



*Ripening tomatoes.*

Photo: Bill Swantner, BCMG

## ***June in the Vegetable Garden***

This has been a challenging season in the garden.

We started off with a February freeze and then 12 inches of rain in a week this spring. The rains create three problems for gardeners: erosion, runoff, and weeds.

Not only did the constant rains not give the soil a chance to dry out, in many cases they slowly eroded exposed soils. If you need to replace soil that has been eroded, select a quality garden soil and mix in about 20% of a good quality compost. This well composted soil will help to absorb and hold water like a sponge while letting the excess drain away. Finally, top your vegetable beds with a couple of inches of a double-shredded bark mulch. Double-shredded mulch has open fibers that absorb water and protect the soil surface.

The other issue is the amount of rain that we received in a short period of time. Our Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent, David Rodriguez, says that when there is 3 or more inches of rain in a short amount of time, any fertilizer or insecticide that might have been applied got washed away. If your plants are turning yellow and vigorous growth is slowing, you may need to reapply fertilizer. And it is a good reminder that it is *very important* to apply chemicals according to the manufacturer's instructions to avoid runoff that can contribute to water contamination.

The rains have been great for our plants but the weed seeds, buried in our soils, have also enjoyed the rains. As David Rodriguez often says, "Weeds are thieves." They will rob our vegetables of water and nutrients. Catch weeds early and do not let the weeds go to seed.

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