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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for June

By Cynthia Brian



Nasturtiums deter cucumber beetles, whiteflies, and squash bugs plus the entire plant is edible and makes long lasting cut flowers. Photos Cynthia Brian

Why is it when we surrender our "busyness" to get outside in nature, we feel better? Researchers have found that going into the garden, hiking, biking, or strolling in the countryside, bird watching, or animal petting triggers the release of endorphins and oxytocin that activate the pleasure center in our brain. When you spend time in the outdoors you experience a deep feeling of well-being and relaxation. Close contact with nature improves health while increasing self-esteem and confidence. Mother Nature is the ultimate teacher providing a foundation for life-long learning that nourishes the senses. Indulging in "green activities" reconnects us to ourselves, one another, our kids, and the natural world. Nature soothes, restores, and heals. Our stressed, depressed, or anxiety-ridden moods are elevated to refreshed, peaceful, and balanced. The next time you are feeling blue, go green and talk to a plant. We can all use a little Vitamin N (as in Nature)!

EMPTY all standing water from containers to stop mosquitoes from invading in this dry year. If the bloodsuckers are biting, check out the ThermoCell products, including a portable protector. A copy of the natural insecticide found in chrysanthemums is vaporized to create a 15 by 15 foot zone of protection. www.thermacell.com

BOOST your immune system and stave off diseases including diabetes, heart disease, and cancers by growing and eating leafy greens, broccoli, apples, beans, onions, garlic, leeks, and tomatoes.

PULL ivy from trees as ivy strangles and kills. Ivy also is a haven for rats and mice.

ELEVATE your palate by including home grown fennel, also known as sweet anise, into your recipes. The aromatic feathery fronds are pretty in the garden while the thick bulbs are delicious! If flower stalks begin to form, pinch them off to direct the plant's energy to the bulb.

SAVE our pollinators by creating habitats that support and nourish them.

MAKE noise before putting your hand into a hidden space such as your irrigation controls as snakes are slithering about in this dry, warm weather, including rattlers.

DON'T overlook the common petunia for lasting beauty and deer resistant lantana. Both are available in luscious pink, purple, orange, red, and white. Butterflies will swarm to the bright yellow and gold lantana.

PRUNE butterfly bush after the blossoms fade to encourage another round of blooms for fall.

STIR fried, sautéed, or just tossed in a fresh salad, the green tops of radishes, carrots, turnips, and beets are pleasantly earthy, peppery, and most of all nutritious!

PINCH spent petunia petals to enable repeat blooming through fall.

REFILL birdfeeders weekly to ensure that the flyers spend the summer with you. **CREATE** unique bouquets and arrangements for your graduation and Father's Day festivities with natural elements from your personal flowerbeds.

SWING on a hammock under a tree for a soothing dose of relaxing nature therapy.

GIVE dad a green gift on Father's Day that he'll enjoy for years to come. Perhaps a blueberry bush for healthy antioxidant eating or a beautiful bougainvillea to enliven the backyard fence.

PRINT personalized coupons to help with the weeding, watering, and digging as another great gift idea for all gardening dads. Mother Nature will thank you.

PLANT cilantro, lettuces, and basil in containers for easy reach for your culinary treats.

CHECK your irrigation timers to make sure they are working properly and set to early morning or evening, but not during the day. Twice a week watering is sufficient for most gardens and will help you conserve our H2O.

PROTECT your plants from hungry hunters as food gets scarce during the dry summer months by installing wire cages, netting, or repellents. No plant is 100 percent deer or rabbit proof.

TREAT diseases with organic remedies. Neem oil and plant based cures are recommended.

CELEBRATE summer by encouraging children to sow easy-to-grow sunflowers. Press the seeds into the soil, add water, and watch the wizardry that can surpass 16 feet!

PULL onions for salads and grilling.

TOLERATE minor aphid infestation to allow lady beetles (aka ladybugs) and "aphid lions" lacewing larvae to do their beneficial pest control. The good bugs only stick around when they have an infested buffet to feed on.

USE the lily pad shaped petals of nasturtiums as serving dishes for appetizers as they are deliciously edible.

THINK ahead to Halloween and Thanksgiving now by sowing your pumpkin seeds directly into the enriched, fertilized ground before mid-June.

DRIVE carefully through neighborhoods as school is soon out for the summer and kids are enjoying the outdoors.

Congratulations to our Lamorinda graduates of all ages and the beautiful June brides and grooms. Wishing the men a joyful Daddy's Day too! Enjoy a warm, fun-filled June!

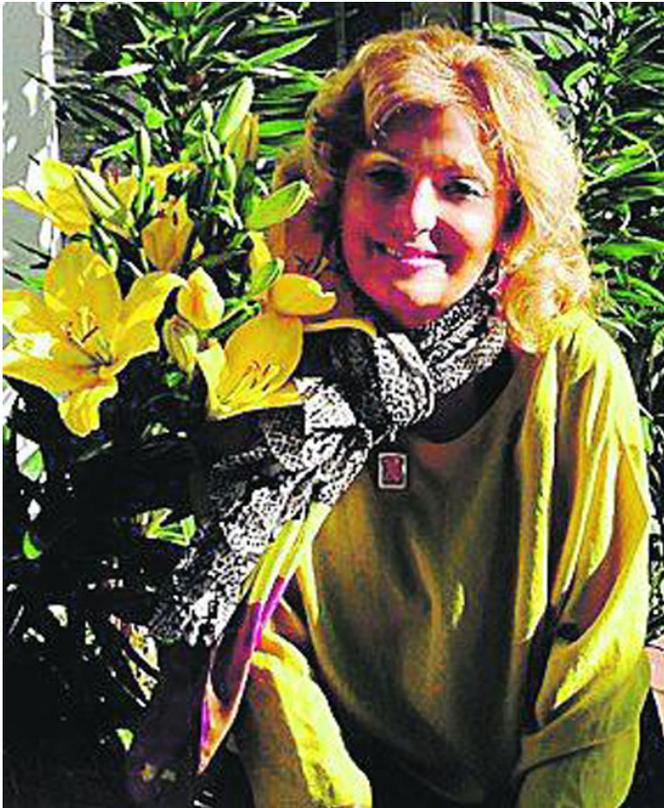
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing.



A hanging pot of petunias brightens any patio.



Mock orange tree attracts the bees.



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