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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian Starting Fresh!

By Cynthia Brian

Winter waves with the beauty of barren bark on deciduous trees. Photo Cynthia Brian

Now, more than ever, every family needs to start with a fresh page of al fresco renewal. According to the Mayan calendar, 2012 portends the end of the world as we know it. Being a history major taught me that although it is important to learn from the past, it is up to us to forge our futures. Every January we have the opportunity to begin anew. I predict that 2012 is the beginning of an era of awakening and starting fresh. With that thought in mind, my gift to readers this year will be improved health in body, mind, and spirit with regular tips on how you and your family can discover the wonders of the natural world by getting outside with unstructured open-air activities to allow the imagination to run wild and creativity to soar.

Whether it's pruning roses or walking in the woods, by exchanging screen time for green time, your internal clock will regulate your body to be alert during the day and tired at night. Numerous studies show that gardening fights obesity as well as sleep deprivation by offering a full body work out that builds strong muscle mass while improving cognitive skills, providing relaxation, increasing stress reduction, and developing deeper sleep patterns. This year, let's plan and plant our meals for year-round plot to plate, potager to pot, patch to platter originality. Put in peas, kale, Swiss chard, broccoli, lettuces, and Bok Choy to reap the riches of vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals, low in calories and packed with nutrients every body craves. When we teach kids how to grow their own dinners, we introduce them to a whimsical wonderful world of wellness and wealth through the joys of garden sowing and harvesting.

Let 2012 be the year that you tap into the power of plants, grow your own food, and nurture your natural instinct to bond with the land. By being mindful of our fragile earth connection, we restore balance to our neighborhoods and community. It's time to get off the couch, power down the phones and computers, turn off the flat screen, and let our surround sound be that of the chirping birds, howling winds, and trickling creeks.

Get up, get out, and get dirty. It's Digging Deep time and we're starting fresh. Welcome to a bright new year.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant." Anne Bradstreet
1612-1672, Poet

As winters dark cloak blankets January days, gardeners are given the luxurious time to contemplate their spring and summer gardens. Curled up in front of the fireplace with a cup of herbal tea, we sift through our piles of catalogues, dreaming of fragrant blossoms, tasty herbs, and sweet vegetables in the months to come. After a snooze, it's time to leap into tomorrow by getting yourself and your children outside for some face time with Mother Nature.

- SPRAY your fruit trees and roses with the final dormant spray of horticultural oil to kill overwintering insect eggs.
- PICK a sunny window in your kitchen and plant an all season herb garden to star in your culinary creations.
- SAVE trees by recycling Christmas cards as gift tags or tree decorations for next year.
- PRUNE crepe myrtles and roses this month. Canes from the roses may be shared with friends. I will again be

offering complimentary rose canes to

anyone who is interested at the end of January. Email me for information at Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com.

- TERRARIUMS have made a fashion come back. I remember making terrariums for friends and families when I was in college! Soil-less tillandsia, humid loving orchids, and rainforest ferns are terrific terrarium selections.

- HEIGHTEN harmony with nature by reducing or eliminating chemical usage in your yard.

- CREATE a backyard habitat for birds, butterflies, and beneficial bugs.

- REPLENISH bird feeders with nutritious seeds keeping our avian visitors nearby while supplementing their dietary requirements during the cold season.

- MULCH your beds with three inches of organic matter.

- PLANT bare roots now, including roses, fruit trees, berry bushes, and vines.

- PERK up the dreary landscape with color spots of primroses, violas, and pansies.

- STUDY plant catalogues for ideas on new specimens to order or buy at your garden center.

- COMPOST, compost, compost. You'll enrich your garden while saving the environment, too.

- CELEBRATE Three Wise Kings Day on January 6th (also known as the Epiphany) by surprising the children with fresh oranges and tangerines plucked

from your tree. It's been a family custom in our household for over a century.

- SPROUT onions and chives in your kitchen by cutting the greens, then putting the roots in a glass of water.

Within a week you'll have fresh greens for your salads and soups. This is a simple, fun growing opportunity for kids! (Change the water daily)

- START a new garden project plan. Consider trellising for vertical growing.

- RECORD your landscaping escapades by writing in a garden journal this week. Save your journals to track trends and seasons.

- REDUCE watering on houseplants as they rest for a winter's nap.

- RESOLVE to spend a minimum of thirty minutes per day outside. Studies indicated that every person needs at least fifteen minutes of outdoor

sunlight daily for necessary Vitamin D replenishment. An additional fifteen is for frolicking.

- TAKE oodles of videos and photos of your garden and children. When you look back in a few years, you'll be shocked at how quickly both have grown and changed.

- THANKS to reader Jo for emailing me this note regarding our feathered friends: "When the birds eat the berries in the winter and then are seen flying "drunk", they are, in fact, not drunk on fermented berries. Birds are like airplanes with specific weight/balance properties. When they stuff themselves in a feeding frenzy, they are out of balance and haven't learned to fly straight with the change in center of gravity."

Wishing everyone a bright, cheery, healthy, wealthy 2012 as we grow into the people we are meant to be. My gratitude to you all for the role you play in the creation of my garden stories. Happy New Year!

Happy Gardening to You!

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Cynthia Brian

The Goddess Gardener

Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com

www.GoddessGardener.com

925-377-7827

My virtual door is always open. I am available as a speaker and consultant. Feel free to contact me.



Fabulous ferns perk up a shady walkway. Photos Cynthia Brian



A cheery container of red and white cyclamen, blue pansies, and white alyssum signal the Presidential election year of 2012.



A basket of freshly picked Meyer lemons makes delicious tea rich in vitamin C to ward off colds. *Tillandsia, a genus in the Bromeliad family, is an air plant. They are wonderful specimens for terrariums.* *A spider weaves its magical web while protecting the garden from intruding pests.*



Cymbidium orchids bloom in the January outdoors.



A calla lily grows by the babbling brook.



After cutting shallots or small onions, put the roots in a glass of water. Delicious, edible green sprouts thrive. Photo C. Brian

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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