

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for July

"All good things are wild and free." – Henry David Thoreau

By Cynthia Brian



Thin the fruit on your tress. Santa Rosa plums are ripening but the large crop could break the limbs.
Photos Cynthia Brian

Summer is here in its full glory with the Fourth of July promise of parades, pancake breakfasts, barbecues, fireworks, and family fun. Our dry hills glisten golden while water conservation is the talk of the town. The warm winter allowed fruit trees to burst into bloom only to have the blossoms knocked to the ground by a late rain. Ripening fruit is sparse, if nonexistent, except for certain varieties. My experiment of early vegetable planting in April resulted in plants that didn't survive the acute climate changes. Despite this dismal failure, I'm glad I attempted the unexpected. Next spring I'll wait until the optimum moment to transplant seedlings. On the positive side, plants that froze have recovered and are thriving. Other than straightforward yard maintenance, July is relatively labor-free since we've already done all the really hard work in preparation for the season. Sit on the patio, pour yourself a cold one, and enjoy living in the land of the free.

- **RETHINK** summer beverages by making your own flavored waters with fruits and herbs from your garden. Add mint, cucumbers, tangerines, basil, and berries to your favorite cocktail for a splash of sunshine.
- **REMOVE** your lawn and replace it with an East Bay Municipal Utility District sustainable landscape option and you'll qualify for a rebate of 50 cents per square foot of grass removed. Call (866) 403-2683 to schedule an appointment.
- **CONSERVE** moisture by adding 2-3 inches of mulch to your landscape if you haven't already. Visit www.EBMUD.com for discount coupons on purchasing mulch.
- **WATER** early in the morning or evening to eliminate evaporation and water deeply yet infrequently. It's hot and deep watering encourages a deeper root system.
- **SOAK** tree roots with a deep soaker. While lawns will come back if they are not watered, your trees will die without H2O. Buy a deep soaker rod and use it.
- **LINGER** on a bench at the beach, in your garden, or at the park to enjoy the scenery.
- **GROW** your own vegetables, fruits, and herbs and be water-wise. Home gardeners use 1/4 to 1/8 less water than commercial growers for the same produce.
- **ADD** straw to beds as an excellent covering that provides a habitat for beneficial microbes while keeping the soil moist.
- **THIN** apricots, peaches, pears, apples, and lemons on your trees to allow for a tastier, larger fruit harvest when ripe.

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