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## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for August

By Cynthia Brian



Elderberries are ripe and ready for jams, jellies, and wine making.

Grandma fashioned flowers to "grow" and planted them in the plot. The next day, the toddler's excitement when she witnessed the stone blooms was beyond priceless.

The entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in California, yet another sign that no matter what the climatic changes, gardeners will find a way to survive the elements to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble.

DIG technology with the Easy Gardening Tips app from Suntory(r). It's a digital magazine with tips on designing decks, summer canning, palette picking, and more. Download free at the App Store.

STAKE tall gladiolus before they topple in the wind and protect from the deer who love to nibble the blooms.

TASTE summer by mashing mint for garden fresh mojitos. Grow all mints in containers as mint is invasive. Can you and your friends drink that many juleps or mojitos?

LEARN the difference between bees and yellow jackets. Bees feed all year long on the lavender and rosemary which require only rainwater, while the yellow jackets feed on your picnic or barbecue. Save the bees, call Vector Control for the yellow jackets: (925) 685-9301.

PERUSE spring bulb catalogues to get your order in this month for fall delivery.

DEADHEAD roses weekly to elongate the blooming season.

FILL hummingbird feeders with a homemade concoction of boiled water with sugar. No need to add food coloring.

PRUNE clematis sparingly after blooms are finished. Save the dark stems, cut away the light stems. Depending on your variety, clematis bloom on new, old, or a combination of the two woods.

ENROLL in a free composting class through Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority at [http://www.wastediversion.org/app\\_pages/view/1723](http://www.wastediversion.org/app_pages/view/1723).

ENHANCE your interior space with an easy to care for plant that blooms for months. The "moth orchid," phalaenopsis likes bright indirect light and temperatures in the 65-80 degree range - perfect for summer indoors.

FERTILIZE your vegetable garden as edible plants are hungry for nutrients. Without the help of fertilizer their appetites will exhaust the soil, producing a poor harvest. Read labels carefully as too

"I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks as if they were great and noble." ~ Helen Keller

There are many ways to tackle a task.

With a drought in full swing, those of us with lawns are investigating every avenue to keep our playgrounds verdant. In Los Angeles, lawn painting has become a new lucrative business using non-toxic permanent dye applied to stressed grass. The green application lasts about 12 weeks without color fade or run-off. When the rains come, most lawns grow back on their own.

On a different path to encourage continued love of gardening, a client of mine decided to take things into her own hands. Her 3-year-old granddaughter was distressed that the pebbles the tyke planted in "Granny's garden" hadn't sprouted. Using twigs, broken jewelry pieces, shiny rocks from her floral arrangements and a glue gun,

much fertilizer can be worse than too little!

REMOVE the silks from corn before cooking. Steam or grill with or without husks. Store corn in its husk in the refrigerator in open bags after picking to maintain freshness. Shuck immediately before using.

CULTIVATE a continuous crop of colorful beans, one of the most economical sources of protein rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

ASK a trusted neighbor or friend to water your container plantings and hanging baskets when you go on vacation. August is traditionally a very warm month and unless you have a drip system installed, pots need daily monitoring.

GROOM your annuals and perennials by taking the time to deadhead the spent blooms or dead leaves, helping them to flower into fall.

PRUNE summer flowering hedges and shrubs after they have finished blooming, removing any dead or damaged branches.

CLEAR brush and vegetation to create a 100-foot defensible space around your home if you have not already done so. Fire season is with us until the rain pours. For any questions on abatement, call (925) 258-4525 ext. 533.

CONTINUE weeding. With warm weather, weed seeds germinate faster, zapping the moisture necessary to nurture other plants.

WATER deeply, thoroughly, and infrequently in the early morning or early evening to prevent rapid evaporation and water wasting.

CUT a bouquet of dahlias to enjoy inside. Spiky, long blooming dahlias come in all sizes, colors, and shapes guaranteed to dazzle. If you don't grow dahlias, buy tubers for fall planting.

CONSERVE water by pouring gray water from kitchens and showers in your outdoor yard. Every drop helps.

SAVE seeds of fennel, arugula, onions, leeks, tomatoes, beans, marigolds, calendula, zinnia, sunflower, and cosmos to share with friends for next spring.

HARVEST pears, blackberries, blueberries, apples, and elderberries. August is the perfect month to can jams, jellies, pickles, whole fruits, and vegetables.

LIGHT the night with inexpensive solar lights available at garden centers to save on electricity.

ENJOY the crayon colors of summer with the effervescent bougainvillea, the perky naked ladies, the sunburst firecracker plants, and the calming agapanthus.

REFRAIN from worrying about a brown lawn. Grasses go dormant in hot weather when not watered regularly, but they are not dead. Raise the blades of the mower higher to protect the roots and wait for winter greening. (Unless of course you prefer painted grass!)

Feed your eyes, ears, nose, and soul with a stroll in nature. The garden is a warehouse of nourishment beyond food. Love summer!

Happy gardening and happy growing!

Cynthia Brian



The climbing pink bower vine has made a full recovery after the winter freeze.



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