Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

"April hath put a spirit of youth in everything." – William Shakespeare

By Cynthia Brian

Beginning at age 8 when we were taught to drive, it was the responsibility of my siblings and me to water our crops one plant at a time starting in April and continuing throughout the warm months. My parents were "dry farmers," meaning that we had no source of irrigation for our fields. My dad built a stainless steel tank on the back of his World War II Willy Jeep, and every day my sisters and I would pump water from the creek or well into the tank, then drive through the fields stopping at each vine or tree to offer a drink. The work was tedious and arduous yet necessary for the survival of our family farm. Although not always pretty, the fruit from our dry farming techniques was super sweet, delicious, and perpetually in high demand. In another act of water management, my dad snaked the washing machine hose to the asparagus patch where after a long day on the tractor, we'd smother our aches in the warm mud. H2O was precious and never a drop was wasted. April is the month for youthful romping and creative conservation. Get busy digging in the dirt as spring has sprung.

- **CUT** back all plants, vines, trees, and bushes damaged by winter frosts.
- **PRUNE** shrubs scheduled to bloom in summer before their growth spurt. Lilacs, forsythia, and tulip trees can be pruned after they finish their spring bloom.
- **GROW** hardy, low maintenance cordylines, also known as festival grasses, in large containers or use in your landscape to provide splashes of vertical color.
- **CELEBRATE** Earth Day by honoring our planet, the supplier of life to over seven billion humans.
- **SUFFERING** from arthritis? Seed tape is a quick and easy way to sow seeds when mobility is compromised. Burpee, Park Seed, and Territorial Seed are among the suppliers available at your favorite retailer.
- **WATCH** your water usage. Be responsible with irrigation by watering in the morning or evening, using gray water whenever possible.
- **TAKE** pictures of your spring garden to share with others and to use as a guideline for harvesting times.
- **APPLY** two to three inches of compost around perennials, trees, and shrubs.
- **SKIP** tilling your soil unless you are starting a new bed. Tilling has been found to be harmful to the beneficial microbes, fungi, worms, and insects that help your garden grow.
- **CONTINUE** planting root crops of turnips, carrots, beets, radishes, and potatoes. Succession sowing keeps your harvest hearty.
- **PULL** or cut weeds as soon as they sprout to conserve water and nutrients for the plantings you want to showcase.
- **ATTRACT** beneficial bugs, bees, butterflies, and birds to your landscape by eliminating all pesticides and insecticides while providing a natural habitat for abundant food, shelter, water, and protection from prey.
- **PROPOGATE** drought resistant sexy succulents from cuttings.
- **PLANT** onions, chives, blueberries, lilies, dusty miller, alyssum, dianthus, and oregano.
- **PICK** fragrant lilacs and wisteria to decorate your interiors.
- **SET** out plants that you started indoors in February.
- **APPRECIATE** the shrill calls of the red-tailed hawks as they rid your garden of moles, voles, gophers, mice, and rats. These hunters can detect a mouse from 360 feet.
- **LOOKING** for the perfect rose that isn't in your local nursery or garden center? Check out Edmunds' Roses at www.edmundsroses.com for a huge selection in every color including hybrid teas, grandifloras, floribundas, groundcover roses, climbing roses, antiques, and tree roses.
- **CHOOSE** bird feeders that are appropriate for the birds that visit your yard. Make sure to keep all feeders away from windows to avoid bird strikes and injuries.
- **TRELLIS** a dwarf fruit tree for easier harvesting. Apple, peach, pear, plum, and apricot can be trained to grow vertically or horizontally. You may need two trees as pollinators.

A parade of spring color with delphiniums, tulips, and pansies.
Photo Cynthia Brian