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## Hot Times Ahead

What a difference a week can make! Last week I wrote about the cool spring we were having but now summer has arrived. I do not know about you, but I really enjoyed the cool spell while it lasted. Now we need to switch into our summer mode. If you have recently moved here from the frosty northern regions get prepared for a summer to remember. Mid August in the Pee Dee, has been compared by many in Biblical terms. But, some people like my father-in-law love the heat. The fact is we have 10 months of beautiful weather in the Pee Dee, and with a little preparation we and plants can survive the hot summer.

First of all, about any plant can stand a little shade in the Pee Dee. Even those plants that taunt "FULL SUN" on the label do better with a little light shade. If it is hot for you and you feel as though you need a knife to cut a piece of air to breath, it is hot for plants. A little light shade will give them a little rest from the heat. For goodness sake do not use rock for mulch in the Pee Dee. Rock absorbs the heat of the sun all day long and radiates the heat all night long. Hot days and hot nights, the plants never get any rest from the heat. Also, unless you have a cactus garden, rock mulch is a sure sign to everyone in the neighborhood that you do not know how to garden in the south.

Next, fertilize and lime properly. I personally like to spoon feed plants. In other words, give plants just what they need and do not starve or over-fertilize plants. This may be done in two ways either use a slow-release fertilizer or fertilize often with a small amount of regular fertilizer. Our heat is enough stress on plants, let alone having pH problems, fertilizer burn, or deficiencies.

Finally, irrigate properly. Water established plants deeply but less often. This encourages deep rooting and drought tolerance. In other words, water only once or at most twice a week but for a long enough time to get 1 inch of water. Put out rain gauges or cans and measure the amount of water applied. If it rains ½ inch or more do not irrigate.

To learn the specifics on gardening we have both free and for-sale publications at our office in the back of the Public Services Building on the corner of Third Loop and Irby. You may also visit our Home & Garden Information Center through our web site at [www.clemson.edu/florence](http://www.clemson.edu/florence). I may be contacted through our web site, [amelton@clemson.edu](mailto:amelton@clemson.edu), or 661-4800.

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