

# In the Back Yard

## -A Sure Cure for Spring Fever

Happy Gardening to You!  
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 The Goddess Gardener  
 www.GoddessGardener.com  
 Cynthia@gardeningwithcynthia.com  
 Cynthia Brian is available for presentations and consultations by calling 925-377-STAR.

Once you have recorded your answers, you'll want to drive around your neighborhood. Lamorinda boasts many micro-climates, but if you choose plants that thrive in areas near your home, most likely the same plants will do well in your garden as well. If you choose exotic plants and they don't survive, chalk up the experience as an experiment. As I'm famous for quoting, "there is no failure in gardening because failure is fertilizer. Put your mistakes on the compost pile, and grow a new garden." Here's a selection of my favorite plants that generally grow well in Lamorinda and can be planted as soon as the last frost is over and the soil has warmed. This list is by no means complete. Do visit your local nursery to see what is hardy and in stock for spring.



Photos Cynthia Brian

<i>Achillea</i>	<i>Helleborus</i>
<i>Anemone</i>	<i>Heuchera</i>
<i>Artemisia</i>	<i>Hollyhock</i>
<i>Aquilegia</i>	<i>Hosta</i>
<i>Aster</i>	<i>Hydrangea</i>
<i>Astilbes</i>	<i>Lavandula</i>
<i>buddleia</i>	<i>Liriope Muscari</i>
<i>Campanula</i>	<i>Lupine</i>
<i>Clematis</i>	<i>Monarda</i>
<i>Coreopsis</i>	<i>Ornamental</i>
<i>Daylily</i>	<i>Grasses</i>
<i>Delphinium</i>	<i>Pansy</i>
<i>Dianthus</i>	<i>Penstemon</i>
<i>Dicentra</i>	<i>Phlox</i>
<i>Digitalis</i>	<i>Rudbeckia</i>
<i>Euphorbia</i>	<i>Salvia</i>
<i>Fall bulbs</i>	<i>Sedum</i>
<i>Fern</i>	<i>Shasta Daisy</i>
<i>Gaillardia</i>	<i>Veronica</i>
<i>Geraniums</i>	<i>Viola</i>



### Read the Labels

Fertilizing begins this month. Do you know what N-P-K mean? Plants need different elements to boost their growth and blooms. N is for Nitrogen, which stimulates leaf formation and gives plants their healthy green glow. P is for

Phosphorus, which encourages root formation. Sturdy roots supply beautiful flowers and fruit set. K is for Potassium, which promotes hardiness and disease resistance. The three numbers that appear on fertilizer labels indicate the percentage of Nitrogen, Phos-

phorous, or Potassium. For example a 5-10-15 means that the package of fertilizer includes five percent Nitrogen, ten percent Phosphorus, and fifteen percent Potassium, also called Potash. A listing is required by law on all organic fertilizers as

well as synthetic and chemical products.

Spring is the time of new birth. We get energized and excited as the weather warms. Get off the couch, get into the garden and dig deep. The season of life is beginning anew.

### Cynthia's Digging Deep Gardening Guide for April

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt." Margaret Atwood  
 Now the fun begins. You actually get your hands dirty. Before you start your spring gardening, make sure to clean and sharpen your tools. Spring forward and cure the fever.

- PRUNE wisteria before it leafs out to promote flowering.
- REMOVE old foliage around the new growth of perennials. Keep compost a few inches away from stems to prevent disease and rotting.
- PLANT frost tender plants such as bougainvillea, hibiscus, ground covers, and citrus as the weather warms. Also choose from the list I provided to add a bit of color. Try planting tomatoes in containers.
- RESEED lawns that are sparse or put out new sod.
- CUTTINGS can be taken from geraniums, carnations, fuchsias and many succulents.
- START seeds of your favorite flowers indoors if the weather is still chilly, then transplant outside as the soil warms.
- BAIT the snails and slugs who will hungrily devour any new seedlings. Pick them off plants by hand, use copper barriers, or get them drunk with bowls of beer.
- HOSE off any aphids. Place paper-cups around transplants to discourage cutworms.
- BUY ladybugs at your garden center for natural insect hunting.
- DANDELIONS are edible and nutritious. Wash and add to a salad. If they are overtaking your lawn, spray with vinegar.
- FERTILIZE fall-planted bushes, citrus, roses, lawns, and ground covers. All annuals require a monthly shot of fertilizer. Learn what the N-P-K mean and read all labels before applying any purchased product.
- FEED your rhododendrons now and again after blooming in May.
- FLOAT camellias in a bowl. Camellias are in their full glory for just a few more weeks, so bring them indoors to enjoy.
- PREPARE your vegetable garden for planting. Add the compost from your bins and enrich the soil.
- ROSES are blooming again. Make sure to deadhead to keep the fresh buds coming.
- SUMMER annuals are now stocked in the nurseries. Get there early for the best selection.
- COMPOSTING is still important. Keep adding to your pile or bin, turning, and watering for rapid processing. Kitchen scraps are good for composting. Re-using natural materials and applying organic mulches is safer for all living organisms including you.
- CUT branches from your flowering fruit trees to use in the house as natural mood lifters. A flower a day keeps depression away!
- CHILDREN love the outdoors. Dig together and teach them about photosynthesis and pollination.

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## Not to be missed

### GARDEN TOURS and EVENTS for April and May

**Thursday, April 16th**-Moraga Garden Club will be hosting its annual salad luncheon April 16th for members and their guests. Cynthia Brian will be the featured speaker. The topic will be 'Please Eat the Daisies.' New members are being accepted. If you are interested, please contact Pat 376-4675.

**Friday, April 17th** -Montelindo Garden Club Meeting- 9:30am, Speaker at 10:30. The meeting is free and welcomes guests. The meeting location will be changed for April only to The Gardens at Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Dr., Walnut Creek. Speaker: Brian the Orchid Guy will speak about Orchids. Website: [www.montelindogarden.com](http://www.montelindogarden.com) email: [montelindogarden@aol.com](mailto:montelindogarden@aol.com)

**Saturday, May 2nd**-Through the Garden Gate Garden Tour-10am - 3pm, rain or shine. Moraga Junior Women's Club's 6th Annual Through the Garden Gate 2009 Garden Tour and fundraiser for UCSF Children's Hospital Child Life Services Showcasing 6 spectacular Lamorinda Gardens. \$30/Ticket Box Lunch \$10. Buy tickets at [www.moragajuniors.org](http://www.moragajuniors.org). Tickets

also available through Moraga Junior Women's Club members or at Across the Way, McDonnell Nursery, and Orchard Nursery.

**Sunday, May 3rd**-Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. As usual, the free self-guided tour will take place on the first Sunday in May. Sixty beautiful native plant gardens will be open. (Please DO NOT visit these gardens on Sat., May 2, as the hosts will be busy preparing for the event on the following day.) Reservations required. More information at: <http://www.bringingbackthenatives.net/selftour.html>

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