

Digging Deep

Have a Homegrown Fourth of July This Summer

By Cynthia Brian

"Flowers and fruit are only the beginning. In the seed lies the life and the future." -- Marion Zimmer Bradley



Purple clematis is royal and easy to grow.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Fruit, luscious, juicy, tantalizing ripe fruit—there's no better delicacy than that which you grow in your own backyard. Whether it's in a pot or a plot, growing your own is the way the rock it.

With our long, warm summer days at their height, fruit and vegetables are ripening quickly, awaiting plucking for our feasts. Apricots, plums, prunes, mulberries, loquats, tangelos and tangerines are just a few of the gems hanging from my trees right now. Soon there will be mouth watering peaches, pears, apples, guavas, nectarines and figs. Tomatoes have taken up the space left by harvested greens, while beans, eggplant, peppers, zucchini, cucumbers and tomatillos are racing to the finish line. It's a virtual farmers market in my garden and this is exactly the way I like to eat.

Every day I walk into my potager to fill baskets with crunchy deliciousness for our supper. I never know what I'll be creating in the kitchen until I see what's ready to harvest.

I continue to sprinkle lettuce and arugula seeds in the empty spaces to extend my summer, fall and winter crops. My recommendation is to sow rows of bush beans, carrots and radishes — or any other vegetable — every three weeks to satisfy your cravings for freshness. Remember to continue to replenish the soil with nutrient rich compost to keep productivity high.

Did you know that that average home gardener only spends \$359 per year on gardening supplies and plants, as reported in a study conducted by Money.com? That seems ridiculously low when you consider that growing your own

tomatoes will save you money. And that doesn't include the spectacular taste, increased vitamins, and the fact that you actually know what you put into your soil.

When it comes to homegrown fruits and vegetables, I am a garden-to-table snob. The finest, healthiest, most cost-efficient source of nutrients is waiting for you in the garden. Dig in!

With the barbeque season in full swing, delight guests with grilled stone fruit. Cut peaches, nectarines, or apricots in half, remove the pit, brush with olive oil and drizzle a bit of honey. Grill for a minute or two on each side. Serve with goat cheese, arugula, or as a side dish. Fresh, surprising, and oh, so delicious! Serve this burst of sweetness with your Fourth of July fare. About those pits: if you want another fruit tree, plant in potting soil in a container and watch the new life grow. It's hang time.



Grill nectarines and peaches added to flatbread with goat cheese and arugula for a surprising 4th of July treat.