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hyacinth

Photo Cynthia Brian



daffodil (narcissus)

Photo Cynthia Brian



crocus

Photo Cynthia Brian

Cynthia's Digging Deep Gardening Guide for March

"He who wants to eat a good supper should eat a weed of every kind."

Italian proverb

March heralds weeds to eat! On a trail near you, you'll find fresh crunchy Miner's lettuce, pungent mustard, creek watercress, dandelion, and wild strawberries. Take photographs to determine if any of these wild delicacies are growing in your garden. If so, toss a spring salad of edible weeds and enjoy my childhood indulgence! We are gearing up for spring and there is more work now that spring has almost sprung. Aren't you excited?

- **PREPARE** your soil for the upcoming spring planting utilizing your new compost materials. You did start a compost pile or bin since reading my last column, didn't you?
- **COMPOST** all your organic materials as explained in last month's column. Remember, you may add your coffee beans, tea leaves, vegetable peelings, shredded newspaper, leaves, grass clippings, woodchips, chicken manure, and non-diseased weeds to your compost bin.
- **CHECK** your oak trees for the pesky oak moth larvae. The caterpillars are quite beautiful with black and yellow markings. If you think you have Monarch butterflies, think again. Call in the pros unless you like bald trees.
- **MOW** your lawns weekly. We didn't have much to do with lawns in the winter but with the increased light and warmer days, our grasses are growing rapidly. Think of mowing as exercise!
- **FEED** you lawns with high-nitrogen fertilizer and pull any noticeable weeds. (If they are dandelions, they ARE edible as long as you haven't sprayed with a toxic material).
- **SOD** or **SEED** now when the weather is dry. If seeding, you may need to cover your lawn with netting as our flying friends, the birds, truly enjoy feasting on newly planted lawns.
- **FERTILIZE** this month. The winter rains have drained the soils of needed nutrients. It's up to you to feed all plants including fruit trees, annuals, roses, and shrubs. Mature trees need their nitrogen booster. Wait to fertilize rhododendrons and camellias with an acid fertilizer until next month when they are finished blooming.
- **DIVIDE** perennials such as phlox, day lilies, agapanthus, and yarrow. Give to friends or find a new space in your place.
- **PEST ALERT** for the creepy crawlies this month as the weather warms. Use a hose to spray aphids or a spray gun with a little household detergent. Vigilance is necessary with the slugs, snails, and earwigs that munch on the new sprouts.
- **NETTING** is a must to keep birds and small animals from eating your newly planted vegetables or color spots.
- **MULCH** to conserve moisture for the summer drought. We didn't really get enough rain this year to lower our water bills, so make sure to place three to four inches of mulch in your garden. When July arrives, you'll be able to afford that extra hose!
- **REMOVE** camellia blossoms that fall to the ground as the spent blooms are not good for the mother plant. Add to your compost pile.
- **VEGETABLE** planting time is here for potatoes, herbs, beets, peas and carrots, peppers, and eggplant. I love broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower and there is still time to grow these edibles which may help prevent cancer.
- **CHOOSE** bulbs for your summer satisfaction including begonias, dahlias, gladiolus, watsonia, and callas.

Community Marketing, Does It Work?

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In Orinda, another example is the venerable Orinda Motors owned by Allen Pennebaker. Allen, in conjunction with his marketing strategist John Vanek, continues a proud tradition of community service. "This is our way of giving back to the community that makes us successful," says Vanek, "it is not something for which a precise return on investment can be quantified, but we've always seen it as the right thing to do."

Orinda Motors is reaching out to the entire Lamorinda community and has joined both the Moraga and Lafayette Chambers. "There, we meet people we can work with and support each other," says Vanek, "it is important to keep the money in the community and spend it where it will come back to you."

Keeping the money in the community is something that

Bill Snider, owner of Moraga Hardware, couldn't agree with more. "It's not only about shopping Lamorinda first," says Snider, who actively supports local schools and clubs, "it's about supporting local business owners who give back to the community every day."

But Snider has concerns about the effectiveness of community marketing. "When people lose their jobs they look at every way possible to save money. When they need something they may not consider who's supporting their schools or their local clubs. They go where they think they will save money." Snider says that people too often have not enough consideration for value added service, community contribution or the long term benefits of supporting locally-owned businesses. "They may not realize that the true cost of a product is not what you pay for at the reg-


ister," he adds.

Andy Scheck, a marketing expert and publisher of the Lamorinda Weekly, agrees that community marketing is not a panacea for all businesses at all times. "You need to consider how many customers you need per day and how quickly you need to contact them," says Scheck, "for example, if you have a two-day sale on milk, community marketing will not do you much good; but if you are a mortgage broker, networking in your community is key."

Scheck adds that word of mouth is often more useful to businesses that provide an experience people like to talk about, like a restaurant. "Community marketing is a long term investment that's very important, but most of the time, it is only a part of each business' unique marketing mix," he concludes.

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