

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Start small



Spring is abloom under the redwoods with flowering cheery in the rear.

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To hungry insects and pests, the smell of onions is unpleasant, making them an excellent companion plant for many other vegetables including the members of the Solanaceae (nightshade) family of tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, and peppers. Onions also act as a mild aphid repellent to roses. Here are other vegetables that will benefit from planting onions, garlic, or other alliums as companions:

- Beets
- Brassicas
- Carrots
- Chamomile
- Dill
- Lettuce
- Parsnips
- Parsley
- Spinach
- Strawberries

Don't plant onions with asparagus, peas, beans, or sage as the flavor will be negatively affected and the growth of the plants will be stunted.

Over the next few weekends, I'll be able to finish weeding areas where I want to plant more

tomatoes, zucchini, sweet corn, beans and cucumbers. Beans, corn and zucchini I'll plant by seed, and other vegetables I'll buy in small containers. I will continue the succession seeding of beets, carrots, and greens that my family enjoys eating. I'll add marigolds to repel other rodents and nematodes throughout the garden.

I am an advocate for growing my own groceries because I know that my soil is free of chemicals, insecticides, pesticides, and other harmful matter. You can also grow your own food even if you have a small space. Whether you buy a decorative container or repurpose a vessel, sanitize it with bleach and water. Rinse well. Add pebbles for drainage and rich potting soil. Plant what you like to eat. Keep your pot watered. Feed with organic fertilizers based on the requirements of what you plant. You will have produce that is delicious, nutritious, and healthy.

Most people don't know that many of the fruits and vegetables that we purchase in the supermarket or even at Farmers' Markets are filled with chemicals. Even if you are on a strict budget, the following Dirty Dozen of vegetables and fruits should only be purchased as organic produce or grown in your garden. Sadly, these are vegetables and fruits that most people enjoy and believe are good for us. Beware ... they are only good for you when they are grown without chemicals.

In order of the most chemicals used on each crop, The Dirty Dozen includes:

1. strawberries
2. spinach
3. collard greens, kale, mustard greens
4. peaches
5. pears
6. nectarines
7. apples
8. grapes
9. peppers and hot peppers
10. cherries
11. blueberries
12. green beans

A small amount of sweet corn, papaya, and squash is grown from genetically modified seeds. Always look to plant seeds that say "non-GMO".

The following fruits and vegetables are called The Clean Fifteen. You may purchase them anywhere, yet again, what you grow yourself will always be more beneficial.

1. avocado
2. sweet corn
3. pineapple
4. onions
5. papaya
6. frozen sweet peas



The weeds are as prolific as the yellow iris.

Photos Cynthia Brian

7. asparagus
8. honeydew melon
9. kiwi
10. cabbage
11. mushrooms
12. mangoes
13. sweet potatoes
14. watermelon
15. carrots

Finally, in May, plant annuals, perennials, and summer bulbs suited to your microclimate conditions as the weather warms. Cosmos, petunias, salvia, zinnias, yarrow, Agastache, penstemon, asters, marigolds, and echinacea are colorful choices that also attract pollinators. For bulbs, consider Lily of the Nile (*Agapanthus*), tuberous begonia, caladium, canna, dahlia, gladiolus, and lilies. Summer blooming plants need warm, well-draining soil. Always pay attention to the directions or plant tags. Keep everything watered sufficiently.

Start small and increase as you have the time and space. Don't buy too many plants at once if you won't be able to get them in their forever home within a few days. Make sure your area is weeded well before you sow any seeds. Cut high grasses and remove debris around the perimeter of your house as fire prevention. Inch by inch, it's a cinch!

Remember mom on Mother's Day with a plant or bouquet and enjoy mild May days.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing! Happy Mom's Day!