Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for September

By Cynthia Brian

"The sun does not shine for a few trees and flowers, but for the wide world's joy" – Henry Ward Beecher

We have definitely experienced ample sunshine this season and as summer simmers into its final month, we still have ample time to enjoy the warmth and tranquility of outdoor entertaining. September is often the hottest month of the year. Make sure that you are paying attention to the water needs of your trees. Because of the drought, you may lose some plants, but mature trees may be irreplaceable in your lifetime. Obey the EBMUD rules, water deeply twice a week, and your landscape will survive until the winter rains arrive. An El Nino is being predicted for 2016. If your ground is severely dry and compacted, you may suffer flooding as the water will not be able to penetrate the soil.

Nothing says "California" better than joining friends for a barbecue or roasting s'mores around a fire pit. (Be fire wise; Lamorinda is on high fire alert this year.) With vegetable gardens at their peak, fresh corn, squash, peppers and melons brushed with olive oil and sprinkled with herbs are delicious cooked over the grill.

As many of our annuals and perennials begin to wither, it's a great idea to gather bouquets to dry for the winter. Many plants dry naturally and others need to be hung. Before tying in bunches, remove the foliage and hang in a dry, cool place away from bright light. Garage beams make great drying racks.

Be alert for the pear, apple and grape harvests happening around the area. Become a farmer for a day. Volunteer for picking, pressing and stomping.

A side yard shaded by trees provides a cool place to play for pooch and people.　　Photos Cynthia Brian

New guinea primrose amidst Bird of Paradise withstand the hot temperatures.

A blue hydrangea will retain its hue when cut and dried.

Our container plants need more water now. Pictured deer-proof heuchera and ferns.