

Happy May Day!

When I lived in France May Day was a big deal. Overnight, tables appeared on every corner and vendors sold lilies of the valley in tiny bouquets to every passerby. People would buy these by the dozen to distribute to family, friends and colleagues. My son's dad's family had a tradition, shared by many a French family, and would drive to the nearest forest early in the morning to pick their own flowers. Of course, this family outing was always followed by a celebratory meal with lots of Champagne.

I have a rather large lily of the valley patch here on the Cape, one of the features of my garden that I particularly love. Its territory is slowly being encroached upon by my nemesis, the ivy, and it has been too cold this year for the blooms to flower on time. That being said, I do have dozens of bright green tubular stalks just waiting for the sun to kiss them enough so that they can emerge and make everything smell divine. I am also checking the cherry tree every day as I have a recipe to preserve cherry blossoms in salt which I want to try as soon as they are at their peak. Right now, they just look as though the tree has very large goosebumps.

Despite the fact that it has been particularly cold, April is the month of the year when I go a bit plant bonkers. In the past, as a city dweller, spring has always been the time when I bought pots of herbs for the kitchen windowsill or a few tomato plants for the balcony. I have also been known to sow lettuce in a large pot on the fire escape. Feel free to skip to the recipe links below as I am apparently even more plant crazy when I have access to an actual garden.

So, what have I accomplished so far? I dug up all of my mint and repotted it in a pot set in the ground to keep it from taking over the herb patch. This was more labor intensive than it sounds. I plan on doing that with my lime balm as well once I can work myself up to do so. I planted shiso and nira seedlings in the herb patch as nice additions to what is already growing there. I dug a bed for the bare root strawberry plants that I purchased and have those in the ground, covered in pine needles so they won't get cold if the weather goes to pot again. For now, most of them look good and already have a few leaves. I dug two new beds at the front of the house. One has been reserved for my son

and his girlfriend who plan on making a pollinator/cut flower bed for me and, in the other one, I have planted shishito pepper seedlings and dug three narrow trenches -- one which I filled with a mix of seven different kinds of lettuce seeds, the second which is devoted to arugula and the third planted with a mix of blue curled kale, broadleaf spinach, giant collard greens and Swiss chard, all to be picked in baby leaf form for salads. This plot is also where my tomato seedlings will be planted when they are old enough to leave my coffee table and their heating mat.

With the help of the kid who takes my trash to the dump, I erected an archway at the side of my house which I will train my morning glory seedlings to climb. They will get planted tomorrow morning. I have started to train the tangles of wild raspberries in the hedge to go where I want them to go, not where they think they should. Last but not least, a friend is sending me fifty wild garlic bare roots and I have started digging a bed for them in the back of the garden, underneath the holly trees where I think they will be happy. I hope that they will not arrive before my son gets home from college as planting fifty bare roots is not for the faint hearted and I am hoping for some unpaid labor to help with this project.

There is a downside to gardening though. Not everything takes, and it never ends. I planted some moonflower seedlings but am not holding out huge hope for a crop; they do not look happy at being outdoors and the turkeys seem to love them and there are a few less each day. I do ten minutes in the morning and ten minutes in the evening of weeding and yet the next day I have a whole new genus of unwanted green thing to remove. Such are the joys of a garden which is pesticide and chemical free in order to protect and attract pollinators and birds.

Speaking of which, all of the bird feeders and watering stations are out and believe me when I say that there are veritable avian cocktail parties at each of the five locations from dawn 'til dusk. Because it is nesting season, as well as being companionable, the birds are going at the bird seed like someone desperate to win pie eating contest in order to keep their strength up.

Despite all of this planting and growing, the grocery store here still seems stuck on end of winter vegetables and my recipes this week (and probably next) follow suit despite my mindset. Thank goodness for herb thinnings from right outside my front door and the hope of summer tomatoes each time I walk through the living room.

[Veggie "Club"](#)

[Baked Onion and Carrot Bowl](#)

[Herb Syrups for Summer Beverages](#)

[Herbed Carrot and Chickpea Salad Dressing](#)

[Crispy Okra "Croûtons"](#)

[Curried Roasted Vegetables with Curry Leaf Steamed Rice](#)