



The late afternoons of August are among my favorite times of the year. The days are still hot, but as the sun starts to fade and the mosquitoes are still hiding, I pause from my labors and sit on a cedar bench and sip iced tea with homegrown mint. And I let my thoughts wander among the dahlias and daylilies, among the hibiscus and hydrangeas – and the bees and butterflies and birds, too. For a little while, the world’s troubles lessen in the deepening light of a quiet summer afternoon in my garden.

~Irene

AUGUST 2017: In the Garden with Irene Virag

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Enrich future peony beds with compost so they’re ready for planting later this month.	2 Harvest herbs – especially basil – before they flower so they don’t lose their flavor.	3 Disbud dahlias. Snip immature side buds so the plant focuses on making bigger blooms.	4 Plant colchicum corms as soon as they’re available. They’ll be blooming before you know it.	5 Sow more peas, lettuce, beans, radishes and spinach. The season is far from over.
6 Put in a final crop of endive, rutabagas, cauliflower, Swiss chard, broccoli and bok choy.	7 Keep watering tomatoes deeply and evenly. Prune out suckers to let the sunshine in.	8 Cut sunflowers for drying when the heads sag. Hang stems upside down for a month or two.	9 Pull beets when they’re 2 inches across. Cook the vitamin-packed greens, too. Plant more.	10 Last chance to feed and dead-head roses. New growth needs to toughen up before frost.	11 Trim back any mildew-infected zinnias and phlox. Dip pruners in diluted bleach.	12 Blanch celery. Keep mounding soil around the stalks or wrap with paper bags or cardboard.
13 Sow pansy seeds – and soon those colorful little faces will be smiling at you.	14 Water the carrot patch before you harvest and they’ll be much easier to pull.	15 Plant or transplant azaleas and other broad-leaf evergreens. Then be sure to water well.	16 Harvest onions when the tops flop over. Dry in the sun for 5 days; store in a cool, dry place.	17 Keep picking beans and cucumbers every other day so plants keep producing.	18 Lift, divide and replant Japanese and Siberian irises. Cut out rotted or borer-infested parts.	19 Stock up at the LI Daylily Society’s annual sale at Farmingdale State U. lidaylily.org
20 Plant your new daylilies in a sunny spot. Divide existing plants if they’re overcrowded.	21 Pick only ripe melons: The disk at the end of the stem slips off with a press of the thumb.	22 Turn pumpkins so they grow full and round. Let’s face it -- nobody wants a flat bottom.	23 Perk up parched hanging baskets by plunging them into buckets of water.	24 Remove the lower leaves of Brussels sprouts for larger heads that form higher on the stalks.	25 Water shrubs, trees and woody plants. But the time to fertilize and prune is past.	26 Patrol the tomato patch for hornworms. Plop the hungry caterpillars in soapy water.
27 Get your bulb order going. Pesto-lovers, don’t forget – garlic is a bulb, too.	28 Plant lilies. They’re bulbs but they like to settle in sooner than tulips and daffodils.	29 Make sure sweet potatoes get lots of water in the coming weeks so they grow bigger.	30 Celebrate St. Fiacre. The Irish monk who died in 670 is the patron saint of gardeners.	31 Plant peonies in a sunny spot, burying the tuber’s upper eye no more than two inches.		Drop me a line: irene@irenevirag.com 1019 Ft Salonga Rd. Suite 10 – #302 Northport, NY 11768