

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Handyman's power tools

... read on Page OH4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

June Boon

By Cynthia Brian



A branch of tangy Bing cherries.

Photos Cynthia Brian

"Life is just a bowl of cherries. So live and laugh at it all." Lyrics by Lew Brown, Sung by Rudy Vallée, 1931

The birds are flocking to the two trees. Every day I watch them devour my precious, unripe fruit, as I impatiently wait for the sunshine to turn the orbs into deep reds and purple. Finally, I can't take it anymore. I grab my pruning shears and put on my boots, taking a colander.

To the orchard I tramp, eager to pick as many cherries as possible before all are eaten by my feathered friends. The Queen Annes are almost ripe, but the Bings are still small. Nevertheless, I fill my colander to the brim.

Because of a miniscule harvest last summer, I cut my trees back by a third. This June, my efforts were rewarded with a bounty of sweet cherries, even enough to share with the flying acrobats. Most people are familiar with Bing cherries sold in supermarkets. The deep red-purple black colored Bings are firm, juicy, and known for their rich sweet taste with a hint of tartness. Compared to the Bings, the mild, honeyed flavored, and lesser-known Queen Anne varieties are crunchier, marbled with bright red and yellow hues. Like the birds, I gobble them fresh from the branch.

When I was a kid, our family always worked on neighboring farms picking cherries, which usually ripened in late May. The pay was minimal, but the perks included opportunities to eat these delectable fruits as we filled the buckets for sale. One year my siblings and I competed for who could pick the most cherries in the fashion of "one in my mouth, one in the bucket." Becoming painfully sick, we all paid the price of our childishness. For years, none of us could tolerate the sight of a single cherry.

As adults, we laugh at our cherries mishap. We are again enamored of this luscious crop and enjoy it in salads, pies, and jams, eating in moderation. The birds have been dropping the pits throughout my garden, small cherry trees sprouting where they land.

While June gloom engulfs Southern California, Northern California boasts June boon! Because of our mild winters and hot summers, we can expect a wide range of blooms in June. Stunning clematis experiences its second seasonal display, climbing and covering a pipe. Like most plants, clematis prefers well-drained soil filled with rich organic matter. Once clematis is established, it is relatively low maintenance, requiring minimal water, occasional fertilizer, and pruning to promote healthy growth and abundant flowering, which attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

... continued on Page OH8



A second wave of clematis attracts pollinators.