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Digging Deep

By Cynthia Brian



Is there anything more bucolic than a waterfall cascading into a pond? Photos Cynthia Brian

pruning after 45 minutes.

6. Use a hand truck to move large, heavy sacks and potted plants.

7. Keep your feet on the ground when cutting limbs or harvesting fruit. Use a ladder only when you have a spotter.

8. Use the best tools that are strong, yet lightweight.

9. Give your back a break. Too much twisting and bending can cause strain. Consider raised beds as an alternative if you experience back pain.

10. Buy a wheelbarrow. It makes moving easier and saves so much time.

11. If you like to kneel while planting or weeding, use a Styrofoam pad to protect your knees. Alternate sitting and kneeling. You can also purchase a rolling garden stool.

12. Shake it up, varying your chores to work your different muscles. Carrying, lifting, mowing, blowing, pruning, raking, sweeping, deadheading, digging, weeding, arranging, even smelling the roses all activate different muscles and senses.

13. Take frequent breaks to avoid stiffness or tightness.

14. Drink plenty of water to rehydrate.

Get fit. Get gardening. Get doing good deeds for you.

For Increased Health Benefits, Add These Simple Greens to your Plot

1. Dandelion Greens: I know, everyone considers dandelions weeds but these weeds are high in vitamin A, actually 10 times more than a serving of broccoli.

Kings and cabbages go back to compost, but good deeds stay green forever, ~ Rick De Marinis

Gardening is good for you. It rekindles our passions, arouses our senses and keeps us in shape. Gardening is a terrific activity for maintaining joint flexibility, bone density, range of motion and, most of all, quality of life.

We have to garden wisely, however, if we don't want to be complaining about aches, pains, bug bites, cuts and injuries, of which I've had more than enough to last my lifetime. Do a good deed for yourself and heed some handy, healthy tips to safer, happy gardening experience.

If you are already a gardener, you know the joys and benefits. For those who are about to begin, get ready for a strenuous workout with the music, smells and tastes of nature.

Getting Going

1. If you have any injuries or illnesses, like all activities, consult your physician before beginning.

2. Choose a time of day where you can dedicate an hour or so to the task.

3. Wear a hat, sunblock, gloves and comfortable clothing.

4. Warm up your body with a few stretches or a brisk walk before beginning.

5. Despite your enthusiasm, pace your work and avoid being in the same position for extended periods. For example, if you are weeding, switch to

2. Leeks: Rich in vitamin B folate, these onion relatives are heart healthy, preventing blood clots.

3. Arugula: My most favorite green, arugula provides more nitrates than spinach or rhubarb delivering energizing oxygen to the rest of your body. Maybe arugula is my secret ingredient to my exuberant energy.

4. Bok Choy: Great for bone health, two cups of this crunchy green delivers as much calcium as half a glass of milk plus 80 percent of your daily requirement for vitamin K.

5. Swiss Chard: A great source of blood balancing nutrients, Swiss Chard prevents blood sugar spikes and dips while being a top source of magnesium.

RELAX and rejuvenate around a pond, stream, or waterfall in a garden.

VISIT the National Heirloom Expo, Sept. 6, 7 and 8 in Santa Rosa for the world's pure food fair. www.theheirloomexpo.com

PROTECT your pet by knowing which plants are toxic to them such as daffodils, hemlock and oleander. See a full list at www.asPCA.com

CREATE mini herb gardens in window boxes or strawberry pots. Buy four-inch pots of sage, lemon thyme, basil, and parsley for a pretty and aromatic edible display.

DEEP-soak trees like magnolia or redwoods, especially when you see them dropping abundant leaves.

SOOTHE cuts, burns, bites and reduce redness after too much summer sunbathing by planting the succulent aloe. Cut off a piece of the spike, squeeze out the anti-inflammatory and antiseptic gel to apply directly to your skin.

HARVEST Asian pears, apples, peppers, squash, tomatoes and eggplant.

ADD color to your planters with bright, perennial pelargoniums. My favorite colors are the deep maroon and bright pink.

MAKE a statement on your porch or patio by grouping urns and pots planted with pretty petunias and pansies.

PULL up a chair next to a hummingbird feeder and let the show begin as hummingbirds enchant you with their chatter, twitters, squeaks and songs. Their hovering wings buzz, trill and thrill.

CONTINUE to compost all of your vegetable and non-meat scraps including cabbages (no Kings).

SET a table outdoors using your favorite tableware and glasses for an upscale meal alfresco on a hot August night.

Trending in my garden:

- Naked Ladies are dancing in the breeze.
- Tomatoes are finally red and sweet, although most don't make it to my kitchen. I eat most of them right off the vine with a snip of nearby arugula and basil
- Deer have been deterred from my orchard and garden with fencing.
- Pearl's Premium lawn is green with some bare and brown spots, but definitely looking better this summer than any previously seeded grass.
- Choke weed is invading. It spreads rapidly, choking out the nutrients and sunlight needed for other plants to grow. I wage a constant pulling battle against it.
- Fluorescent pink crape myrtle trees are in full bloom, attracting hummingbirds and bees.
- Incredible amounts of exercise for me as I pull hoses up and down hillsides to keep plants alive. Gardening is good for my body, mind and soul as long as I give my back a break.

Do good deeds, stay healthy, and enjoy the month of August.

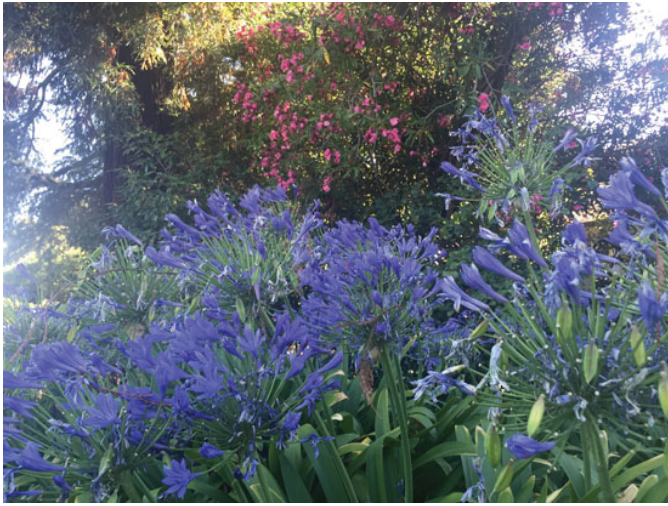
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Choke Weed, although green, is an invasive nuisance.



Crape myrtle trees are beautiful in every season. Photos Cynthia Brian



Blue Agapanthus is complemented by the pink oleander in the rear.



Charming arrangements of urns and pots with petunias and pansies.



Cynthia Brian encourages planting the succulent aloe to ease summer burns and bits.

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