

- **FERTILIZE** your vegetable garden as edible plants are hungry for nutrients. Without the help of fertilizer their appetites will exhaust the soil, producing a poor harvest. Read labels carefully as too much fertilizer can be worse than too little!
- **REMOVE** the silks from corn before cooking. Steam or grill with or without husks. Store corn in its husk in the refrigerator in open bags after picking to maintain freshness. Shuck immediately before using.
- **CULTIVATE** a continuous crop of colorful beans, one of the most economical sources of protein rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- **ASK** a trusted neighbor or friend to water your container plantings and hanging baskets when you go on vacation. August is traditionally a very warm month and unless you have a drip system installed, pots need daily monitoring.
- **GROOM** your annuals and perennials by taking the time to deadhead the spent blooms or dead leaves, helping them to flower into fall.
- **PRUNE** summer flowering hedges and shrubs after they have finished blooming, removing any dead or damaged branches.
- **CLEAR** brush and vegetation to create a 100-foot defensible space around your home if you have not already done so. Fire season is with us until the rain pours. For any questions on abatement, call (925) 258-4525 ext. 533.
- **CONTINUE** weeding. With warm weather, weed seeds germinate faster, zapping the moisture necessary to nurture other plants.
- **WATER** deeply, thoroughly, and infrequently in the early morning or early evening to prevent rapid evaporation and water wasting.
- **CUT** a bouquet of dahlias to enjoy inside. Spiky, long blooming dahlias come in all sizes, colors, and shapes guaranteed to dazzle. If you don't grow dahlias, buy tubers for fall planting.
- **CONSERVE** water by pouring gray water from kitchens and showers in your outdoor yard. Every drop helps.
- **SAVE** seeds of fennel, arugula, onions, leeks, tomatoes, beans, marigolds, calendula, zinnia, sunflower, and cosmos to share with friends for next spring.
- **HARVEST** pears, blackberries, blueberries, apples, and elderberries. August is the perfect month to can jams, jellies, pickles, whole fruits, and vegetables.
- **LIGHT** the night with inexpensive solar lights available at garden centers to save on electricity.
- **ENJOY** the crayon colors of summer with the effervescent bougainvillea, the perky naked ladies, the sun-burst firecracker plants, and the calming agapanthus.
- **REFRAIN** from worrying about a brown lawn. Grasses go dormant in hot weather when not watered regularly, but they are not dead. Raise the blades of the mower higher to protect the roots and wait for winter greening. (Unless of course you prefer painted grass!)

Feed your eyes, ears, nose, and soul with a stroll in nature. The garden is a warehouse of nourishment beyond food. Love summer!

Happy gardening and happy growing!

Cynthia Brian



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