

GARDENING

What Every Gardener Needs to Know About the Viral "3-Hour Warning"

Gardening has a lot of health benefits associated with it, but only when done safely.



BY LISA MULCAHY PUBLISHED: AUG 13, 2023



Roberto Westbrook // Getty Images

Britain is known for introducing us the best of the best — think Princess Diana, *Harry Potter* and fish and chips. Now we can thank the UK for bringing us a fantastic sun safety idea: the [3-hour-gardening rule](#).

The concept is simple: don't go out in the sun to tend to your plants during its strongest rays, which generally occurs between 11 AM and 2 PM. After British

gardener [Shannen Goodwin](#) explained that the 3-hour gardening rule can offer powerful protection from sun-related health problems, the internet took note and the idea went viral.

Really, though, the 3-hour rule is just excellent common sense. “I treat many skin cancers on gardeners on their hands, arms, ears and neck,” says [Ellen S. Marmur, MD](#), clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and founder of [Marmur Medical](#) in New York City. Not to mention the fact that too much sun can adversely affect the rest of your body: think dehydration, heat exhaustion or sunstroke.

Top Sun Protection Picks



Hawaiian Tropic Antioxidant Plus Sunscreen Lotion SPF 50

Now 13% Off

\$15 AT WALMART



Banana Boat Light As Air Sunscreen, SPF 50

\$15 AT AMAZON



Vapor Apparel UPF 50+ UV Sun Protection T-Shirt

[\\$28 AT AMAZON](#)



THE NORTH FACE Class V Brimmer

[\\$45 AT AMAZON](#)



YETI Rambler 26 oz Bottle

Now 11% Off


[\\$40 AT AMAZON](#)

Advertisement - Continue Reading Below

Many gardening pros already follow the rule religiously. “Unless I’m in the middle of a big project, I’m not outside working in the heat of the day,” says [Tara Nolan](#), co-owner of [Savvy Gardening](#) and author of [Gardening in Your Front Yard](#). “If I am working on a project, I’ll only stay in the sun for a couple of hours at a time, well covered.”

How can you adopt the 3-hour rule effectively and easily — and still find enough time in the day to spoil your roses rotten? Use these 6 key tips, and then [get your bloom on!](#)

Editor's note: Here’s how to interpret the index: UV Index 0-2 means sun exposure danger is at a minimum. UV Index 6-7 means moderate risk of harm from the sun. UV Index 8-10 means high risk of sunburn and sun damage. UV Index of 11+ means a very high risk to your health from the sun.

 Time your trimming.

Choosing the chilliest part of the day to garden is first and foremost. “When the temperatures are high and the sun is out, I would recommend gardening early in the morning, or early in the evening when it's cooler,” says Nolan. “I try to get out as early as possible in the morning to water the vegetables and herbs in my raised beds. At this point, I'll sometimes do a bit of weeding or pruning as I go while it's still cool outside.”

If that's not possible, and you just have to head outside when the sun is a little stronger, you can actually track the intensity of rays in your area. Enter your zip code [here](#) at the US Environmental Protection Agency's UV Index Search to find out the precise UV measurement for where you live is up-to-the-minute.

-
- ↓ Slather on the sunscreen.
 - ↓ Dress smart.
 - ↓ Take breaks.
 - ↓ Stay hydrated.
 - ↓ Know the signs of heat exhaustion, too.
-

Remember, gardening is lots of fun — and has [a lot of health benefits](#) associated with it — but only when done safely.

From: [Good Housekeeping US](#)



LISA MULCAHY

Contributing Writer

Lisa is an internationally established health writer whose credits include Good Housekeeping, Prevention, Men's Health, Oprah Daily, Woman's Day, Elle, Cosmopolitan, Harper's Bazaar, Esquire, Glamour, The Washington Post, WebMD, Medscape, The Los Angeles Times, Parade, Health, Self, Family Circle and Seventeen. She is the author of eight best-selling books, including The Essentials of Theater.

Is your house a mess?

Sign up to get the latest organizing hacks.

Enter Your Email Address.

LET'S GET ORGANIZED.

By signing up, I agree to the [Terms of Use](#) (including the [dispute resolution procedures](#)) and have reviewed the [Privacy Notice](#).
