

August 2024 Newsletter

Happy “Dog Days” of summer!

The term “Dog Days” of summer lasts from July 3 to August 11. The term traditionally refers to a period of particularly hot weather occurring in the Northern Hemisphere. In ancient Greece and Rome, the Dog Days were believed to be a time of drought, bad luck, and unrest, when dogs and men alike would be driven mad by the extreme heat! Today, the phrase doesn’t conjure up such bad imagery. Instead the Dog Days are associated purely with the time of summer’s peak temperatures.

This period of heat coincides with the year’s heliacal (meaning “at sunrise”) rising of Sirius, the Dog Star. Sirius is part of the constellation Canis Majoris - the “Greater Dog”- which is where Sirius gets its canine nickname, as well as its official name, Alpha Canis Majoris. Not including our own Sun, Sirius is the brightest star in the sky.

Enjoy your gardens and happy watering!

FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

The birth flowers for those born during the sultry late summer days of August reflect the season with intense colors and dramatic blooms. August birth flowers include the poppy and gladiolus, both late summer bloomers known for their beauty and a myriad of symbolic meanings. While every month is represented by two flowers, it’s not always the case that both flowers work well in a bouquet. August stands out in that both poppies and gladioli are popular in bouquets and arrangements.

Flowers have been associated with birth months since ancient Rome, and evolved as a beloved custom around the world. As we mentioned, each month is represented by two flowers, which means more choices and ways to personalize birthday bouquets. Not just a choice between two flowers, but a myriad of varieties and vibrant colors, plus layers of symbolism that you can fine-tune according to the flower genus, variety, and color.

Primary August Birth Flower: Gladiolus (Gladiolus)



The tall, handsome gladiolus flower gets its name from the Latin word *gladius*, meaning sword, because of its saber-like appearance. Though not a lily, it's often called sword lily for the same reason. Originally cultivated in South Africa, the gladiolus now has around 300 species, and over 10,000 cultivars. The showy, trumpet-shaped flowers bloom in mid-to-late summer in a brilliant array of purple, pink, red, orange, yellow, and white hues. Gladiolus' height and column of blooms make it a favorite in bouquets.

Gladiolus Symbolism

Along with being one of the August birth flowers, the gladiolus is also the traditional flower for 40th anniversaries, and represents faithfulness and infatuation. In **floriography**, the Victorian flower

language, the gladiolus was believed to pierce the heart with love, earning its modern associations with love at first sight, enchantment, and fidelity. Gladiolus also symbolizes intellect, good character, and remembrance.

Different colors of gladioli add extra layers of symbolism. Pink represents a mother's love, perfect for moms born in August. Yellow, associated with friendship and joy, for the friend who's always there in good times and bad. White symbolizes innocence, and purple is symbolic of beauty and good fortune. Whether you're a wordsmith or not, a bouquet featuring gladioli can do all the talking, sending just the right sentiment to your favorite August baby!

Gladiolus Varieties

With more than 250 species, the varieties of gladiolus seem endless. A look at a few of them will give you an idea of the range of choices this showy flower offers.

- Jester – ruffled bright yellow petals with a crimson throat, or center
- Black Beauty – dark maroon petals with edges that look almost black
- Pastel Mix – flowers in shades of lavender, pink, peach, yellow, and white.
- Parrot Mix – contrasting colors on the tips and throats of the petals in a myriad of colors

Gladiolus History and Trivia

Though gladiolus flowers are now cultivated and quite popular around the world, we can thank South Africa for these regal beauties. There it's valued for its ornamental aesthetic appeal, as it is around the world, but for another cultural contribution – food culture, in fact. In many African countries, the flowers are cooked and eaten as vegetables.

It was ancient Rome that gave gladiolus flowers their name, deriving from *gladius*, or sword. They were associated with gladiators, who were presented with gladioli upon victory as a symbol of virility. It wasn't until the 16th century that the flowers were introduced to the rest of Europe, and they gained popularity in the 18th and 19th centuries with the emergence and widespread appeal of floriography.

NO MEETING UNTIL SEPTEMBER:

Date: Next meet is September 11

Time: 9:30 AM - Set-up

10:00 AM - Business Meeting

10:30 AM - 11:00AM - Social time and snacks

11:00 AM - Program - TBD

12:30 PM - Clean-up

Location: Our Savior Lutheran Church

745 Front Street South

Issaquah, WA

Snack Committee:

Hostess: TBD

Committee: TBD

TIME TO PAY DUES:

It's that time of year again when we need to pay dues for the next garden club year.

Amount: \$25.00 with or without a contribution to the club in lieu of having a plant sale / fund raiser this spring. Write checks payable to the Issaquah Garden Club.

Send to: Sandra Roberts
4623 194th Ave SE
Issaquah, WA 98027-4357

Keep in mind that in September we'll be making a new membership list and this is what I use to send the newsletter. No Dues = No Newsletter ...

SAVE THE DATES:

September 30, 2024 - General Membership Meeting at St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Bellevue. Cost is \$10.00 for two speakers and lunch. Registration begins at 9:30AM. You need to reserve a space in advance. *Lunch will be provided by the Issaquah Garden Club.* More details will be forthcoming in subsequent newsletters.

October 18, 2024 - Work Day at Bellevue Botanical Gardens. Remember that in order to volunteer you need to have completed the required paperwork and the background check!

July 18 - 20, 2025 (Friday, Saturday & Sunday) - Flower Show at Bellevue Botanical Garden

EDUCATIONAL CORNER:

How to Grow BIG Tomatoes in Western Washington

**(This method comes highly
recommended by a current
garden club member)**

You will need:

Epsom salts

Whole fat powdered milk (Amazon)

Any tomato friendly plant food (dry for planting and liquid for after)

Plant foods you need are:

5-1-1 for nitrogen for green plant health

0-10-10 for fruit/blossoms.

Recommendation is to mix 50/50 during growing season

When planting seedlings:

Dig the hole for the seedling 1/2 larger than the root ball, trim the bottom leaves of the plant to leave an exposed and elongated stem, then dig hole deep enough to plant in soil up to 2-3 inches below bottom set of leaves.

Mix:

1 tablespoon powdered milk

1 tablespoon Epsom salts

1 tablespoon dry vegetable plant food

Spread 1/3 in bottom of hole and mix the rest with the soil you removed from the hold that you are going to place around the roots. Place plant in the hole, fill in around roots with the soil that has the mix in it.

After 2 weeks, start feeding once every 2-3 weeks with:

1 tablespoon powdered milk

1 tablespoon Epsom salts

1 tablespoon each of two liquid plant foods (Alaska fish fertilizer for 5-1-1 and Mor-bloom for 0-10-10 mixed in 2 quarts of water per plant.

Repeat liquid feeding every 2 1/2 to 3 weeks until end of the season.

For you non-tomato growers here's some light reading on a different topic using another item found in our households:

What Adding Coffee Does to Your Plants, According to Experts

Here is the science behind using your morning brew and grounds to perk up your plants.

Pouring your [morning coffee](#) leftovers into your favorite houseplant or sprinkling used coffee grounds around the soil [of your vegetables](#) is a nugget of homespun growing advice that gardeners have been passing down for generations.

But does it really work to boost the health of your plants? Some say that coffee's benefits to your plants are hard to quantify. Ahead, we asked experts to break down the benefits, risks, and best techniques for adding coffee to your plants.

Meet Our Expert

Linda J. Brewer of the [Oregon State University Department of Horticulture](#)
Seth Pearsoll, creative director and vice-president of the Philadelphia Flower Show at the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#)

Coffee Has Nutrients That Are Good for Plants

Coffee grounds contain several nutrients that make it a favorite soil amendment for gardens, including nitrogen, potassium, magnesium, and copper, says Pearsoll.

"Brewed coffee, although less nutrient-dense, still contains some amounts of these elements," he says.

Nitrogen: "A vital macronutrient for plant growth, nitrogen is crucial for the synthesis of proteins and other essential plant compounds," says Pearsoll.

Potassium: "It's essential for plants' overall health, participating in processes like photosynthesis, nutrient uptake, and water regulation," Pearsoll says.

Magnesium: "It's a core component of chlorophyll, helping plants to photosynthesize," says Pearsoll.

Copper: "Although required in smaller amounts, it plays a role in enzymatic functions and protein synthesis," Pearsoll says.

The Benefits of Using Coffee in Your Garden

When you add ground or brewed coffee to your garden, you can boost the quantities of those essential nutrients within your soil—though some of Brewer's research and literature reviews have shown the percentage increase of those nutrients is relatively small. "What [the coffee] is providing is a carbon source for soil microbes," she says. You may not be able to tie that to brighter flowers or tastier tomatoes this season, but over time, the "microbial glues" left behind by these bacteria and fungi can improve soil structure, reduce erosion, and retain nutrients, she says.

Brewer has also identified research that points to coffee as a successful slug deterrent, working more effectively than traditional metaldehyde-based repellents. In a paper for the Oregon State University Extension Service, she points out that a solution of one-part water to two-parts coffee was strong enough to push 100 percent of the slugs in the study away from the treated soil.

The Risks of Using Coffee on Plants

In low concentrations, coffee likely won't have any major adverse effects on your garden. However, cautions Pearsoll, you shouldn't use it in place of fertilizer. "Coffee grounds can be a good supplement to a well-rounded fertilization plan," he says. "They should not be relied upon as a standalone fertilizer because they lack certain nutrients, like phosphorus and calcium, that plants also need."

Raises Soil Acidity

Conventional gardening wisdom points to coffee as a way to lower the pH of your garden; though Brewer says these effects are often temporary, Pearsoll notes that raising the acidity of the soil can cause problems for plants that thrive in neutral or alkaline soil.

Causes Dry Soil

If you don't properly incorporate the grounds into the soil, you can force your garden to dry out. "Coffee grounds can also create a dense layer on the soil surface that might impede water infiltration if not properly mixed into the soil," says Pearsoll.

Slow Germination and Growth

Brewer also notes that previous research has connected higher levels of caffeine with lower levels of seed germinations and slower plant growth.

How to Use Coffee Grounds or Brewed Coffee in Your Garden

Figuring out the proper amount of coffee to add to your garden allows you to experience the benefits without the potential risks. "The 'right' amount of coffee to use can depend on your soil's existing nutrient levels and pH, as well as the specific needs of your plants," says Pearsoll. "As a rule of thumb, moderation is key, and it's always better to err on the side of less to avoid any potential harm to your plants."

Pearsoll recommends using coffee grounds in your garden over brewed liquid. "Used grounds are best because most of the acidity has been leached out in the brewing process," he says. "They can be sprinkled on the soil surface or mixed in lightly. If you're mixing it in, the top few inches of soil would be enough."

Though you can use any type of bean or flavored grounds in your garden, make sure you aren't using leftovers from a cup mixed with milk or sugar. "They can attract pests and create a breeding ground for harmful bacteria and mold," he says.

If you are using brewed coffee, allow it to cool and then pour it onto the soil, not the leaves (no need to water it down). Take this moisture into account when considering the overall watering needs of your plant.

1 Source:

Support EW. [Used appropriately, coffee grounds improve soil and kill slugs.](#) Extension Communications. Oregon State University.