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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Spanish lavender is excellent as a water-wise and pollinator plant. Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

"Water is the driving force of all nature." ~  
Leonardo Da Vinci

Welcome to summer! It's going to be a hot one. If the newest studies reviewing tree rings are correct, we are currently in the worst drought since 800 A.D. The first three months of this year registered the least rain and snow on record. While we plunge into pools to cool off, our gardens will struggle to survive. Conserving water is top of mind as our climate becomes warmer. It's time for all of us to plan to grow water-wise.

I recently attended a seminar sponsored by Monrovia and came away with increased awareness of how to maintain healthy landscapes during the dry seasons. There are numerous plants besides cacti and succulents that have low water requirements. When we re-think drought-tolerant landscapes, we may continue to enjoy our gardens with colorful and interesting trees, grasses, shrubs and flowers.

Drought-tolerant perennial contenders include:

- Salvia
- Blanket flower,
- Catmint
- Agastache
- Guara
- Milkweed
- Penstemon

- Verbena
- Mallow
- Coreopsis
- Red hot poker
- Kangaroo paw
- Geranium
- Spanish lavender
- African daisy
- Lantana
- Yarrow

Drought-tolerant perennial contenders include:

- Statice
- Everlasting sweet pea
- Echinacea
- Sage
- Sea holly
- Rose
- Feverfew

Shrubs with minimal water needs are:

- Ceanothus,
- Bottlebrush
- Pride of Madeira
- Heavenly bamboo
- Pittosporum
- Smoke tree
- Cotoneaster
- Butterfly bush

Hydrangeas that are three to four years old will do fine. Younger specimens will require more water.

Vines that I recommend are:

- Bougainvillea
- Honeysuckle
- Jasmine
- Climbing and rambling roses.

Annuals don't have roots that go as deep as perennials. They focus energy on flowering which requires

increased moisture.

These annuals usually require only weekly watering to one inch as opposed to daily drinks:

Zinnia  
Marigold  
Cleome  
Portulaca  
California poppy  
Globe amaranth  
Vinca  
Chamomile  
Cosmos  
Sunflower  
Wax begonia

To minimize water waste, prioritize planting drought-tolerant perennials, shrubs and trees, and augment with color spots of annuals. Established plants do better in a drought than in a newly planted landscape. A plant is considered established when its roots have taken hold and spread in the soil. Perennials take a year to be established plants. A shrub could take two to three years, and most trees need three or more years. For this reason, it is always recommended to plant a garden in spring and fall when the weather is milder.

In a drought, paying attention to our trees is critical. Give established trees a deep soak every three to four weeks to keep roots from rising to the surface. Trees will experience leaf drop in the heat, but the tree will survive. If your trees are two years old or younger, an easy way to give them a good drink is to drill holes in a five-gallon bucket to allow water to slowly trickle to the roots. When you use a soaker wand, make sure to position it six feet or more from the trunk of the tree or at the end of the canopy as that is where the roots are. Roots are not at the base.

A sampling of California native trees that will be beautiful and survive in a drought include:

Olive  
Pomegranate  
Fig  
Marina strawberry  
Desert willow  
Pistache  
Mimosa  
Manzanita  
Crape myrtle  
Redbud

Keep an eye on your oak trees. They tend to topple over without any wind when they either have too much moisture or not enough.

As much as we love our vegetable gardens, this season only grow what you will eat or share with family and friends. Because of the lack of water, it is not prudent to overplant. Herbs are mostly drought-tolerant, especially rosemary.

To grow in water-wise knowledge, we need to embrace varied techniques for watering.

1. Water early in the day before the temperature warms.
2. Test your soil to determine its dryness. Only water when the soil is dry two to four inches down.
3. Even on the hottest days, don't be tempted to give your plants an extra drink.
4. Group plants with similar watering needs in one area.
5. Check irrigation systems for leaks.
6. Inspect drip systems to make sure the hoses are not strangling plants.
7. Watering deeply twice a week will keep your plants alive.
8. Mulch, mulch, mulch with layers of at least three inches.
9. When adding to your garden in the summer, do so on a cool or cloudy day.
10. Include water-conserving measures indoors by taking shorter showers. Keep a bucket in your showers and sinks to use for containers or outside.

In the water restriction days during the extreme drought of the 1970s, the slogan was "If its brown flush it down. If it's yellow, let it mellow," as each flush wasted seven gallons.

June 20- 26 is designated as pollinator week. Bees, butterflies, birds, bats, beetles, wasps, and moths as well as smaller mammals transport pollen to various species to make our gardens grow. Without our pollinators, we would have no food. Honor these hard-working garden helpers by making your garden pollinator friendly.

Take the plunge and grow water-wise this summer. Have a safe and healthy Independence Day!  
Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Plant geraniums in containers for instant beauty. Photos Cynthia Brian



Agastache and zinnias grow together with minimal water. Photos Cynthia Brian

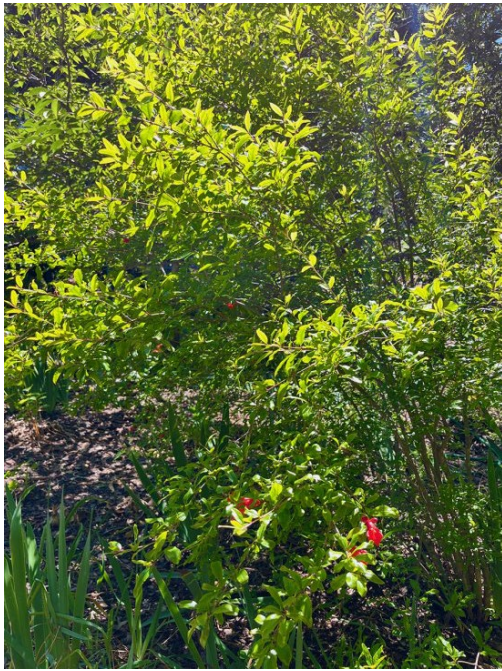




Everlasting sweet pea is a welcome perennial. Photos Cynthia Brian



Chamomile reseeds itself without any irrigation. Photos Cynthia Brian



Pomegranate trees have bright green leaves, orange flowers, and red fruit.



Barbecue rosemary grows in dry conditions and attracts bees.



Drought-tolerant kangaroo paw adds texture and interest to any garden.



Feverfew grows from seed and has medicinal uses.





Butterfly-like flowers of guara.



Cynthia Brian encourages growing roses.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your summer garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia 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 Are!r 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyler Radio Broadcast at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Buy copies of her books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Receive a FREE inspirational music DVD and special savings. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com)  
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