

What to do in your garden in June

PLANTING

□ **Dianthus.** Sunset climate zones 1a–3b: ‘Firewitch’, a new variety of *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* with blue-gray foliage and hot pink flowers, is sure to make a splash in higher-elevation gardens. It thrives in full sun and well-drained soil low in fertility, and takes less water than most dianthus. The 8-inch-tall by 18-inch-wide perennial is a good choice for rock gardens. Order plants from High Country Gardens (www.highcountrygardens.com or 800/925-9387).

□ **Native plants.** Zones 1a–3b: The following grasses thrive in high-elevation gardens: blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*), and mountain muhly (*Muhlenbergia montana*). Shop for these and other plants native to the Colorado Plateau at Flagstaff Arboretum’s annual summer-plant sale (9–5 Jun 17; free; 4001 S. Woody Mountain Rd., 4 miles south of historic Route 66;



www.thearb.org or 928/774-1442).

□ **Summer wildflowers.** Zones 10–13: Before summer rains hit, sow seeds of yellowish orange Arizona poppy (*Kallstroemia grandiflora*), yellow Bright Lights cosmos (*Cosmos sulphureus*), and pink devil’s claw (*Proboscidea parviflora*). Arizona poppy and devil’s claw attract native pollinators; Bright Lights draws clouds of butterflies. Order Arizona poppy from Wild Seed (602/276-3536), Bright Lights from Garden Trails (www.gardentrails.com or 888/476-9123), and devil’s claw from Native Seeds/SEARCH (www.nativeseeds.org or 866/622-5561). Zones 1 and 2: Sow

seeds of Bright Lights cosmos and devil’s claw.

□ **Torch cactus.** Zones 11–13: With their enormous flamboyant flowers that appear mostly between April and August, torch cactus (*Trichocereus* hybrids) are some of the most spectacular warm-season bloomers in desert gardens. Tucson breeder Mark Dimmitt has developed some gorgeous hybrids. Try ‘Apricot Glow’, ‘June Noon’, or ‘Volcanic Sunset’ either in the ground or in pots filled with a fast-draining soil mix. Order from Living Stones Nursery/Plants for the Southwest (www.lithops.net or 520/628-8773).

□ **Vegetables.** Zones 1a–3b: Sow seeds of broccoli, carrots, radishes, Swiss chard, and turnips. Zones 10–13: Sow seeds of Armenian cucumber, cantaloupe, okra, squash, tepary beans, and watermelon. Order old-time varieties at Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds (www.rareseeds.com or 417/924-8917).

MAINTENANCE

□ **Fertilize cactus and succulents.** To achieve maximum growth give plants extra fertilizer and water during the warm months. Feed monthly from May to September with an all-purpose, water-soluble fertilizer diluted to half-strength. Water weekly.

□ **Provide shade.** South African succulents (aloes, ice plants, living stones), peppers, and tomatoes need extra shade during the hot summer months to prevent sunscald and increase fruit set on tomatoes and peppers. Suspend 70 percent shadecloth over plants; leave on until September.

□ **Thin trees.** Before the monsoon season arrives with its notorious high winds, remove weak and crossing branches from trees prone to blowing over. Zones 12–13: Chilean mesquite (*Prosopis chilensis*) is particularly susceptible. Thin up to 25 percent of the canopy so wind can move through the branches. —SCOTT CALHOUN

TIP FROM THE TEST GARDEN

Thinning fruit



If your fruit trees are starting to produce too heavily, remove excess immature fruits. Doing so now allows remaining fruits more room to grow and prevents branches from breaking under the weight.

When apples, pears, and stone fruits such as apricots, nectarines, peaches, and plums reach 1/2 inch in diameter, pick some off, leaving the remaining fruits spaced 6 to 10 inches apart along the branch. —JULIE CHAI