

Back Yard Garden

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All photos Cynthia Brian

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microorganisms an opportunity to break down organic matter, I wanted to give myself a head start on learning as much as possible about using my new garden helper. An information booklet comes with the Biostack with recipes on how to accelerate the decomposition process. In addition, composting workshops are held for free throughout the county to assist residents to start growing a healthy garden. You can order a Biostack or find out about free classes by calling the Home Composting Hotline:(925) 906-1801.

My motto in life has always been "failure is fertilizer" because I don't believe in mistakes. Learning from life digging in the dirt, I figure that when something doesn't thrive, I throw it on the compost pile, then use the new earth to plant a fresh garden. Lessons from nature adapted to daily living, I guess you'd call that.

What goes in a composter, you are probably wondering? Just about everything organic is my response. I rarely use the garbage disposal in my kitchen because my system is two-fold. I have a five-gallon bucket outside my door for all the non-meat food scraps, vegetables, bread, and fruit to be fed to my barnyard animals. In addition, they eat my rose cuttings, weeds, and tree trimmings and all non-poisonous edible plants that I've discarded. Weekly I clean their manure mixed with hay and put it in the compost pile. Added to that goes all the leaves, lawn clippings, bark, coffee grinds, tea leaves, shredded newspaper, and any other organic material. I don't put dog or cat feces, meat scraps, bacon

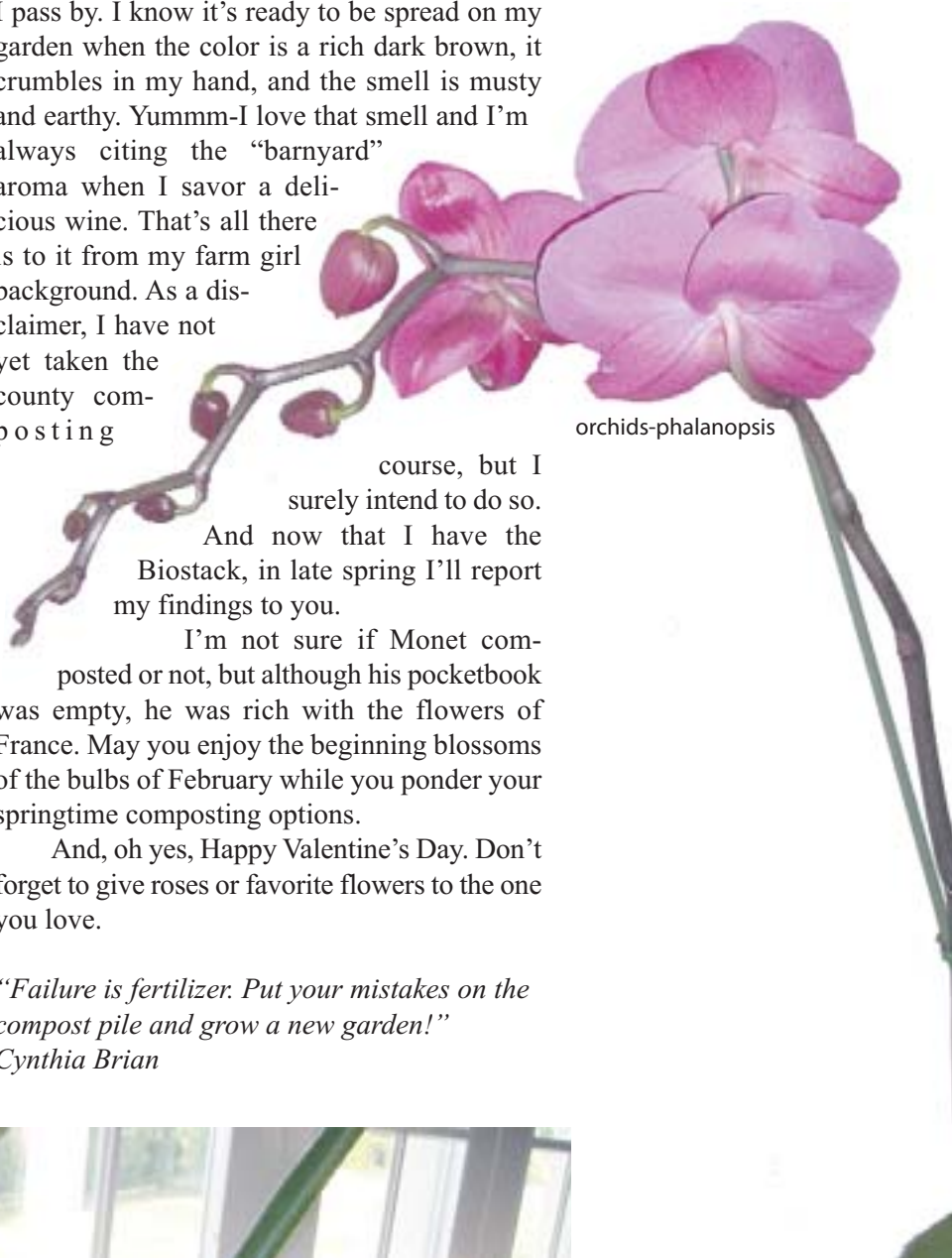
grease, plastics, or diseased plants into the pile. The pile gets turned with a pitch fork whenever I pass by. I know it's ready to be spread on my garden when the color is a rich dark brown, it crumbles in my hand, and the smell is musty and earthy. Yummm-I love that smell and I'm always citing the "barnyard" aroma when I savor a delicious wine. That's all there is to it from my farm girl background. As a disclaimer, I have not yet taken the county composting

course, but I surely intend to do so. And now that I have the Biostack, in late spring I'll report my findings to you.

I'm not sure if Monet composted or not, but although his pocketbook was empty, he was rich with the flowers of France. May you enjoy the beginning blossoms of the bulbs of February while you ponder your springtime composting options.

And, oh yes, Happy Valentine's Day. Don't forget to give roses or favorite flowers to the one you love.

"Failure is fertilizer. Put your mistakes on the compost pile and grow a new garden!"
 Cynthia Brian



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MORAGA GARDEN CLUB - Meets 9:30 a.m. Third Thursdays, Monthly - September-May.
 February 19, 2009: Bob Case from the California Native Plant Society will make a Powerpoint presentation on invasive plants in the garden. Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. Membership: Pat 925-376-4675.

Montelindo Garden Club Meeting and Speaker, Friday, February 20, Orinda Community Church, #10 Irwin Way, Orinda. Meeting at 9:30, Speaker at 10:30. Danville resident, Kirsten Yanker-Hansen, a well-known Bay Area landscape designer, will speak about winter gardens. The meeting is free and welcomes guests.
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