



SUMMER
Home & Garden

Attend a Garden Festival

In between some shade trees with the breeze gently pushing you through rows upon rows of fresh vegetables, locally made crafts and one-of-a-kind food items. Is there a better way to spend a summer day?

Every year, millions of people take to the centers of their respective communities to celebrate all things garden. And considering the emerging popularity of movements focused on eating clean and consuming more organic products, local growers are finding their services in high demand.

Summer garden festivals provide enjoyable experiences for people of all ages, tastes and preferences for items such as flowers, bushes or trees. No matter what you're looking for at a summer garden festival, you're sure to find it.

GET INSPIRED

One of the best aspects of attending a summer garden festival is the accessibility of local experts. This is your chance to ask your lawn and garden questions to a true specialist in the field.

You will likely find professionals from local nurseries, garden centers and outdoor construction firms. Use this opportunity to pick their brains on projects you have in mind for your home, such as a new garden fence or outdoor kitchen area.

GET PRODUCTS

Don't let the word "garden" fool you into thinking you'll only be able to find flowers or plants at your summer festival. Quite the opposite.

Vendors will be ready to sell all types of food, drinks, gardening tools, lawn accessories and decorative out-



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door pieces, as well.

Many downtowns host sidewalk sales during their summer festivals. Here you can find local businesses selling their unique jewelry and housewares, all during a convenient stroll down your city streets.

GET GOING

What are you waiting for? Touch base with your local tourism organization and check the upcoming events section of your local newspa-

per to find your town's next summer garden festival.

Don't forget to bring a cart or wagon for all of goodies you'll find.

A pickup truck will make it easy to haul the annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs and spices you find from

Backyard Safety Tips

Backyard fun should conjure up positive thoughts of a barbecue grill, swing set and a game of Whiffle ball, all of which can also pose potential safety hazards.

Staying safe in your yard means more than simply teaching your children to avoid busy streets or stray dogs. It also requires some vigilance on your part to make sure they get the most out of their summertime fun.

TEND YOUR YARD

Once the cold thaws and the temperature begins to warm, it's time to take a general overview of your yard. Look for things such as large holes that may need to be filled or downed branches with sharp thorns.

Is your area prone to groundhogs digging up large chunks of your yard? These tunneled trails are not only unsightly but also can serve as tripping hazards. Check with your local hardware store or pest removal agency to rid yourself of these pesky pests in the most humane way possible.

Remedy these issues quickly to help keep you, your family and friends safe in the summer sun.

GRILL WITH CAUTION

Do your neighbors refer to you as the community grill master? Do your family mem-



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bers eagerly line up around the picnic table awaiting your next meat masterpiece?

Be sure you're at your best — and safest — when it comes time to dust off the tongs. Careless grilling can cause injuries, house fires and even explosions.

If you're cooking with gas,

be sure to check your connections for leaks or blockages. Position your grill away from the house, deck and any flammable objects that could set ablaze if too close to an open fire.

MORE TIPS

The Allstate insurance company offers these tips for maintaining your health and safety during the summer:

- Test tree houses, jungle gyms and swing sets for safety, making sure your outdoor equipment is on a level area and the legs are properly anchored;

- Double-check wooden structures to be make sure the winter elements haven't broken them down; and

- Take extra care to maintain safety near swimming pools, where the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that thousands of injuries and

Protect Your Home

Count to 13. ... In that short time span at least one home burglary likely occurred in the United States, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The FBI says burglaries are the most common threat to our homes and are most likely to occur during the summer months.

Long vacations and family get-togethers that take us away from home are two of the main reasons police report an uptick of summertime stealing.

Here are more burglary-related statistics from the FBI:

- More than 2.5 million home invasions occur every year;
- July and August are the most frequent months for break-ins;
- Only 17 percent of U.S. homes have a security system; and
- 1 out of 3 residential assaults are a result of burglary.

We can all agree that those numbers are alarming. So what will you do about it?

KNOW THE ENEMY

The most common perpetrator of home invasion is a male under the age of 25, reports the FBI. Crooks may choose an unoccupied home with easy access and accessible escape routes. Be watchful of your surroundings and pay attention to any suspicious behavior in your area.

Be sure to report any such



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incidents to your local authorities, who may be able to increase their patrol frequencies. You can never be too mindful of what may pose a threat to you and your family.

WEAKNESSES

The FBI warns citizens that windows are the most frequent points of entry during the warm weather months. An

open window that can be seen from the street may give a criminal an easy target.

Be sure your windows have latches and even secondary locking devices. If sleeping or

leaving the house with your windows open, make sure that the opening is not large enough to allow someone to reach through to remove any locks.

Wasp-Be-Gone

Wasps can absolutely terrorize a homeowner and family members if not kept at bay. They quickly build nests in sometimes hard-to-reach places as to keep their base hidden from any human danger.

Their ability to fly makes it harder to catch them, but fortunately you are smarter than a wasp. Your ability to spot a wasp nest from a distance gives you a distinct advantage in the fight for your yard, but you must make sure to approach or treat one carefully.

If you are allergic to wasp stings, it is not worth the risk to treat a nest yourself. Call in your local exterminator to handle the project for you.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers up these tips to protect yourself from wasp stings:

- Wear light-colored, smooth-finished clothing;
- Avoid perfumed soaps, shampoos, and deodorants;
- Do not wear cologne or perfume;
- Wear clean clothing and bathe daily;
- Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible;
- Avoid flowering plants when possible;
- Keep work areas clean;
- Remain calm and still if a single stinging insect is flying around; and
- If attacked by several stinging insects, run to get away; and
- Go indoors.

USING PESTICIDES

Before deciding to use pesticides for your wasp problem, consider that if any of your pets were to ingest a wasp sprayed with pesticide, it could become poisoned. Some pesticides also can damage your grass or plants.

If you choose to use pesticide, be sure to treat according to the manufacturer's specifications. You may be surprised how little is actually recommended to destroy the nests of flying insects such as wasps.

Also, be sure to find and discard any dead wasps that may have landed in your yard, barn or patio area. This will keep your pets from happening upon a potentially dangerous situation.



The Perfect Fourth Party

Making your Fourth of July party sparkle is about more than just lighting some fancy fireworks.

It's about the camaraderie of inviting over your fellow Americans to celebrate one of the most defining days in our nation's history. It's also about celebrating those who have served our country to protect our freedom and liberties. And don't forget the hot dogs!

The Fourth of July brings together people young and old to spend a day of fun in the sun celebrating the red, white and blue. If you're throwing a party this year, there are many ways you can make it a memorable experience for you and your patriotic guests.

FOOD

Any great Fourth of July party starts with the grill. Will you crisp up some ribs slathered in barbecue sauce or slow-grill some generous cuts of tender rib eye?

Devoting so much energy to the main course means you can skimp a bit on the appetizers. Consider asking your guests to each bring a dish with them. Before you know it, you'll have options galore without having to cook your day away.

Drinks are another aspect of the party that may be better outsourced.

Tell your guests to bring what they will be drinking, along with a cooler of ice to keep your fridge space intact.



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DECORATING

Compared to other parties, choosing your Fourth of July color scheme is easy. It's what you build around the red, white and blue accents that will tie your party's aesthetics together.

Your options are endless.

From tablecloths and plates to streamers and even piñatas for the kids, there are many ways to show off your pride in America's colors. Balloons tied to your mailbox or red, white and blue yard lighting in the evening hours can really take your party to the next level.

FUN-FILLED DAY

Legions of competitive eating fanatics watch the annual Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest every year.

The event drew more than 1 million viewers again in 2014, making it seven years in a row.

Why not host your own eating contest?

If hot dot's aren't your thing, maybe you can pull off a watermelon or pie eating contest.

Let your family members and friends go wild with the activity — and take plenty of pictures.

Riding Mower Maintenance

How much time do you devote to mowing your lawn every week?

One of the best ways to cut down on your cutting time is to make sure your riding mower is up to par. Regular maintenance such as oil changes, tire pressure checks and spark plug replacements can both extend the life of your mower and help you get more quality performance out of your machine.

Your mower may have come equipped with an hour meter to help you track and perform routine services. If not, create a spreadsheet on your computer detailing the date you performed the service and any steps you had to take that may have been out of the ordinary.

DECK MAINTENANCE

One small issue with your deck's alignment can mean uneven and unsightly lines across your yard. Always check to see if your deck is level and properly affixed to the mower.

Follow the owner's manual to remove and sharpen your blades, as well as to inspect drive belts or clean the underside of your deck. All of these actions will leave your mower in outstanding shape, no matter what part of mowing season it is.

GAS & OIL

Using high-quality gas and oil in your mower is critical to its performance. When changing the oil, always remember to:

- Change it when the engine is warm;
- Use the easy-to-open push-pull drain plug and plastic hose, if your mower came equipped with one; you may be able to change your push mower's oil by dumping it on its side — obviously not so for your riding mower;
- If the engine has an oil filter, apply some oil onto the rubber sealing gasket before installation; and
- Always use a funnel or oil spout when adding new oil and be careful not to overfill.



Weeding Tips

It's hot and muggy and bugs surround you. The last thing you may want to do today is weed the garden. But what about all of the hard work you did to get your plants in the ground?

Are you willing to let invasive weeds take over the space and stunt your plants' growth?

Weeding may not be your favorite activity, but there are steps you can take to make the process more enjoyable, if not a little more friendly on your back.

IMPORTANCE

Weeds will still win some of their battles against you. The sooner you realize and accept this, the less stressed you will be when it comes to working to eradicate them. One single weed plant can produce thousands of seeds, many of which can survive for multiple years.

That's why it is so important to understand that you can't completely stop weeds; you can only hope to contain their impact on your lawn and garden.

AVOID HERBICIDES

The easy way to kill weeds is by applying synthetic herbicides. But you should think twice before going this route. These chemical weed killers can be dangerous to people, pets and your grass.

According to the National Gardening Association, the best way to control weeds in your yard is to grow a thick,



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vigorous lawn. This dense grass takes away resources such as sunlight and water that weeds depend on to germinate.

STAY MOTIVATED

Spending a Saturday on all

fours with the afternoon sun beating down on your back may not be the ideal start to your weekend.

Space out your weeding efforts. Don't pull weeds every Saturday. Start with every other. Work a little here

and there during the week to minimize the amount of time you'll need to devote when Saturday comes around.

This lighter workload will help keep you motivated when the time comes to tackle the weeds. Other ways

to stay invested include inviting friends over or enlisting the help of older children in your household. The more hands and laughter the better for monotonous projects such as weeding.