

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you." Frank Lloyd Wright

Greener environments cut the time it takes to recover from surgery, improve the way the immune system works, and help diabetics achieve healthier blood glucose levels. Just like eating greens provides essential nutrients to the body, so does just seeing and being around green according to researchers. While we are happily planting our spring gardens, it is essential to savor the surprises that are already smiling on us. Sweet, fragrant stock is often overlooked, yet it is a stunner with its heady scent of clove in a variety of hues. Tulips and hyacinths top the charts as they reach for the Easter spotlight while daffodils and freesias maintain their sunshine through the end of May. Strawberry plants blossom as a harbinger of the sweet red treats to come. Give your garden a lift! It's easy to introduce exquisite beauty, luscious colors, rich perfume, and nutritious food simply by planting what you love to eat and see in your spring landscape.

- **AMEND** soil with compost, manure, and organic matter before preparing garden beds.
- **MAKE** marmalade with a variety of citrus. It's so easy using both the rind and the juice. Mix tangerine, tangelo, Meyer lemon, and orange. For a healthier jam, use less sugar and check online for recipes.
- **ELIMINATE** snails and slugs now by plucking from plants or drowning in beer before April showers.
- **MIX** perennials and annuals to extend the blooming season. Many specimens marked "annuals" are really perennials in Lamorinda including snapdragon, lobelia, primroses, and fibrous begonias. Pansies sometimes return annually.
- **DISCARD** fallen blooms from camellias and rhododendrons. Do not compost or leave them on the ground.
- **RECHARGE** spent daffodils by allowing the leaves to yellow and wither. The bulb is nourished for next season by leaving the leaves attached to the bulb. Inter-plant colorful annuals as a cover.
- **DIG** holes for summer blooming bulbs including tuberous begonias, gladiolus, lilies, and dahlias.
- **WEED**, weed, weed before you seed and feed. While the soil is still moist, roots can be plugged more easily. Don't let the seed heads scatter or next year you'll have double or triple the problem.
- **WATER** weekly the bare root roses, vines, and fruit trees planted earlier in the year. Stone fruit trees will bear fruit in two to three years as long as the roots are kept moist and there is plenty of sunshine.
- **FERTILIZE** all blooming and fruiting bushes and trees with an all-purpose organic mixer.
- **BE AWARE** of late season frosts that can damage tender plants. Keep blankets or sheets ready to cover your pots when warnings of cold nights are announced.
- **BOOST** your levels of vitamin A and C by planting orange-colored vegetables and fruits including cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, carrots, peaches, orange bell peppers, citrus, and persimmons. Oranges and tangerines are ripe and ready now.
- **ENCOURAGE** pollinators to your yard with swathes of salvia, sunflowers, black eyed Susan, Echinacea, borage, dill, and thyme.
- **MOVE** your containers to sun or shade areas to maintain the desired conditions for peak performance.
- **BUY** organic, free range eggs in a plethora of colors laid by chickens that eat natural greens, worms, and insects.
- **SPEND** time in nature and enjoy the health benefits.
- **PLAN** a butterfly habitat with sedum, purple coneflower, iris, prairie grasses, bee balm, nicotiana, butterfly bush, and parsley. The flowers are nectar to the adults and the leaves nourish the larvae. Don't forget to offer a restful vista of stones and a cool drink with a fountain, bird bath, or pond for the flying visitors.
- **CREATE** a fire safe barrier around your home by removing debris, dead branches, fire wood, or other flammable substances before summer. It appears we may have a hot, dry season ahead with high fire danger.
- **TURN** on automatic lawn irrigation for a few minutes every two weeks to make sure that grass has not grown over sprinkler heads. Grass grows quickly and thickly in spring and can easily cover sprinklers making it more difficult for you to water when necessary.
- **ENJOY** Easter and Passover with a picnic in the back yard with family and friends.

May the Easter bunny hop through your garden and the forest fairies sprinkle dandy dust on all your seedlings. In plain English... Joyful springtime and get growing!

Happy gardening to you!

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Cynthia is available as a speaker and consultant.






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CALL AN ARBORIST

The most common reason a tree owner calls an arborist is concern that something is wrong with a tree. It may be that some of the leaves are discolored, a branch has died, or perhaps the entire tree has been dropping leaves. Sometimes the cause of the concern is a minor problem that is easily explained and corrected. Other times the problem is more complex-with several underlining causes and a remedy that requires treatments extending over several years.

Unfortunately, there are instances in which the problem has gone undetected for so long that the tree cannot be helped, and the only option is removal. If an arborist had been called earlier, perhaps the tree could have been saved.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping.

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