

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Growing wisdom



Crocasmia, the firecracker plant, combines well with baby roses and snapdragons.



An elegant purple bearded iris.



Pink Bonica shrub roses flanked by cornflags.

Photos Cynthia Brian

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I decided to buy seedlings of tomatoes, peppers, zucchini and cucumbers and try once again to sow seeds of beets, carrots, arugula, lettuce and beans. Several gallons of boxwoods were also purchased to replace the dead ones in my hedge. It's hard to resist buying truckloads of plants when everything is so enticing. As I grow wiser, my rule is to only buy what I can personally plant within my time limits. It's a good rule for anyone to follow.

As you start planning your spring and summer planting, remember the garden design guide of planting in odd numbers: groupings of three, five, seven (or more) plants help to create a more natural and aesthetically pleasing look to the human eye. To achieve this, plant the same variety of flowers in each odd grouping, or create color blocks with several similar varieties.

For fragrance, pollinators and beauty, add lavender to your garden in full sun and well-drained soil. Lavender doesn't like soggy soil so plant slightly above the soil surface so the water drains away. Lavender makes an excellent companion plant to roses, controlling the nasty pests and attracting the beneficial insects. When planting your roses, give them breathing room because when roses are crowded they become susceptible to powdery mildew. Roses also need well-drained soil, compost, and natural fertilizers. As blossoms fade, deadhead the stems to ensure continued blooms through winter. Together roses and lavender make a sweeping sight.

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Purple and white African daisies.