

# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for May

*"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." - Mahatma Gandhi*

The blossoms from the apples, pears, and cherries are almost spent while the buckeye, chestnut, dogwood, and red bud trees flaunt lightning bolts of color. The heady fragrance of lilac shares a beautiful balance with bearded iris, rose, and wisteria as they brighten with a repetition of color moving the eye in soft waves throughout the landscape. Butterflies and bees flock to these plants creating a fluttering pollination habitat. With the warmer weather, we'll need to watch our water consumption. Scientists at the University of Twente in the Netherlands found that producing one rose bloom requires three gallons of water. With your new potager kitchen garden, you'll save water while enjoying exuberant edibles including flowers and herbs. Time to play. Hurray, it's May!

- WELCOME the migrating birds back to your garden by providing plenty of fresh water, food, shelter, and a place to nest.
- KEEP up with the weeds. Pull by hand when they are small and add to your compost pile.
- EMPTY standing water from all containers, downspouts, or saucers (pour in your pots) to prevent the 23 kinds of mosquitoes from breeding and biting (According to Vector Control, mosquitoes mature in five days and travel up to twenty miles.)
- ATTRACT bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, and other pollinators to your garden by planting nectar producing specimens including flowering culinary herbs, poppies, salvias, and sunflowers.
- WEAR boots while gardening and hiking. Snakes are in abundance this year, including rattlers.
- EXPERIMENT with what we call a weed but is really a plant packet of Omega 3's, vitamin A and C by sowing purslane in your potager.
- CHECK health and safety issues before planting a tree. Is it the right tree for the right place? Precautions include those for utilities, fire safety, height restrictions, root damage potential, toxicity, and biogenic emissions.
- ALLOW narcissus, daffodil, and tulip foliage to dry to a crunchy golden brown before cutting back. You are feeding the bulb for next season's show.
- BAIT for snails and slugs, especially when the seeds are sprouting.
- CLEAR the last of the remaining fallen camellias from around your bushes.
- TALK to your plants. Bloom, baby, bloom! It works for me!
- MOW the grass weekly and give one last shot of nitrogen before the weather warms.
- BRIGHTEN your shady areas by planting bleeding heart, astilbe, or big root geranium. Despite what you may read, deer do eat geraniums!
- CLEAN sheds, potting benches, or your garage to make room for summer projects.
- PICK sprays of sweet peas and roses from your garden for a Mother's Day fragrant posy present.
- ADD structure with shrubs such as smokebush or spirea.
- EXPLORE new colorful annuals at your local garden center including the tall spires of self-seeding verbenas bonariensis, or heliotrope to perfume the evening air.
- BUY a California grown living plant for Mother's Day. According to the February 2011 Smithsonian magazine, the majority of bouquets purchased by Americans are grown, designed, and packaged overseas. When buying bouquets, look for the Rainforest Alliance Certification which observe strict sustainability requirements of their floral farms.
- COME to the Be the STAR You Are!® charity car wash on Saturday, May 14th, 10-4pm at the STAR Gas Station on the corner of Rheem Blvd. and Moraga Rd., adjacent to the Moraga Faire for a spring cleaning. Receive a FREE bag of fragrant homegrown and hand made potpourri.
- EXPERIENCE the beauty of the blossoms by sharing a Mother's Day picnic in your backyard with your Mom and family.



Sending big hugs to the most wonderful women of Lamorinda—MOMS!

Wishing you a joyous, sun filled Mother's Day.  
Happy Gardening to You!