

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Summer Sweetness

Photos Cynthia Brian



Four O'clock flowers usually open in the afternoon and bloom throughout the night.



The blue giant bird of paradise, a native of South Africa, exhibits a crown of white sepals with a blue tongue.

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Other sweet summer blooms include daisies, echinacea, birds of paradise, plumbago, and gladiolus. The sky-blue color of plumbago is mesmerizing. Buds on my crape myrtle trees are about to burst open and I've observed crape myrtle trees blooming in numerous yards.

A few not-so-sweet summer trespassers:

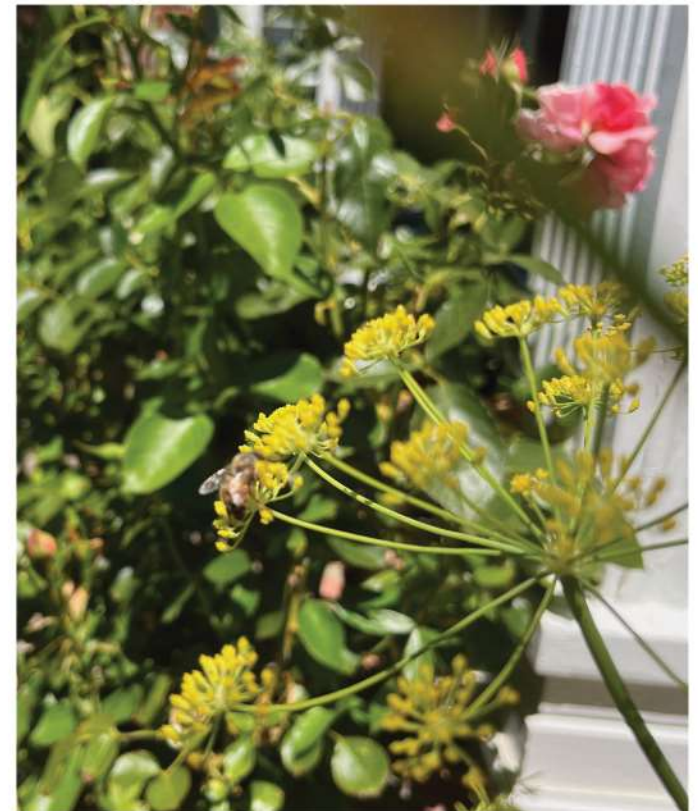
You may notice powdery mildew invading your rhododendrons, crape myrtles, viburnum, roses, and other plants when the temperatures are hot during the day and cooler or humid at night. This fungal disease looks like a dusting of flour on your leaves, and although it doesn't kill the plant, with mild cases recovering on their own with improved airflow, normal treatment is necessary. One of the best and least expensive preventative measures is to spray sulfur in advance of symptoms. In the early stages of infection, an effective organic treatment is to use a 50/50 combination of milk and water sprayed on the entire plant (leaves and stems) twice weekly until results are achieved. An un-

pleasant sour smell may develop in the hot sun, but your plants will no longer be sickly!

Rust is another fungal disease that targets roses, especially in summer. It manifests with orange and/or black spots on the leaves and stems. Sulfur or copper can be used as a preventative measure. When a few of my roses showed signs of rust, I quickly removed and destroyed the leaves to prevent further spread. I also improved the air circulation by removing surrounding plants and weeds, making sure that the roses were being watered at the roots and not by overhead sprinklers. Always disinfect and sanitize your pruning shears with alcohol so as not to spread disease.

Do you have bindweed in your garden? This little cousin of the morning glory is an invasive climbing plant that strangles other plants and can easily take over a landscape. The flowers are dainty and pretty, but don't be fooled. It is going to take patience and persistence to rid your garden of this noxious weed. The root system can spread to twenty feet wide and deep.

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A bee feasts on the bronze fennel seeds.