consultation with the state noxious weed advisory committee, local governments, and other interested parties, develops and implements state noxious weed management plans designed to stop the continued spread of these species.” I think they should be on the A species list which the website states “are designated by the Commissioner for eradication.” I never saw either until about eight years ago and they are taking over empty lots.

I’m focusing on mulching more than I used to. In my flower beds I prefer cedar mulch which is shredded and intertwines so it doesn’t blow away easily. Once I got bark chips which weren’t fibrous and they blew away by the next season. I mulch around any new shrub or perennial that I plant. For larger shrubs I try to make sure that each one has at least one emitter under the mulch. The mulch helps mitigate soil/air temperatures and reduce soil evaporation. In our environment we have daily temperature swings of more than 40 degrees for most days in the first half of July. So even if you water during cooler mornings, the 80 and above afternoon temperatures can easily sap the soil of moisture.

Please take a look at AlamosaFlowers.net for photos and more information about all the flowers mentioned in this column. All of the photos are from our garden – not just what they should look like according to a catalog picture!

I hope of the four items in the title that you are mostly ‘enjoying’ your July garden!

"The unmulched garden looks to me like some naked thing which for one reason or another would be better off with a few clothes on." Ruth Stout in “The Ruth Stout No-Work Garden Book”, 1971