

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for August

Towers of flowers

By Cynthia Brian

"A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it." ~ George Moore



Petunias, petunias, petunias - the favorite summer flower.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Europe has been experiencing the highest temperatures of recent years causing major forest fires, crop losses, beach restrictions, and deaths from the simmering heat. In all the times I had visited Ireland since my teen years, the sun never shone. Yet recently when I visited the Emerald Isle to attend a wedding, spend time with my first-grade teacher, and embark on an overdue road trip with my childhood Irish pen pal, a heat wave was in full swing with temperatures in the high 90s. Dusk didn't arrive until at least 11 p.m. when both the moon and the sun shared the sky.

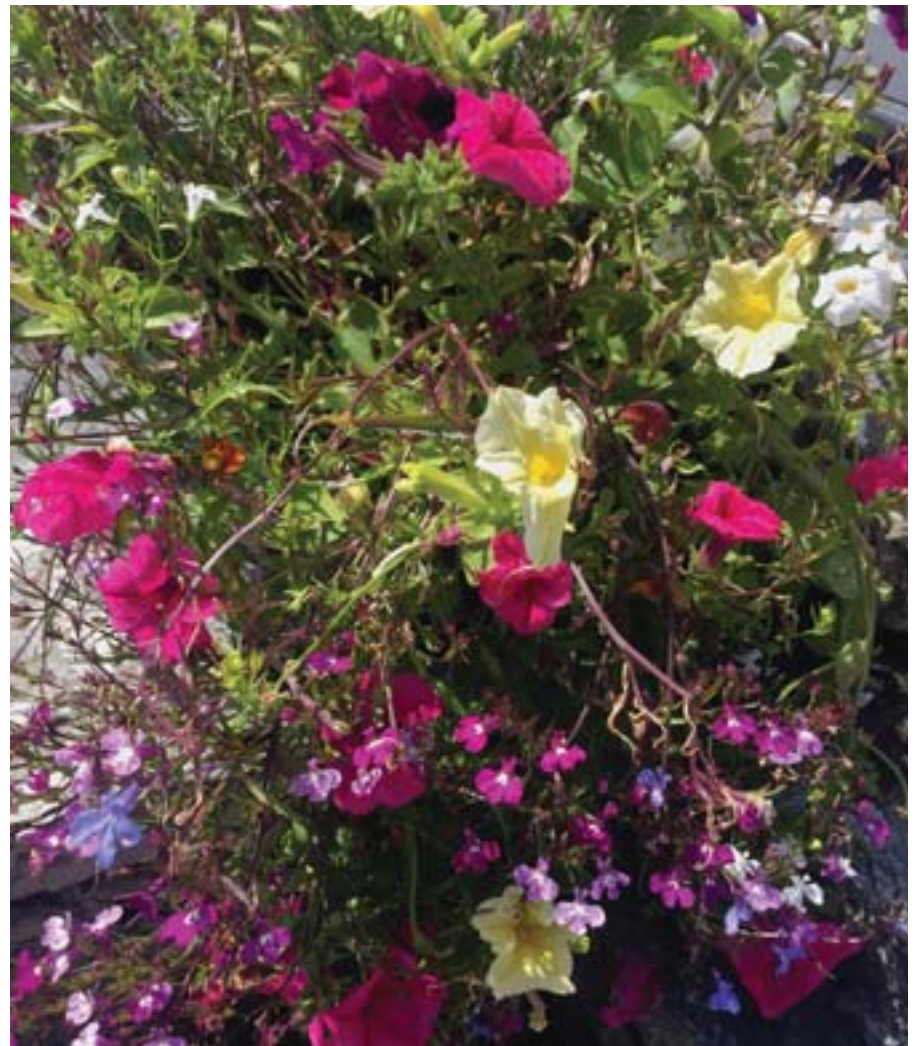
Although the countryside was dry and golden, almost resembling a California June landscape, Dublin was ablaze in flowers. Everywhere we walked towers of flowers adorned street corners, tubs hung from pubs overflowed with glorious blooms, while horns honked at me as I foolishly stepped into the street to photograph the beauty. Even the Guinness Storehouse boasted a soaring riser of cascading petunias in vibrant hues of red, pink and fuchsia. On the Aran Island of Inismor, thatched cottages were enlivened with baskets of purple petunias, blue, lavender and white lobelia, and geraniums. The Doolin pier boasted an old boat loaded with flowers in yellows, oranges and reds, while streets in Galway were lined with roses, agapanthus, verbena, astilbe, ivy, and even more petunias. Besides the exquisite flowers everywhere, I was enthralled by the doors that led to houses for the fairies and leprechauns that adorned many of the landscapes.

Whenever I travel, I gravitate to gardens. No matter where I am in our wondrous world, experiencing the spectacular floral creations of a nation is enchanting. Gardens relax, refresh, and energize me. I return to California excited to create something fresh and new.

For a friend who raises chickens, I designed a birthday arrangement that felt sunny and bright using firecracker plants, hollyhocks, roses, nasturtium, calendula, Italian berries, and sorrel stalks all gathered in a rooster teapot.

My Irish first-grade teacher always told me that she kept a leprechaun in her pocket. I was hoping to persuade her to allow her little friend to emigrate to California with me, but I guess I'll just have to make due with installing a fairy door on a tree and planting a few shamrocks.

This August as you travel, make sure to visit a few gardens and spend time exploring the towers of flowers at your destination. You'll find what you need.



Yellow petunias anchor this flowing basket of pinks, and lavenders.