

July in the Garden

My favorite Covid “in place” is.... my backyard, so I will take you on a virtual tour:



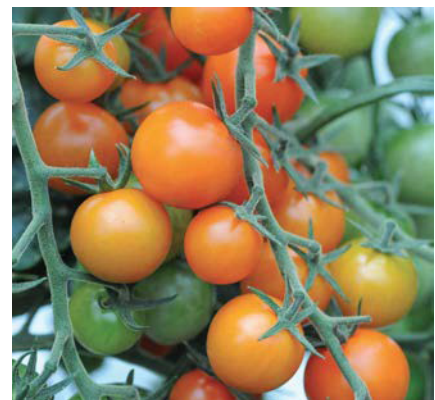
The azaleas finally stopped blooming so by the end of June I was able to feed them and my Camellias some acid fertilizer. The camellias are mostly on the driveway, the only dependable shade in my garden. At the same time, I fed my Meyer lemon bushes to keep them happy. I realized about ten years ago that citrus must be fed almost monthly! No food, no lemons.

All 50 roses in my garden were spectacular this year, with their zenith at the end of May.

I have roses almost everywhere, especially on all the fences bordering our property. In fact, the climbers I planted last January when I pulled out the fruit trees that had been commandeered by squirrels are blooming like showoffs. By the middle of June though, the rose blossoms were fading, and the rose bushes looked tired. To the rescue comes: balanced fertilizer on July 1, and 2 weeks later, fish emulsion, 2 tablespoons dissolved in a 2-gallon jug of water, poured around the base of each rose, following Ray Redell's Rose Feeding Program. He says he

is an absolute “pig” when it comes to rose blossoms; he wants as many as possible from April until frost. The only way this will happen in my yard is if I follow Ray's Gourmet Diet for Bay Area Roses. Ray also urges gardeners to mulch by using organic materials, like compost, chicken manure, and leaves. He attests to the fact that mulch is not only nutritious on its own, but it is also the perfect medium over which to apply fertilizer, probably to protect the roots.

My tomatoes are going gangbusters, two of each kind planted in large wine barrels. The cherry tomatoes of course will be the first to ripen, especially Sun Gold. but for the rest of them, the race is on! My money is on Early Girl, but Black Prince is about the same size right now. They all look like they are on steroids, so that the cherries are giving the big tomatoes a real race. Even the Marigolds are looking very mature for their age, and the Basil in each wine barrel is twice as tall as the Marigolds. Don't forget to hang small water bottles containing PineSol near your tomato cages to keep squirrels at bay. They hate the smell and mostly stay away.



The veggie raised beds are bulging with cucumbers, yellow squash and zucchini. If I don't get out there for two days in a row, the cucumbers outpace the zucchini, leaving eggplants in the dust. I love planting squash and cukes! They are so rewarding! It makes my



day to serve them for dinner. I do string them up on tomato cages because I don't have a huge amount of space. Remember those castles and moats we used to make at the beach? Good training! I can now turn the hose on one end of the veggie bed and the water winds around every cage. Simple way to water!

I only grow lettuce in 3 window boxes outside my kitchen, so I have lettuce all year. Last month however, a dingbat bird built a nest in one of the window boxes under the lettuce. Imagine my shock when she flew out from under the lettuce that I was about to water! I peeked from the inside of the kitchen window and saw 2 little baby birds. So I couldn't water one of the boxes. Well Mrs. Dingbat departed from her nest in the middle of June, sadly leaving behind one dead baby from that heat wave we had, and one unhatched egg. At least she took her lone baby bird with her. I waited three days before I removed her nest, which was very elegantly created, soft but intertwined with

firm pieces to hold it together. July is when I usually buy more lettuce transplants for the window boxes. Once again I could not find lettuce. So I went on-line and ordered Little Gem seedlings from Gamble Garden.

Eleanor Laney, my butterfly partner, started from seed some narrow leaf milkweed, the sole host plant for Monarchs, so she passed the flats of baby seedlings on to me. Now I have two racks, 5 shelves on each, thriving with milkweed, 200 at last count. Eleanor did the hard part. I have never been a fan of growing ANYTHING from seed! I am too impatient; I know my limitations! So please let me know by email if you want a few milkweed plants. We were hoping to give them out at the June luncheon! I now don't know if we will have any Garden Club meetings before next January! No vaccine; no large meetings. I grow nectar plants in a very cheerful setting along the parking strip in front of my house. This is the fourth year for my nectar garden. I see Painted Lady butterflies, humming birds and bees busily gathering nectar from Salvia, Coreopsis, Marigold, Aster and



Zinnia flowers. I believe that Monarchs come looking for nectar plants because they are hungry. Then they might leave a few eggs as a thank you. Every year for the past 4 years, I have brought Monarch eggs to my grandson's classroom for them to babysit until the caterpillar turns into a butterfly, an amazing process to watch.

A new edition to my garden a few years ago was to fill old coffee pots and dented metal containers with succulents. It puts those wannabe antiques to good use along ledges and bare railings. Echeveria, crassula and sedum get right to work in old pots. If one breaks off, let the tip dry out, and then stick it back in the pot.

Remember to keep sheltering, especially in your back yard. Your plants will love you for it!
Happy Gardening from Vicki...

Vicki Sullivan
Horticulture Chair