

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Some like it hot!



Blackberries are sweet and profuse this season.

By Cynthia Brian

“Summer afternoon – summer afternoon; the two most beautiful words in the English language.” ~ Henry James

The blackberry bushes flanked the horse stables on my grandparents’ ranch. My grandmother was a genuine horse whisperer. She lovingly cared for a herd of adopted steeds and rode in parades in her fancy Western wear. She even trained the horse for the television show, “My Friend Flicka.” Together, after an early morning gallop through the fields and vineyards, she would give my cousin and me an empty pail and challenge us to a blackberry picking contest. Our reward was a big bowl of berries with fresh cream dusted with cereal. I adored my horse-loving grandmother and those luscious summer blackberries.

Although I’ve always treasured horses, I stopped liking blackberries when I started growing my own. The thorns are menacing, and the bushes sprout everywhere with their

underground runners. In the heat of summer, my days are filled with pulling out blackberry vines from flower beds instead of picking fruit. But this year I have a bumper crop of big juicy berries in an area where I’ve allowed them to flourish. I decided to risk the scratches to re-live the free-flowing glory days spent with my grandmother riding horses and gobbling blackberries in rich purple cream. It’s a short season for blackberries and they like it hot.

Meteorologists have predicted that 2020 has a 75% chance of being the hottest ever recorded. The good news is that we grow many specimens in our gardens that thrive in the heat. The bad news is that the Arctic is rapidly warming and climate change is sinister. We must strive to reduce our carbon footprint while we indulge in the summer flavors of favorite fruits and vegetables and the beauty of heat-tolerant blossoms.

Unless you can water deeply and daily, August is not an optimal month to plant any-

thing. But it is a month to enjoy the high-temperature lovers. Tomatoes, tomatillos, beans, peppers, eggplant, beets, zucchini, basil and corn are a few of the vegetables/fruit that demand six to eight hours of sunshine to flourish. Other summer fruits that require heat to ripen include peaches, pears, plums, nectarines, cantaloupe, watermelon, apples, blueberries, figs, and, of course, blackberries. Limes are the only citrus that require a blistering summer to be at their best. By growing your choices in containers, specifically tomatoes, peppers and herbs, substantial sunlight can be guaranteed by moving the pots to different areas and watering when necessary.

I have a pistache planted in a large ceramic cask that has already turned a vibrant red while other in-ground pistache trees are still a brilliant green. Crape myrtle trees, hollyhocks, and agapanthus pop into magnificent blooms when the thermometer rises.

... continued on Page D16



Oleanders come in all colors and bloom throughout the warmer seasons.

Photos Cynthia Brian