



Nature's Awakening

Each season offers a lush palette of plants that capture a specific moment in time. Early spring brings with it our first blooms, which build up to an intoxicating bounty of flowers. TEXT ERIN BENZAKEIN

This arrangement includes blush pink and yellow ranunculus from the greenhouse, below left, which complement the two-toned blossoms of honeysuckle, below right.

Of all the seasons, spring is by far my favorite because it is filled with so much hope. After a long, dreary winter, it's always a thrill to watch life return to the garden and to once again begin filling my house with flowers.

The bees arrive right on cue and make quick work of pollinating our fruit trees, and on sunny days the air is filled with a light aroma along with the sound of thousands of tiny workers buzzing away. Soon after, blossoms give way to young fruit, and the once-bare branches are cloaked in a new set of leaves. In the hedgerows lining our field, wild roses start to flower just as the peonies and earliest perennials arrive.

Behind our old house sits a one-car garage that I've transformed into a bright, cheerful flower studio. It has uneven floors; thin, rattling windows; and so many cracks in the walls that plants often make their way inside to bloom. When I first took over this space, I was embarrassed by how rundown it looked on the outside,

so I planted a dozen heirloom climbing roses and vines all around the perimeter. The plants flourished, and now I'm continually cutting away branches from the windows so my view remains clear.

Right outside the studio's back door is the most glorious honeysuckle vine that my eighty-five-year-old neighbor, Louise, gifted me shortly after we moved in. At the tail end of every spring, it explodes into a cloud of fragrant flowers, filling the studio and our backyard with the sweetest scent.

I'm always amazed by how much changes over the course of this season: In just three short months, our previously barren landscape transforms into a dense and richly layered sea of green. And while in early spring I have to hunt for even the tiniest treasures, by the end there's more abundance and beauty pouring out of the garden than I can possibly keep up with.

See *A Year in Flowers* by Erin Benzakein for more information.

PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS BENZAKEIN



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