

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October

By Cynthia Brian

"Go forth under the open sky, and listen to Nature's teachings." ~ William Cullen Bryant



Lilies, Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susan) and Gladioli are low-maintenance, multi-blooming and drought tolerant. Photos Cynthia Brian

Autumn is with us. The sun is still scorching our soils with heat during the days while the nights offer chilly dew. October is the best month of the fall season to take care of garden chores before winter arrives. With the drought a forever threat, we are all seeking ideas for a low-maintenance garden that will thrive with little care and less water. It is clear that we need to stand under the open sky to listen and look at what Mother Nature is telling us about our future in the outdoors.

Visit your favorite nursery or garden center and talk to the professionals. Choose plants appropriate for your soil and sun requirements. Determine whether you have a shade or sun garden, how much moisture your area needs, then pick the plants that will flourish in those conditions. For example, sun-loving specimens such as canna, lamb's ears, sweet alyssum, geraniums, salvias, fountain grass and boxwood planted densely will out-compete weeds while providing you with an elegant, low maintenance area. Plant the clump forming fountain grass and the

evergreen shrub, boxwood, toward the back, with the fragrant sweet alyssum as a border in colors of pink, cream, purple and white in the front. The wooly silver evergreen lambs-ear with its spikes of purple looks great with the salvia and tall spikes of the robust perennial canna in red, yellow or orange. Geraniums are available in color clusters of red, pink, white and purple, offering continuous blooms above bright green leaves spring through mid-winter, when it's time to prune them to the ground.

Other low-maintenance plants for full sun include Russian sage, rosa rugosa, daylily and rudbeckia. For a shade garden, consider hosta, Lenten Rose and ferns. If your soil is extremely dry, succulents including hen-and-chicks, lavender, sedum and St. John's Wort are easy choices while astilbe and Japanese iris will prosper in wet soil. A recirculating water feature, waterfall or pond will keep the pollinators around while adding a calming resonance in your environment.

Halloween will be upon us soon. Allow your sunflowers, cornstalks and pumpkins to continue in the garden until it's time to decorate.

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Create a beautiful nook with a pot of bright red geraniums.

