

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for May

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks." John Muir

April showers did indeed bring May flowers. Our lush landscapes are blanketed with blooming bushes, trees, bulbs, annuals, and perennials. Blossoming black currants, wood hyacinths, forget-me-nots, bearded iris, tulip magnolias, azaleas, roses, osteospermum, and alpine strawberries are the panoramic backdrop for nature's artisanal display. A walk in the woods is a "must do" activity this time of year when wild flowers furnish a rainbow-colored kaleidoscope, creeks are filled with frogs croaking their alluring mating calls, and wild turkeys double gobble on their hillside sortie. Inhale the fragrance of the cherry and crabapple blossoms, forage for watercress, and delight your family with sweet anise licorice-flavored fennel snips in your next salad. With Mother's Day around the corner, it's time to prepare our plots and get our summer gardens readied. Grab your gloves, hat, and trowel, get out into the sunshine, and start digging deep!

- **THINK** bulk when buying compost. Twenty-seven bags of compost equal one cubic yard covering 192 square feet (10' x 16'). More information at www.compostingcouncil.org.
- **PLANT** beans, squash, cucumbers, corn, gourds, melons, and pumpkins directly into the garden now. Because of their tender taproots, they do not transplant well.
- **PACK** in the pretty with boughs of cherry blossoms arranged in a wide mouthed vase. This year of 2012 is the 100th Anniversary of the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D. C. commemorating the 3,000 cherry trees given to our nation's capital by the people of Tokyo.
- **PROTECT** your seedlings from the hungry birds by netting your newly planted area. If you wish to protect individual plants, use upside down berry crates until fully leafed.
- **DINE** alfresco on Mother's Day with a picnic on your lawn. Spring flowering beds lend a painter's palette of color.
- **PLAN** your potager for practicality, production, and pretty.
- **GRAVEL** paths as an inexpensive and attractive way to dress up a walkway.
- **PINCH** the tips of fall bloomers such as asters and mums for a bushier performance.
- **DIVIDE** and transplant overgrown fall blooming perennials.
- **STAKE** tall flowers such as digitalis to prevent toppling.
- **DEADHEAD** spent blooms on calendula, pansy, cyclamen, and calla lily to encourage more blooming.
- **ATTRACT** the ladybugs, bees, and other beneficial insects with plantings of lavender, rosemary, cosmos, salvia, sunflowers, sedum, and butterfly bush.
- **WELCOME** wildlife to your backyard by providing food, shelter, water, and nesting opportunities. Turn your area into a wildlife habitat.
- **CLEAN** greener this spring by using friendlier ingredients found in your garden such as lemon juice to remove grease, mildew, and stains.
- **VISIT** the Be the Star You Are! and Express Yourself! Teen Radio booth at the Moraga Faire to pick up a FREE bag of home-grown potpourri and heirloom Hollyhock seeds. I'll be there to answer your gardening questions and encourage you to be interviewed LIVE on our international award-winning radio program.
- **USE** biodegradable 100% coconut husk fiber pots planted directly in the ground in place of plastic. They are a renewable resource and promote rapid, robust root growth.
- **EDUCATE** yourself about the origin of your favorite blooms. Did you know that tulips were wildflowers that originated in the 1500s in Persia?
- **BUY** fresh organic, free-range eggs packed with Vitamin D, iron, folic acid, high quality protein, and only 70 calories a pop. Studies indicate that people who eat at least one egg a day have LOWER rates of heart attack and stroke. Aged chicken manure is the best fertilizer for your garden.
- **BREATHE** easier indoors by filling your home and office with toxin-eating houseplants such as philodendron, peace lily, or spider plants. One potted plant per 100 square feet of space will clean the air of common indoor chemicals like formaldehyde, benzene, and trichloroethylene.
- **ALLOW** your daffodils, Dutch iris, and tulips to wilt naturally, giving the bulbs the extra nutrients they need for next season's spectacle.
- **WALK** a nature trail for exercise, beauty, and curiosity satisfaction.
- **PAMPER** the Mother in your life with a fragrant freesia posie bouquet plucked from your vernal flowerings.

Let your creativity blossom this spring while you indulge in strolling in secret gardens and sampling exotic specimens. It's May, the season of play.

Happy Gardening to You!

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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.



Bearded iris in velvety royal purple can be divided and shared after blooming.



Tulip magnolia - one of the most elegant of flowering small trees.



Purple and yellow freesias flanked by lambs ear and blue wood hyacinths make a long lasting cut bouquet.