

## June in the Garden

**The best feature of my garden right now is my rose display.** Artistry Roses are 7 inches across, looking like roses on steroids. The rest of my hybrid tea roses in the front yard measure 6 inches across, the largest roses I have ever grown!!

However, my neighbor Wendy's cluster roses measure 10 inches across!! Walk around Palo Alto and you will see similar displays. I believe it is rose growers' modest reward for suffering through "shelter in place". Another reason for the

rich display in my front yard is that sheltering forced me to observe the squirrel action that for the last 6 years has stripped my dwarf fruit trees, leaving me about one piece of fruit per tree, despite covering the trees with netting, hanging 4 oz. used water bottles filled with Pine-Sol near ripening fruit, mounting Slinkys the length of the fence top, yet hardly slowing down the squirrel traffic from the side fence of my front yard to the front corner of the house. When those fruit trees were evicted, the roses brightened up with so much sun. The squirrels were spied picking rose petals to eat! Fortunately, that did not become their diet staple.



**So, here we are in June, still sheltering, wearing gloves and a mask when venturing out.** It took three different treks to Home Depot, Ace Hardware in MV, then finally, via the Internet, to Gamble Garden, to acquire the 14 tomato plants that I usually grow in 7 wine barrels in my back yard. I didn't stop searching until I finally found at least 2 of my favorite tomatoes (at GG), Sun Gold and Cherokee Purple. The tomatoes are in the barrels and all are thriving right

now, flowering and developing tiny green balls, hopefully the precursors to a happy harvest, spread out from late June to November. They are surrounded by Marigolds, to keep away a few pests, and Basil, which will turn into Pesto in the Fall. I prolong my Basil harvest by removing any flowers that appear.

**April is when I typically add a cu.yd. of Ciardella's mushroom compost and also a cu.yd. of Ciardella's mulch to my garden soil. However, this year,** due to the tricky business of finding compost and mulch while sheltering, I didn't sweeten the soil until the end of May. I had enough of my own compost for parts of my yard, but I had to purchase compost by the bag for the rest of the garden – 1 ½ cu.ft.= \$8.00 at Ace Hardware. That would add up to at least 12 bags if I covered just the back half of my garden. I felt like a dictator, deciding which plants would be allotted soil enriching, and which would be passed over.

**Starting in May, I feed my roses a balanced fertilizer like 10-10-10, 20-20-20 or whatever is on sale.** During most of rose season, rosebushes need equal amounts of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Two weeks later, during May and June, I feed a ½cup Epsom salts per bush. Epsom salts (properly called magnesium sulfate) is an activator for plant enzymes essential to the growth process. For roses, that translates to vigorous growth at the base of a rosebush (basal breaks, in rose lingo, according to Ray Redell, RR)). According to RR, the added level of magnesium also increases chlorophyll production in the plant, for strength and deep, green color. In July and August, I switch to fish emulsion for fertilizer, one tablespoon per gallon, 2 gallons per bush, once a month, then Epsom Salts mid-month. Don't neglect your roses during the rest of the summer.



**Got rust? Pick off any diseased leaves and throw them in the garbage can.** I use "Modified Cornell Formula" to control rust, the formula of which can be found on-line. Keep deadheading and follow a feeding plan. You will be rewarded!!

**When they stop blooming, I always feed my azaleas, rhododendrons, and camellias.** First I dead head and then clean up any fallen leaves around each plant. Next I add a bit more acid

planting mix, followed by some mulch. Finally I add acid fertilizer, following the instructions that consider the size of the plant. If I see any new long branches, I will trim them down to match the shape of the plant.

**For a steady supply of green beans, eggplant and zucchini, plus other squash and cucumbers, I add new seedlings about once a month to 2 raised beds in my yard.** To protect Swiss chard, I put bridal veil tulle from Joann's Fabric over the whole bed, because I have been plagued by Leaf Miners. I only grow lettuce from seedlings in 3 window boxes outside my kitchen window, and those boxes supply us all year with leaf lettuce. Except this year, some kind of small dingbat bird has built a nest inside the lettuce that is ready to pick in one of the boxes. Imagine my surprise when I approached the lettuce with scissors and a bird flew out! She owns the window box for now!!



**I am growing nectar plants in two places this year, hoping to attract butterflies, bees and birds. My Narrow Leaf Milkweed, the sole host plant for Monarchs, has spread like crazy in the front parking strip.** I added more purple Salvia to the front patch near the Milkweed, and the Lantana and Coneflower have come back in front. I did see a hummingbird yesterday sampling my selection of Salvia and Buddleia in the back yard. My

contention is that Monarchs coming looking for nectar plants because they are hungry. Then they consider leaving an egg or two in the area. Other nectar plants that I usually plant next to Milkweed are Coreopsis, Mexican Sunflower, and Marigold, plus Aster and Zinnia. By the way, I am growing lots of Milkweed, and I don't know when we will ever have monthly garden club meetings. If your Milkweed did not come back, send me an email and we can set up a pickup or drop off.

Remember that the garden doesn't notice that you are sheltering. It's just a nice place to be!

Happy Summer!!

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