

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for June

"I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than of cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs."
Joseph Addison, essayist and poet (1672-1719)

When I arrived home to find my garden gate open and my cherry tree stripped of the bountiful almost-ripe Queen Anne's, I wasn't singing a tune. It wasn't the birds that had eaten the fruit, but a family of deer who had welcomed themselves into my back yard to dine on all my roses, fruit, and lilies. When I whined to my favorite city dwelling book editor, she emailed, "I always thought that if I ever had a garden, it would be dedicated to the dining delights of butterflies, birds, snails, rabbits, gophers, etc. Maybe a few favorite flowers guarded in glass enclosures for my visual diet." The butterflies, birds, and bunnies are welcome in my secret gardens, while the snails, gophers, etc. are invited to invade another planet. Even though I appreciate the manure the deer left behind, outside my backyard they are invited to feast. This year local intruders are in abundance so make sure to tighten the locks and be vigilant about protecting your summer harvest. The bird song is more melodious in a well-protected garden.

- FENCE areas visited by marauding deer. Although fuzzy and poisonous plants tend to be deer resistant, nothing is deer proof except a fence! (Yes, they bit off the floral spikes of my foxglove!)
- INSERT three to four, eight-foot bamboo poles straight into the ground then pull together and tie at the top to make a teepee for cucumbers, beans, melons, and other climbers.
- REPOT your crowded cymbidium orchids. Divide and share with friends and family.
- ADD a snake plant, broad sword fern, Peace lily, or rubber plant to your indoor living space for the maximum amount of natural air purifying.
- CELEBRATE the summer solstice on June 21 by including neighbors in a midweek cook out.
- REFRESH your wooden patio furniture with a splash of colorful paint or if it's teak, give it a good cleaning.
- SWING in a hammock while reading a good book.
- FREEZE cherries or blueberries to add to your iced tea.
- SURPRISE dad with a new garden tool. (Keep the receipt in case he wants to exchange it!) Happy Father's Day to all great dads!
- RESEARCH the growing habits of trees you like.
- STAKE your gladiolas before they topple.
- APPLY a final dose of high nitrogen fertilizer to everything: lawns, perennials, trees, and annuals before the heat begins.
- POUR your coffee grinds and tea leaves on acid loving plants like azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, and fuchsias.
- CUT out dead wood from privets, boxwoods, holly, and other hedges.
- PUT on your overalls to work in your vegetable garden. Take it from the farmer in me—the more seeds you sow, the more food you'll grow.
- THIN fruits when they are the size of a penny on your overly populated trees.
- THROW your graduates a garden party and serve homemade Meyer Lemonade.

Congratulations to all the Lamorinda teens who are graduating this June and kudos to the parents and teachers who have done such an amazing job of cultivating blossoming individuals. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with many of our community's youth through *Be the Star You Are!* charity, *Express Yourself!* radio show, *Starstyle Coaching*, and the *Teen Scene* column here in the Lamorinda Weekly. May the gardens of your life continue to fertilize and grow YOU.

Happy Gardening to You!

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Cynthia Brian repots cymbidiums and stands under a redwood with climbing ivy.

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

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