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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for June

By Cynthia Brian



Alstroemeria and lilies are perennial beauties this time of year. Photos Cynthia Brian they will need a thorough scrubbing. Check cushions and pillows to either wash or replace.

"Why stay on earth except to grow?" - Robert Browning

End of the school year, graduations, Father's Day, weddings, baby showers, vacations. June signals the beginning of summer and the season of outdoor celebrations. With so many milestones to check off our fun to-do lists, we hardly have a moment to think about gardening. Yet, for the next several months most of us will be enjoying the outdoors more than ever. It's time to make sure that our landscapes are welcoming, manicured, and inviting. Kumquats, loquats, and cherries are ripe for the picking, bougainvillea is resplendent with fluorescent radiance, pansies brighten beds while poppies still flourish on hillsides. Pick a bouquet of alstroemeria, the lily of the Incas, for a pop of bright color to add to your party. If you have been diligent in saving your gray water, make sure you are dumping it daily into your garden to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Heidi from Vector Control informed me that because of the drought, mosquitoes are expected to be a major problem this summer as people collect water in barrels and buckets. Be water and mosquito conscious by pouring out your saved water immediately into your landscape or houseplants.

CLEAN patio furniture, if you haven't already.

If you've left your lounges outside for the winter, they will need a thorough scrubbing. Check cushions and pillows to either wash or replace.

GOING on vacation and want to make sure that your indoor plants don't die while you are gone? Instead of hiring a person to come water, clip off the ends of a long thick shoelace, place one end deep into the soil and the other end into a tall vase of water. Water will wick up the shoelace keeping your plant hydrated while you are on holiday!

BOOST your creativity quotient by taking a walk outside. A study recently published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology found that your creativity soars 60 percent by walking in nature as opposed to brainstorming at your desk.

PLANT pumpkins now for a Halloween harvest. This is also a perfect opportunity to get your corn, eggplant, beets and cucumbers started.

SUCCESSION plant your greens every three weeks including lettuce and arugula as well as root vegetables like carrots, radishes and turnips.

SOW seeds of basil, cilantro, chives and parsley for a summer season of savory spice.

CHECK your drip irrigation systems as well as any sprinkler heads.

SOAK your big trees, such as magnolias, with a deep soaker hose. If leaves are yellowing and curling, the tree is thirsty and wants a very long, deep drink.

SAVE water by watering only once or twice a week, early in the morning when the plants will absorb the most. Watch for runoff.

PROPAGATE azaleas, carnations, fuchsias and hydrangeas by taking cuttings and planting in rich soil.

NET your fruit trees to prevent hungry birds from devouring your summer crops of cherries, peaches, apricots and apples.

DEADHEAD spent rose petals weekly to encourage continuous blooms.

MAINTAIN your weeding schedule. Be vigilant to pull weeds as soon as they appear as they zap nutrients and our precious water from plants that we actually want.

COMPOST all of your scraps except meat products to stimulate microbial activity while limiting nematode invasions.

ATTRACT butterflies and honeybees by planting nectar-rich specimens including zinnias, butterfly bush and scarlet runner beans.

WIN a grant of \$10,000 sponsored by the National Garden Bureau with a therapeutic garden that supports and promotes the health and healing powers between people and plants. For more information, visit www.ngb.org.

PINCH seedlings on annuals to encourage branching and lush, fuller growth patterns.

CUT a stem of digitalis, common name, foxglove, to enjoy the speckled throats indoors. Since foxglove is poisonous, deer don't bother it.

SUPPORT your sprouting tomatoes with wire cages or teepees to prevent them from toppling over and sprawling on the ground. The fruit will rot when in contact with soil.

ALLOW passion flower tendrils to vine and twine over fences and trellises. Although there are over 400 species of vines and shrubs, all Passiflora boast an exotic flower that lives only a day.

MULCH your entire garden with at least three inches of material to help retain moisture, keep the soil cooler, and prevent drought-related problems throughout the upcoming hot months.

GIVE the gift of a living plant for all the special occasions of the month. Live plants clean the air while affording beauty, fragrance, and the presence of nature.

Congratulations to all our local graduates. May you be happy, healthy, and always curious.

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!

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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.



Look closely at the throats of foxgloves.



Cumquat trees are the perfect size for picking the small ripe treats.



Add interest to your trellis with a perfect passion flower.



California poppies brighten a rock garden.

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