

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

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*Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

## Perennial favorites!



Photo Cynthia Brian

**Blue agapanthus is a staple of summer gardens.**

**By Cynthia Brian**

*“When the sun rises, I go to work. When the sun goes down, I take my rest. I dig the well from which I drink, I farm the soil which yields my food, I share creation. Kings can do no more.” ~ Chinese proverb*

In the sizzling heat of summer, many annuals go to seed and flowers fade. Thankfully there are plants besides cacti and

succulents that enjoy the higher temperatures. Most of my favorite summer bloomers are perennials that once established require minimal irrigation.

My top 10 summer flowering favorites include acanthus, agapanthus, bougainvillea, bower vine, crape myrtle, crocosmia, daylily, hollyhock, hydrangea and rose. I also am a huge fan of the Naked Lady, but it sprouts its neck later in August, lasting through the fall months.

### **Acanthus:**

Also known as Bear’s breeches, Acanthus can be deciduous or evergreen growing from rhizomes. It is drought tolerant with shiny oval leaves lobed with spines and spires of flowers that are purple, white, pink, cream or green. It doesn’t like full sun when it is hot, so it may be best to grow Acanthus in partial shade. The flower spikes can grow to five feet. I like it as a back border plant or to line a path. The good news: butterflies flock to it. The bad news: deer devour it. Cut it to the ground in the fall and it will re-emerge in the spring. Greek Corinthian column capitals were and are modeled after the Acanthus plant.

### **Agapanthus:**

Another rhizome spreader that is hardy in drought times, yet pretty in bloom is the Lily of the Nile or African Lily that we know as Agapanthus. The rhizomes retain water and divide easily to plant in other locations. They prefer a sunny location, although I’ve seen many beautiful specimens growing in the shade. The sky blue, midnight blue, or white trumpet-shaped flowers bloom June through the end of August with stalks that reach 4 feet high. The elegant strap-like leaves are evergreen. When planting, work compost and organic matter into the soil and continue

to fertilize during the growing season. Deadhead when the flowers fade and toss them on the compost pile. Wear gloves when working with this plant as it is poisonous and could cause an allergic reaction in those who are prone to plant allergies.

### **Bougainvillea:**

A gorgeous tropical vining shrub, bougainvillea flowers are modified leaves called bracts blooming in colors of yellow, orange, white, and my personal favorite, fluorescent pink. Native to arid climates, bougainvillea thrives in hot weather and needs full sun while requiring a minimum of H2O. On our ranch, bougainvillea covered one full side of our two-story farmhouse delighting our family year after year with a spectacular showcase of hues. Plant bougainvillea on a strong structure or well-made fence. It can be pruned when it starts to rain or after flowering. Since it is susceptible to frost, cover with burlap in the winter to protect it if your plant is small enough.

### **Bower Vine:**

This is the most perfect flowering evergreen vine for pergolas, arbors, and trellises. Grow bower vine over awnings, around windows and doors, or as a gate climber. It is easy to care for, doesn’t invade a roof or siding, and is a swift grower. Blooming throughout spring, summer and fall, flowers are pink and white with deep-throated trumpets attractive to hummingbirds. I grow bower vines in full sun and partial shade. Once established they don’t require much water while providing year-round beauty with their shiny green leaves. Prune whenever the vine needs a bit of TLC as this vine is not fussy. Cut stems to add to indoor arrangements. ... continued on Page D12