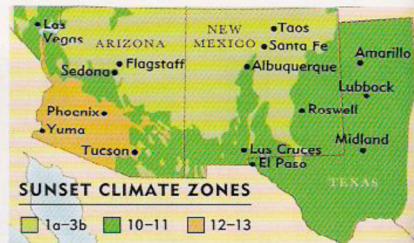


What to do in your garden in July

PLANTING

□ **Cactus.** Sunset climate zones 10–13: During the cool months, glory of Texas (*Thelocactus bicolor*) is an unassuming little 4-inch-tall cactus resembling a spiny bird's nest. But when warm weather arrives, the cactus comes alive with 3-inch-wide, vivid pink flowers. Plant this Chihuahuan desert native in small beds or containers and watch it bloom from spring through autumn. Look for plants at specialty cactus nurseries, such as Landscape Cacti in Tucson (520/883-0020). Zones 2–3, 10–11: At higher elevations, red-flowered claret cup hedgehog (*Echinocereus triglochidiatus*) is a good choice for hot exposures. *E. t.* 'White Sands Strain'—from the White Sands region of New Mexico—is the largest variety, growing from 1 to 3 feet tall. Scarlet flowers appear in late spring and summer. Order plants from High Country Gardens (www.highcountrygardens.com or 800/925-9387).



□ **Heat-loving vine.** Zones 12–13: Queen's wreath (*Antigonon leptopus*), or rosa de montana, as it's called in Mexico, is a favorite climber in barrio gardens on both sides of the border. Its rapid growth and heart-shaped leaves make quick shade over ramadas, and sprays of delicate red, rose pink, or white blossoms produce a colorful show from late summer through fall. For the most vivid magenta, choose 'Baja Red'; for moonlight gardens, seek out the rarer white 'Album'.

□ **Vegetables.** Zones 1a–3b: Sow bush beans, collards, cucumbers, egg-

plant, melons, okra, and snap beans. Zones 10–11: Sow corn, cucumbers, gourds, melons, pumpkins, squash, and tepary beans. Zones 12–13: Sow black-eyed peas, corn, gourds, melons, pumpkins, squash, and tepary beans. If you can't find tepary bean and black-eyed pea seeds at local nurseries, order from Native Seeds/SEARCH (www.nativeseeds.org or 866/622-5561).

MAINTENANCE

□ **Collect rainwater.** To prepare for summer monsoons, dig catch basins and form mounds to direct water from your downspouts to trees and other plantings. *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands: Guiding Principles to Welcome Rain into Your Life and Landscape* (Rainsource Press, 2006; \$25), a new book by Tucson author Brad Lancaster, is an excellent guide for learning how to construct rainwater irrigation systems.

□ **Gather prickly pear fruit.** Zones 10–13: Late July through early August is harvest time for one of the desert's most ubiquitous fruits, prickly pear (*Opuntia*). Using steel tongs, pull the magenta fruits off the cactus pads; fruits separate easily when ripe. For processing tips and recipes, including muffins and margaritas, check out *The Prickly Pear Cookbook* (Rio Nuevo Publishers, 2004; \$15), by Carolyn Niethammer.

□ **Get rid of insect pests.** Purple prickly pear is particularly susceptible to cochineal scale, which looks like a white cottony duff on the pads. To control it, blast off the scale with a strong jet of water. Two other insects that can be controlled by jets of water are green aphids (1/8-inch-long, soft-bodied insects that infest new growth), and tiny spider mites, which feed on the undersides of leaves (the upper leaf surfaces have a stippled appearance). —SCOTT CALHOUN

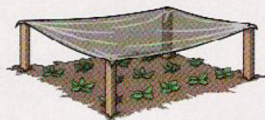
TIP FROM THE TEST GARDEN

Shield plants

If you live in an area where summer often scorches seedlings, protect them by creating some shade.



For small seedlings, prop a board against another piece of wood to shield plants from sun. Be sure boards are stable.



For larger seedlings, place stakes around plants. Fasten shade cloth (available at nurseries) to stakes with tacks.

DAMIEN SCOGIN '21

