

Digging Deep

Warm or Cool, Summer Gardening is a Breeze

By Cynthia Brian

"There shall be eternal summer in the grateful heart." — Celia Thaxter*Who can resist a summery arrangement of sunflowers and hydrangeas?**Photos Cynthia Brian*

When it's sweltering outside, I want to be in the garden. I find it challenging to sit in my office writing articles or producing radio shows when nature beckons me to be nurturing the earth.

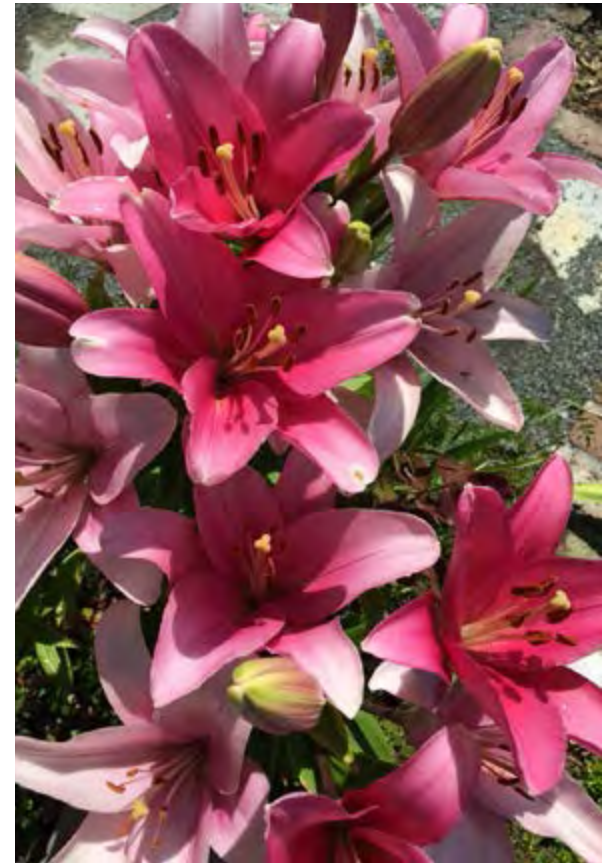
In summer I spend several hours of every single day digging in the dirt whether it's early in the morning or after dusk because my chores are never finished. Like the gardening wardrobes of my siblings, mine usually consists of my bathing suit and shorts allowing me a quick cool down with a spray from the garden hose. As my daughter was working in her garden in her bikini she telephoned to declare that she was carrying on our family tradition. "I realize I come from a long line of bikini gardeners," she giggled. I thought of titling my next gardening book, "The Bikini Gardener," but then perhaps read-

ers would expect to see beautiful bikini clad bodies instead of gorgeous gardens. I promise not to be photographed.

Baby, it's hot outside and we gardeners have work to do. We have to be water conscious, yet we see the bare spots in our landscape and yearn to make our personal paradise a more beautiful place. What are our options?

Planting annuals and perennials offer the answers to filling in those areas that just never seem to seed well. Between the turkeys, deer and raccoons, our landscapes have many hurdles to overcome and I'm determined to continue to find ways to succeed.

Here are a few of my favorite recommendations for adding sparkle, individuality and excitement without the extra water and work this season.

*Asiatic lilies grow from bulbs and return year after year.*

- Sun loving vinca (*Catharanthus roseus*) crave six hours of sunlight a day and do well in extreme heat. Colors are violet, peach, white and bright pink. Lately I've seen these annuals on sale at garden centers for as little as \$4.50 a gallon or three for \$12, offering a kaleidoscope of shades at bargain prices.
- Lantana once established needs minimal water or maintenance. Butterflies, hummingbirds and bees are attracted to the highly scented flowers, although some humans find the plant stinky. The deer are repelled by lantana. Some cultivars have variegated leaves, and all are evergreen, blooming all year long. Trailing lantana is terrific on hill-sides and spilling out of containers. Buy the shrub variety when you want width and height that grows to three to 10 feet. Multi-colors include orange, yellow, purple, pink and white.

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