

# The Resource Collection Landscaper's Almanac

A Quarterly Publication from **The Resource Collection**

Summer 1999

For many of us summertime means a real bonanza time in the vegetable garden. It's still not too late to add more to your garden this season depending, of course, upon the intensity of the summer heat.

## Gardening Activities

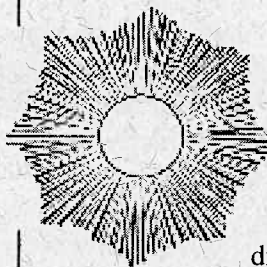
As the summer season progresses it often becomes more difficult for plants to become established. However, it's still worth a try if you'd like to attempt a lengthier harvest time. When August arrives and your green thumb is itching, start plants from seeds; when mid-September arrives you'll be ready with plenty of seedlings to plant. Be sure to keep them moist and in a shady spot until they sprout.



This summer try some of the following in your edible garden: sweet lima beans, beets, carrots, chayote, corn, cucumbers, endive, leaf lettuce, melons, okra, onions, potatoes, salsify, New Zealand spinach, squash, Swiss chard, tomatoes, turnips, and watermelons.

Verbena, Vinca, and Zinnia.

For bold summer color try Bougainvillea, Hibiscus, and other subtropical vines that can be planted in June. During August you can enjoy the Naked lady (*Amaryllis belladonna*), a lovely plant with big pink trumpet flowers that blooms after the foliage has withered. When the end of August arrives remember to dig up your bearded irises, cut off the healthy rhizomes that have a good set of leaves, trim the leaves and roots to about six inches long, and replant the rhizomes.



## Summer Thirst

This season delivers a big payoff to those with drought tolerant gardens and efficient irrigation systems. Monitoring your garden's watering needs ranks top in the landscape priority list. Try to water early in the morning or in the evening when evaporation will be minimal. In the middle of a very hot day try misting your plants, clamping your thumb over the hose to refresh them. It's better to water less often but for longer durations, rather than frequent, shallow waterings. With the deeper watering method, the water is safe from evaporation and the roots stay cooler. Rotting and fungus disease are also discouraged with this method. Know your specific plant's water needs so that you can properly water it. If you overwater a plant during hot summer weather you might promote root molds and rots. However, if you underwater a plant it will also suffer.

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To add floral charm and color to your summer landscape you could plant: Ageratum, Alyssum, Amaranthus, Bachelor's Buttons, Asters, Bells of Ireland, Celosia, Coleus, Dahlia, Hollyhock, Marigold, Morning Glory, Niotiana, Petunia, Phlox, Salvia, Scabioso, Strawflower, Sunflower,



### Roses are Red...

"Roses are red, violets are blue; But they don't get around like dandelions do."

Slim Acres  
(American Poet)

### Summer

"A spell lies on the Garden. Summer sits. With finger on her lips as if she heard the steps of Autumn echo on the hill."

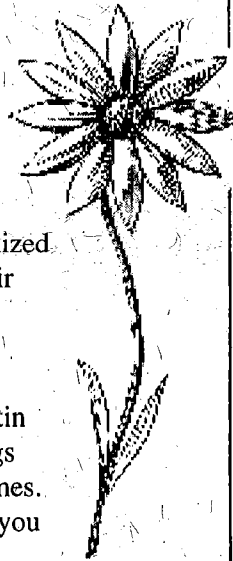
Gertrude Huntington  
McGiffert

Keep an eye on your trees this summer. Look for signs of drought stress, particularly if it's a hot, dry summer. Symptoms include wilting leaves, dead branches, scorched leaf edges, grayish green leaves with a lack of luster, smaller than usual new leaves, yellow, thinning foliage, and dry soil. Trees weakened by drought stress are also more vulnerable to disease. If you suspect that a particular tree is suffering from drought stress, check the soil at several locations beneath it. Go down to a depth of eight to twelve inches in the soil with a soil probe or shovel; if it's dry, irrigate the area well.

### Plantspeak

Plants are identified by universally recognized botanical names and by common names. While common names are often charming, it's always a good idea to learn universally recognized botanical names for their specificity.

Here are a few useful, common descriptive Latin terms and their meanings often found in plant names. In regard to geography you will find "anglicus" (of England), "gallicus" (of France), and "japonica" (of Japan). The form of a plant's growth is often indicated by terms "arborescens" (tree-like), "repens" (creeping), and "scandens" (climbing). Clues to a plant's habitat can be found in the words "arenarius" (growing in sand), "campestris" (of the fields), and "fluviatilis" (of the rivers). A plant's structure is often reflected in its name, such as "penstemon" (indicating five stamens), "amabilis" (lovely), "campanulatus" (bell-shaped), and beware of "foetidus" (foul-smelling). Let these Latin clues help to find just the right plant during your next visit to the nursery.



### Just Outside

Even if you have a very limited space for gardening, you can make creative use of the space outside of your windows,



doorsteps, railings and terraces. That's right. Do what they do in the Alps. Put a Blumenkasten on your Fensterbrett (or in other words, put a flowerbox on your windowsill!) And don't limit yourself by thinking that these festive displays are just for spring and summer, but delight in them every day of the year.

Consider your planter box as an architectural detail of the whole of your structure. It can alter the mood with color or soften lines. Your container can be of wood, plastic, metal, stone, or cement. Just be sure that it has at least 8 inches of depth, and 8 to 12 inches of width with adequate drainage holes in the bottom, covered with wire or broken pottery. In beginning your planter box try to start with plants that have already begun flowering. Consider the location of your planter and choose your plants in accordance with the amount of sunlight they'll receive.

For sunny locations we recommend: Lantana, Petunia, Nasturtium, Dwarf marigold, Heliotrope, Geranium, Ever-blooming begonia, Candytuft, Sweet alyssum, Ageratum, Coleus, Dusty-miller, Begonia semperflorens, Cigar plant, French marigold, Golden feverfew, Lobelia, Forget-me-not, and Nierembergia. Especially nice trailing plants are Asparagus plumosa, Asparagus sprengeri, Trailing geranium, Trailing lantana, Vinca, German Ivy, English Ivy, and Wandering Jew.

## More Than All

“Give fools their gold,  
and knaves their power;  
Let fortune’s bubbles rise  
and fall,

Who sows a field, or  
plants a flower,  
Or plants a tree, is more  
than all.”

John Greenleaf Whittier  
(1807 - 1892)  
American Poet

## Middle Age

“Now is the deyday of  
summer,  
The full, warm robust  
middle age of the year,  
The earth, ripe with  
products as well as  
promise.”

Daniel Grayson, Poet

For shady exposure play with the Tuberos begonia, Viola, Fuchsia, Forget-me-not, Impatiens, the African violet, and almost any fern or foliage plant. As for the shady area trailing plants, you should be safe with using the same trailing plants that are appropriate for the sunny areas.

## Cacti and Succulents

Whether they’re part of your “Eco-Security System,” or just potted on your windowsill, with over 20,000 kinds of cacti and succulents, chances are that as a resident of southern California you’ve been entrusted with a few of these plants. Although most are very hardy, some types are very particular and you shouldn’t assume that they thrive on neglect. Research your plants, observe them and learn to recognize their responses to different conditions. Don’t be afraid to experiment with different locations, planting mixes, and fertilizers.

Not all cacti and succulents thrive in intense light. Be aware of your plant’s physical responses. Insufficient light to a plant results in etiolation, a condition where the plant has stretched itself to try to get more light. It will become pale and the stem will become smaller in diameter. The space between the leaves, the internodes, will become longer. Excessive light will result in sunburn - bleached out or blackened areas on the sunny side of the plant. A safe exposure for many kinds of plants is direct sun in the morning and filtered sun the rest of the day.

Most cacti and succulents prefer warm conditions but some will take freezing temperatures if they are allowed the time to adjust to colder weather and are kept

dry. However, most of these plants should not be exposed to temperatures below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Cacti and succulents need a moderately coarse-textured mix that allows rapid drainage and does not retain too much water for too long. Commercial potting soil and about one-third coarse, sharp sand will make an adequate basic mix. Although they generally can survive without water

for a while better than most,

you’ll still want to be cautious. They can suffer from over-watering, so allow the soil to dry out somewhat between waterings, then saturate it. In general, you can’t water too much, just too often. Treat your cacti and succulents right

and they’ll reward you with

some of the most awesome blossoms to be found in the plant kingdom.

## Early Aging

Create a unique garden container by “aging” it. To give your cement or terracotta container an aged look, spread buttermilk, beer, water-soluble plant food, or yogurt on the container. Place it in a shady spot and a mossy green patina should develop. If you’d like the look of an expensive antique but don’t want to wait even a day, try this technique. Take a cast-concrete urn and paint it with a black latex enamel paint. While still wet, use a soft-green semi-gloss latex enamel and lightly paint over the black, sponging it off in places to create a worn look. Then highlight the details by going over it with a thin brush. Use your creative judgement as you realize your own unique “antique.” When you’ve achieved your own look, spray the urn with a whitewash paint to give it a soft finish.

