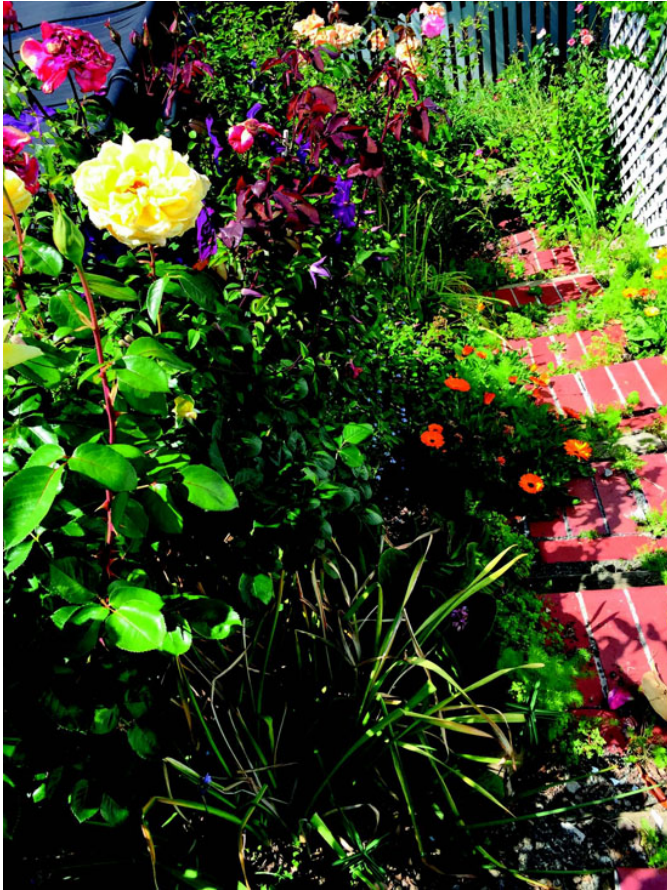


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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for May

By Cynthia Brian



A bed head garden is wild and free. Photos
Cynthia Brian

commented, "Purposefully un-styled outdoor spaces are the result of intentionally working within the natural landscape. This casual landscape style expresses an effortless personality with an 'anything goes' attitude." The wild look of this new garden fashion will be of interest to those of us who are harried, hurried or interested in embracing a more natural, environmentally sustainable garden. Colors are whatever thrives, plantings are in drifts, maintenance is low, hardscapes are minimal, earthy-born or recycled elements, and the result is lush, overgrown and messy, yet beautiful. Seems like a great fit for these crazy, hectic times.

Grab your gloves, shears, shovel and a bucket. We have work to do outside before the play days begin. And we all look forward to the amusements of the season!

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CUT BACK your daffodils. The foliage should be very dry and crispy now, meaning that plenty of nutrients have gone to next year's blossoms. Time to clean up.

DEADHEAD all spring blooming flowers such as pansies and primroses. Petunias planted amongst your succulents will be especially beautiful in a rock garden.

CLEAN ponds, fountains and bird feeders with non-toxic detergents for a fresh start. Make sure your recirculating pump is working effectively.

"May the sun bring you new energy by day, may the moon softly restore you by night, may the rain wash away your worries, may the breeze blow new strength into your being, may you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life." - An Apache Blessing

May! What a glorious month, perhaps the most fragrant feast for our senses of the entire year. With only one evening of April rain, nature blossomed into May magnificence lavishing the landscape with color, texture, birdsong, and a painter's palette of picturesque pleasures. Elegant and dainty bearded iris spread their alluring colors and intoxicating scents along driveways and paths. Azaleas and rhododendrons sparkle in the moonlight. Now is the time to experiment with new plants to lift our zapped spirits to new heights. If you like azaleas as I do, this is the time to get them into the ground after they have completed their spring flowering. I planted a sampling of new azalea releases from J Berry Nursery including Fuchsia Parasol, Orchid Showers, Pink Ribbons and Pink Jewel. These rebloomers are set to offer a big show in late summer or early fall.

In the 2015 Garden Trends Report, a new phenomenon in gardening was reported that I found intriguing. It's called the "bed head" garden. President of Garden Media Group, Susan McCoy

ELIMINATE any standing water from gutters, pot saucers or old tires to reduce breeding of mosquitoes.

MOW the top portion of leggy ground covers including Vinca Major and ivy.

ADD dandelions, calendula and lemons to your daily food intake for a boost of vitamins A and C. Colds and flu are still rampant.

SEED for summer blooming annuals - cosmos, marigolds, sunflowers and zinnias.

COMPOST all of your green trimmings. Add raked leaves as well as eggshells, shredded newspaper, vegetable peels and wood ashes. Turn your compost pile or bin often and keep moist.

FEED azaleas, rhododendrons and camellias with a fertilizer for acid lovers after they have finished blooming. Continue to pour your coffee grinds mixed with water around the plants for an extra boost of energy.

PLANT tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, beets, carrots, peas, and cabbage. Also get summer blooming bulbs including gladiolas, lilies and dahlias into the ground now.

DEADHEAD roses as blooms fade for continuous flowers throughout the year. Make sure to cut a few stems to cheer up your indoor spaces.

PLAN to include more drought tolerant species to your landscape, including succulents.

PICK UP the petals of fallen camellias as the season comes to an end. Leaving the flowers on the ground leads to diseased plants.

GROW South African clivia as a houseplant in indirect sunlight or as a shade garden attraction. Their shiny deep green foliage and bright orange, yellow and white lily-like flowers encourage gazing.

PLANT an Oregon Grape as a deer-proof perennial shrub. The blue berries are prominent in May, and the leaves turn amber in the fall.

PRUNE spring-flowering clematis after the blooms are spent.

SPRUCE up your decks and patios by growing herbs and flowers in one container.

PICK mulberries as they turn from red to deep purple. You'll have to work fast, or the birds will do the picking for you.

RAKE lawns to help with de-thatching. Aerate with a garden fork to help water penetrate.

VISIT me at the Be the Star You Are!(r) booth at the Moraga Faire on May 9 to pick up your free hollyhock seeds and potpourri. Make a \$95 tax-deductible donation in the name of your mom or grandmother to have a case of brand new books valued at \$720 donated in her honor to the library or school of her choice. She's worth it! <http://www.bethestaryouare.org/donate.htm>

BUY six packs of annual color for both sun and shade gardens. Most retailers are featuring big sales at the moment, and these small packs add a big punch to your growing garden.

DESIGN a "bed head" garden area and give yourself a labor break.

TRANSPLANT any small trees or shrubs into desired areas before the end of the month.

KEEP doors closed on garages and sheds, or you may invite a slithery serpent to snoop.

LAVISH mom with a pot of pretties, perhaps dahlias, and delphiniums on Mother's Day and thank her for being the wonderful woman she is.

May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty all the days of your life!
May Blessings!

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing.

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Mulberries will be ripe soon. Get your baskets ready for the harvest.



Petunias and succulents are flattering together in a rock garden.



Oregon Grape is an excellent deer-proof shrub in the landscape.



Pots of azaleas to be planted in the May garden.

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