

Published June 28th, 2017

## July Gardening Guide

By Cynthia Brian



Red clover blossoms are nutritious and some say pain relieving. Photos Cynthia Brian

iridescent wings of the yellow swallowtails flutter between the violet blossoms of thyme and the budding tomatillos. Bees are swarming the lavender and rosemary gathering nectar for their honeycombs. Because of the heat, I continue to rescue bees and ladybugs that have landed in my fountains. My clematis is chock full of large deep amethyst-hued blooms glittering in the sunlight. Pink and white striped morning glory zigs and zags through the golden euphorbia, opening with the sunrise and closing at sunset. Not to be outdone, deep pink sword lilies, commonly known as gladioli, have unfurled their ruffled one-sided spikes amidst the blush Bonica and Dolly Parton roses. The kaleidoscope combination of forms, textures, shades and scents throughout the landscape add a mesmerizing jolt of joy to each moment.

When I'm ready to relax, I only have to venture into my orchard where the daisy-like florets of the chamomile make for a calming tea, especially enhanced with a squirt of juice from my tangelos. Another excellent medicinal tea is made from foraging for red clover, a wild perennial rich in magnesium, potassium, vitamin C and calcium. The red or pink flowers have a mildly sweet flavor and are often used to ease stomach discomfort or menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes. The leaves taste like alfalfa sprouts and can be tossed into salads along with dandelions, sautéed, or added to soups. If I'm in the mood for something a bit stronger, it's always fun to muddle the mint into a mojito or mint julep!

Soon the fireworks of the Fourth of July will be flaring, filling the night sky with the exploding whirls and swirls circa a 1960s acid-dropping experience. Go into your garden, pick a few blooms, and wear flowers in your hair. If you are a gardener, you are a flower child. Welcome to a beautiful summer of love!

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for July

**MINIMIZE** back strain by keeping your back straight, not hunched, while planting or weeding. Avoid twisting and reaching overhead.

**CREATE** walking paths with gravel, stepping stones or bricks throughout your landscape so that you never compress the soil of your planted beds by walking in them.

**SUPPRESS** weeds, retain moisture, and keep a consistent temperature in your soil by adding four inches of compost or mulch around your plants. No need to turn under the compost or mulch.

**PICK** tomatoes just as they form a hint of color allowing them to ripen on your countertops. This prevents them from being eaten by birds and insects. Never refrigerate tomatoes as they lose their flavor.

**GET FREE** recycled water, up to 300 gallons per trip, from Central San. Visit [www.CentralSan.org](http://www.CentralSan.org). You'll need to fill out an application and bring your own containers. Central San notes that water is very heavy at eight pounds per gallon and is not to be consumed or allowed into storm drains.

**CLEAR** away weeds, grasses, dead vegetation, limbs, pine needles, leaves and debris from all areas around your house to safeguard your home from embers. It's fire season and we need to be vigilant to reduce fire fuel laddering.

**CUT** a bouquet of roses for a punch of stimulation. Sunset colors are perfect for summer.

**DECORATE** your dinner parties with edible flowers including pansy, elderberry, calendula, chamomile, clover, daisy, nasturtium, rose, snapdragon and violets. Most herb and fruit tree blossoms are also edible including apple, banana, basil, chives, citrus, peach, pea, pear, pineapple guava, pumpkin, radish, rosemary, sage, squash, sunflower and thyme.

"If you're going to San Francisco...Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair" - written by John Phillips of The Mamas & the Papas, sung by Scott McKenzie

In the summer of 1967 over 100,000 young people descended upon San Francisco, Golden Gate Park, and the Haight-Ashbury area to experience a season of love, peace, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. The Summer of Love, as this counterculture revolution was called, celebrated with free concerts, performances, protests and flowers. I was never a hippie, but I've always been a flower child.

This month as we reminisce about 50 years of the "make love, not war" movement, I put on my beads, headband, rose-colored granny glasses, and wore flowers in my hair as I planned the July Gardening Guide. No drugs are necessary to enjoy a euphoric trip down memory lane when the garden is brimming with colorful and edible specimens ... magic mushrooms excluded. A romp on the wild side was a fun diversion as I plucked my first juicy tomatoes while watching the

**IRRIGATE** early in the morning or late evening. Remember to water deeply and less frequently.

**DEEP** soak redwoods and magnolias before signs of stress appear, or their roots will surface.

**EMPLOY** successive planting techniques to continue your crops of lettuce, radish, carrots and greens. Every three weeks, plant more seeds as you clip and harvest for continual fresh eating through autumn.

**REPEL** pests and predators while attracting beneficial pollinators by planting aromatic herbs including rosemary, basil, cilantro, sage, fennel and thyme.

**ORGANIZE** a flower power photo scavenger hunt. Provide a list of 10 unusual specimens growing in your garden. Invite friends to find and photograph them for a special prize, perhaps a pot of petunias or a basket filled with gardening tools.

**CONGRATULATE** yourself on being a gardener. You are an authentic flower child.

Enjoy a safe and electrifying Independence Day! Embrace your free spirit, dance under the stars, and salute the sunshine as you relish a stellar summer of love.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



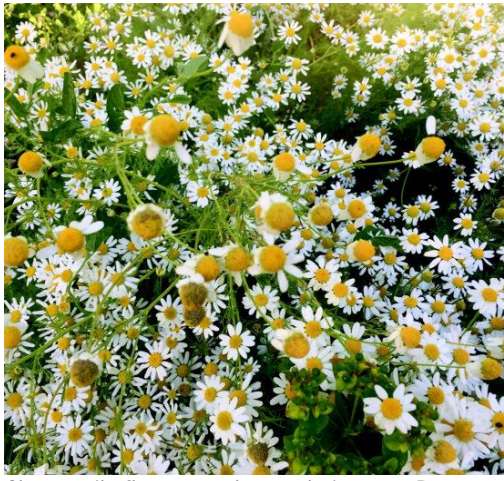
Clematis, a prolific bloomer, lasts about two weeks as a cut flower.



Gladioli spikes add drama to the Bonica rose garden.



Bees and deer resistant lavender are best buddies.



Chamomile flowers make a calming tea. Dry, store, use.



This potager is planted with perennial thyme, tomatillos, peppers, kale and calendula (poor man's saffron), making it a favorite habitat for butterflies and pollinators.



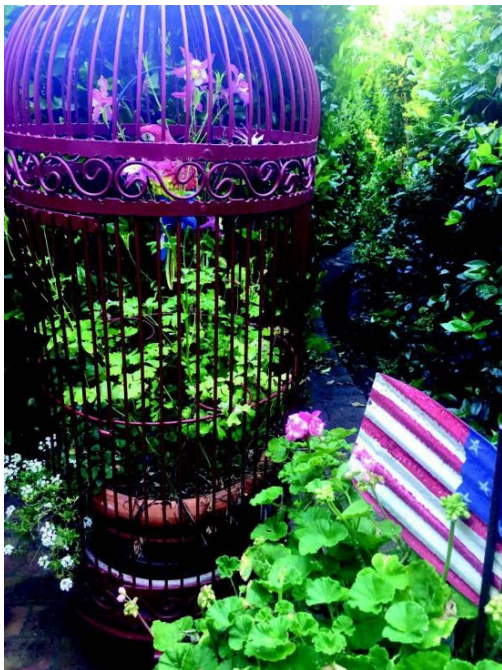
The first tomatoes of the summer proclaim a bountiful forthcoming season of juiciness.



Take a break to muddle fresh mint into mojitos or mint juleps.



hubarb stalks are almost ready for harvesting. Cook only the stalks as the leaves are poisonous.



A wooden flag and a red bird cage nods to a festive Fourth of July celebration in the garden.



Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are1® 501 c3.

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