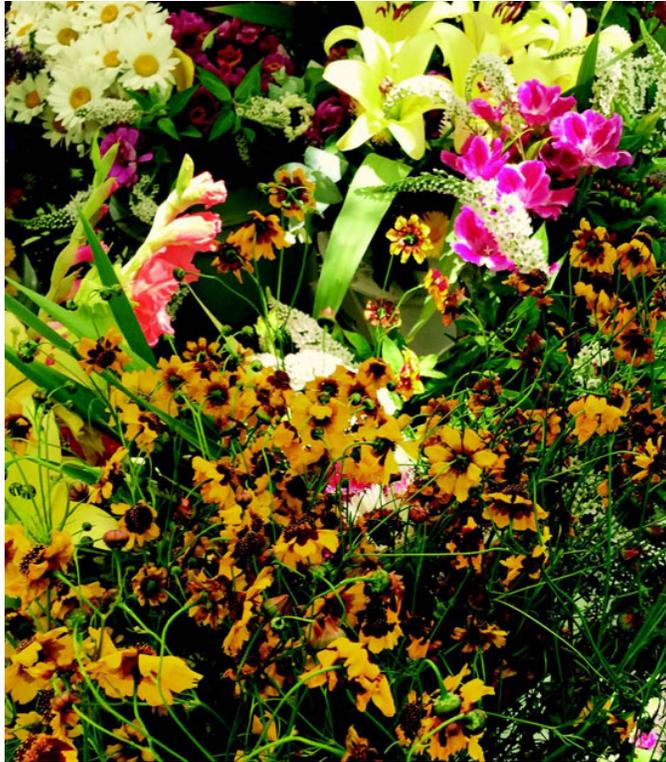


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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October

By Cynthia Brian



Lilies, Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susan) and Gladioli are low-maintenance, multi-blooming and drought tolerant. Photos Cynthia Brian

lamb's-ear with its spikes of purple looks great with the salvia and tall spikes of the robust perennial canna in red, yellow or orange. Geraniums are available in color clusters of red, pink, white and purple, offering continuous blooms above bright green leaves spring through mid-winter, when it's time to prune them to the ground.

Other low-maintenance plants for full sun include Russian sage, rosa rugosa, daylily and rudbeckia. For a shade garden, consider hosta, Lenten Rose and ferns. If your soil is extremely dry, succulents including hen-and-chicks, lavender, sedum and St. John's Wort are easy choices while astilbe and Japanese iris will prosper in wet soil. A recirculating water feature, waterfall or pond will keep the pollinators around while adding a calming resonance in your environment.

Halloween will be upon us soon. Allow your sunflowers, cornstalks and pumpkins to continue in the garden until it's time to decorate.

MOVE baskets and pots to a shady area when Indian summer is hottest.

PRUNE your berry vines hard after you have harvested the fruit for easier picking next season.

ORDER spring bulbs from catalogs now for planting in November.

PICK sorrel to add to salad, sauces and soups.

DEADHEAD spent annuals.

PROPAGATE geranium and pelargonium by cutting back non-blooming stems and planting in damp soil.

DESTROY invasive star thistle that may have taken root in your garden. Animals and birds will not eat it and it must not be added to the compost pile.

BUY trees boasting autumn colors now.

"Go forth under the open sky, and listen to Nature's teachings." ~ William Cullen Bryant

Autumn is with us. The sun is still scorching our soils with heat during the days while the nights offer chilly dew. October is the best month of the fall season to take care of garden chores before winter arrives. With the drought a forever threat, we are all seeking ideas for a low-maintenance garden that will thrive with little care and less water. It is clear that we need to stand under the open sky to listen and look at what Mother Nature is telling us about our future in the outdoors.

Visit your favorite nursery or garden center and talk to the professionals. Choose plants appropriate for your soil and sun requirements. Determine whether you have a shade or sun garden, how much moisture your area needs, then pick the plants that will flourish in those conditions. For example, sun-loving specimens such as canna, lamb's ears, sweet alyssum, geraniums, salvias, fountain grass and boxwood planted densely will out-compete weeds while providing you with an elegant, low maintenance area. Plant the clump forming fountain grass and the evergreen shrub, boxwood, toward the back, with the fragrant sweet alyssum as a border in colors of pink, cream, purple and white in the front. The wooly silver evergreen

VISIT nurseries to check out the fall selection of plants and bulbs. Suggestions in the tulip category include Greigii, single or double early blooming, triumph, Giant Darwin hybrid, lily flowering, parrot, peony, heirloom, viridiflora, fringed, crispa, single or double late blooming. Amazing how many varieties there are. Make sure to cool them in the refrigerator for six to 10 weeks before planting. Other bulbs to buy include narcissi (and there is an equal amount of varieties, sizes, shapes and colors), amaryllis, paperwhites, crocus, galanthus, scilla, iris, freesia, hyacinths, muscari, anemone, fritillaria, Dutch iris, allium, peonies and Asiatic lilies, for starters.

CHECK around your house for fire hazards and flammable materials. October is the height of fire season.

FERTILIZE begonias and roses for more blooms.

GATHER seeds from bachelor buttons, cosmos and four-o'clocks to dry and save for spring planting.

FEED your citrus.

TRANSPLANT calendulas, Iceland poppies, dianthus, forget-me-nots, primroses, Shasta daisies, agapanthus and daylilies.

FREEZE or can your extra harvest of fruit and vegetables for winter health.

EAT the flowers of chives, garlic, basil, mint, dill and other flowering herbs, which are delicious and pretty in salads, sandwiches and soups.

HARVEST the last of your grapes. Add the colorful leaves and twine the vines to form a spectacular autumnal arrangement.

RAKE your leaves into a compost pile. Add lawn clippings, eggshells, food scraps (no meat) and coffee grounds. Stupendous soil will be ready to use before the holidays.

Reseed tired lawns using low-water loving clover for less maintenance and fast, healthy growth.

DECORATE your front porch with sunflowers and cornstalks from your garden at the end of the month.

SAVE sunflower seeds to feed the birds as well as to sow for next season.

PICK your pumpkins at the end of the month and make a family day of carving jack o'lanterns.

SEE you at the Pear and Wine Festival on Sept. 26 at Moraga Commons. Visit the Be the Star You Are booth to receive a free brand new book as part of the literacy outreach project, "Read, Lead, Succeed!" Thanks to our sponsors, Children's Success Unlimited, Michael Verbrugge Constructions, and The Lamorinda Weekly for making this giveaway possible. Pick up free seeds, bookmarks and potpourri for all of our garden readers. Info http://starstyleradio.net/Events/Entries/2015/9/26_Pear_%26_Wine_Festival_2015.html

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing.



Create a beautiful nook with a pot of bright red geraniums.



For bursts of color and easy care, save seeds of cosmos, bachelor button, and four-o'clocks for sowing next spring.



More seeds to gather for spring planting: Queen Anne's lace and purple bachelor buttons.



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