

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian The Language of Flowers

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Sunflowers are the perfect flower for the graduate as they shout "Congratulations!"

Depending on the source, there may be multiple meanings for the same specimen, sometimes with completely opposing connotations. Color and number of stems may also weigh into the interpretation for the recipient, especially when it comes to the rose, which enjoys the status of the plant with the most definitions. For example, a red rose implies passionate love, whereas a crimson rose indicates mourning. A fresh white rose speaks of innocence and purity while a dried white rose denotes "death is preferable to loss of virtue!" The significance of giving ten roses signifies that "you are perfect", thirteen roses means "friends forever", fifteen roses says "I'm truly sorry", twenty-four roses kisses with "forever yours" whereas twenty five roses signs "congratulations." Perhaps it would be wise to count properly as we wouldn't want to confuse those numbers and import the incorrect gist. If you are contemplating a marriage proposal, 108 red roses on a bended knee whispers, "Will you marry me?"

Whether it's Happy Birthday, I Love You, Get Well Soon, Sincerest Condolences, Thank You, Forgive Me, or Just Because, Mother Nature provides the verdant language. With the language of flowers you can have an entire conversation without uttering a word!

CYNTHIA BRIAN'S GARDENING GUIDE FOR JUNE

"Summer afternoon -- summer afternoon; to me those have always been the two most beautiful words in the English language." Henry James

School is winding to a close, the days are getting longer, and we are all itching for the summer time hues. It's time to spruce up the patio, fire up the barbecue, and start living in our dressed up outdoor spaces. The longest day of the year occurs on June 21st, the summer solstice, as the sun "stands still" while the earth begins to tilt away. Our roses shine in their prime releasing their sweet fragrance onto the hands that pluck them. Herbal concoctions make great iced-teas and tonic elixirs, and our mixed greens are ready to be tossed as a fresh, crisp salad. Put out the welcome mat! It's hammock time.

- **SPRUCE** up your patio furniture with a coat of paint or lacquer.
- **POWERWASH** your brick, concrete, driveway, and deck to rid them of the winter mold and moss.
- **REPOT** plants that have outgrown their containers. Choose one or two sizes larger, add new potting soil, being careful to separate the roots, and water thoroughly.
- **REPEL** the hungry deer and rabbits with frequent reapplications of organic repellents available at your favorite garden center.
- **COOK** up your pea shoots, beet tops, sorrel, and bean blossoms for a tasty tendrill treat.
- **MAINTAIN** your weeding regimen. Pull weeds by hand before they go to seed. Using a mechanical weed eater spreads the weed seeds.
- **FILL** birdbaths with fresh water weekly providing our feathered friends with their own private lake.
- **SNIP** the blossoms of bee balm, chamomile, and lavender for a tangy tea. Hot or iced, every delicious sip is loaded with nutritious health benefits.
- **READ** labels when fertilizing. Overfeeding breeds weaker growth.
- **ADD** rose petals to your salads, desserts, and bath water.
- **PRUNE** dead palm fronds. You may need to hire a tree service if the limbs are taller than the ladders and extenders you have.
- **TOSS** your mistakes on the compost pile. Remember failure is fertilizer.
- **SPRINKLE** crushed eggshells onto your soil. They repel snails, slugs, and cutworms while being a great organic fertilizer.
- **CLEAN** up the final dried leaves from your spring blooming bulbs. If the foliage is still green, don't cut them back until they are brown and crackling as they are still photosynthesizing nutrients for next year's show stopping season.
- **WATCH** your landscape for necessary watering needs. Containers require a daily drink. Water lawns in the early morning to eliminate insect infestation.
- **EXPERIMENT** with floriography, the language of flowers, by designing a personalized tussey-mussey.
- **COZY** up to your outdoor fireplace or buy a portable fire pit for those chilly Lamorinda summer nights.
- **EXPLORE** a local garden, take a trail walk, pack a picnic with juicy fruit you grow. Purple plums ripen by June 22.
- **PREPARE** for fire season by clearing brush, limbs, grass, and weeds from the perimeter of your home and fence.
- **SUPPLEMENT** your outdoor rooms with spectacular hanging baskets of ferns, fuchsias, verbena or lobelia.
- **EXPERIENCE** a new shade shrub in your garden. How about adding a blueberry plant for its year round beauty and anti-oxidant rich produce?
- **CELEBRATE** the summer solstice on June 21st with a roaring bonfire, midnight swim, or dancing in the dark!
- **KICK** back, relax, and relish the lazy, hazy daze of summer.

Wishing sunflowers and lavender to all the jubilant graduates, pansies and parsley to the dedicated dads, and to all of my loyal readers, may you enjoy a summer of peonies, roses, and heather!

Happy Gardening to You!

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My virtual door is always open. I am available as a speaker and consultant. Feel free to contact me.



Cynthia Brian lets freedom ring with Delphiniums.