

# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for June

*"Nature. Cheaper than therapy." ~ Source unknown*

By Cynthia Brian

Why is it when we surrender our "busyness" to get outside in nature, we feel better? Researchers have found that going into the garden, hiking, biking, or strolling in the countryside, bird watching, or animal petting triggers the release of endorphins and oxytocin that activate the pleasure center in our brain. When you spend time in the outdoors you experience a deep feeling of well-being and relaxation. Close contact with nature improves health while increasing self-esteem and confidence. Mother Nature is the ultimate teacher providing a foundation for life-long learning that nourishes the senses. Indulging in "green activities" reconnects us to ourselves, one another, our kids, and the natural world. Nature soothes, restores, and heals. Our stressed, depressed, or anxiety-ridden moods are elevated to refreshed, peaceful, and balanced. The next time you are feeling blue, go green and talk to a plant. We can all use a little Vitamin N (as in Nature)!

- **EMPTY** all standing water from containers to stop mosquitoes from invading in this dry year. If the bloodsuckers are biting, check out the ThermoCell products, including a portable protector. A copy of the natural insecticide found in chrysanthemums is vaporized to create a 15 by 15 foot zone of protection. [www.thermacell.com](http://www.thermacell.com)
- **BOOST** your immune system and stave off diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and cancers by growing and eating leafy greens, broccoli, apples, beans, onions, garlic, leeks, and tomatoes.
- **PULL** ivy from trees as ivy strangles and kills. Ivy also is a haven for rats and mice.
- **ELEVATE** your palate by including home grown fennel, also known as sweet anise, into your recipes. The aromatic feathery fronds are pretty in the garden while the thick bulbs are delicious! If flower stalks begin to form, pinch them off to direct the plant's energy to the bulb.
- **SAVE** our pollinators by creating habitats that support and nourish them.
- **MAKE** noise before putting your hand into a hidden space such as your irrigation controls as snakes are slithering about in this dry, warm weather, including rattlers.



*Nasturtiums deter cucumber beetles, whiteflies, and squash bugs plus the entire plant is edible and makes long lasting cut flowers. Photos Cynthia Brian*

- **DON'T** overlook the common petunia for lasting beauty and deer resistant lantana. Both are available in luscious pink, purple, orange, red, and white. Butterflies will swarm to the bright yellow and gold lantana.
- **PRUNE** butterfly bush after the blossoms fade to encourage another round of blooms for fall.
- **STIR** fried, sautéed, or just tossed in a fresh salad, the green tops of radishes, carrots, turnips, and beets are pleasantly earthy, peppery, and most of all nutritious!
- **PINCH** spent petunia petals to enable repeat blooming through fall.
- **REFILL** birdfeeders weekly to ensure that the flyers spend the summer with you.

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