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Natural Attractions Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



The pink/purple blossoms of Heather brighten a winter landscape. Photos Cynthia Brian

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes." Marcel Proust

While many people are swooshing down the slopes or basking on balmy beaches, in February, gardeners are forecasting future flowering. We peruse seed catalogues hunting for those special heirlooms and old fashioned favorites while dreaming of trips to nurseries to fill our flourishing spring grounds. Although I admit to thoroughly enjoying the surf and the snow, whenever and wherever I travel, I make it a point to wander through public gardens, as well as any private ones that offer an invitation. With camera and notebook in hand, I have an exhilarating field day as I discover unusual displays, exotic rarities, and humorous descriptions. How can you top witnessing tree bark that looks like the top of a tortoise shell or shrieking at the sight of a snake plant slithering through the tropical forest? My photo folder has more shots of flora than of people. While rambling through the greenery, I fantasize about borrowing ideas that will find passage into my vegetative projects.

This year I've dedicated Digging Deep to getting you up, out, and moving. When the weather is dreary, blustery,

and cold, a great way to combine nature with nature is to visit a botanical garden (see list on page D10). If you are planning a winter get away, include a side trip to a flower show or regional garden as part of your itinerary. If you are staying home, delightful public gardens, conservatories, arboretums, and plant destinations await your exploration in a relaxing day trip within a couple of hours driving distance from Lamorinda's landscapes. From tropical paradises to dry oasis, I've dug up delightful display playgrounds anticipating your arrival. Participate in guided tours, educational programs, hands-on workshops, propagation classes, horticulture seminars, green living demonstrations, or just amble at your own pace. Many have activities for children and most have gift shops or nurseries where you can purchase rare specialty species. Some venues charge a nominal fee while others are free. All will inspire and ignite your love of Mother Nature while entertaining and informing. Grab your loved ones, hat, gloves, camera, picnic, sketchbook, and enjoy the splendor of distinctive backyards with fresh eyes.

This is by no means a complete list of all the remarkable offerings available. Wineries, bed and breakfasts, historic homes, regional or city parks boast meandering brooks, enchanting paths, potagers, rose gardens and countless opportunities for botanical entertainment. I've been delighted to be a speaker and autograph my books at many of these locations and have worked as an actor in several. Work and play, play and work.

This Valentine's give yourself and your loved ones the gift of natural attractions. Even for the timid traveler, it will be love at first sight.

Public Gardens:

Arboretum at University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, Ca. 95064
831-427-2998
www.arboretum.ucsc.edu
Open Year Round. Fee.

Ruth Bancroft Gardens
1552 Bancroft Rd.
Walnut Creek, Ca. 94598
925-944-9352
www.ruthbancroftgarden.org
Open Year Round. Fee.

Berkeley Rose Garden
Department of Parks and Recreation
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, Ca. 94704
510-981-6700
www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/parks

Open Year Round. Free.

Cooper Molera Historic Garden
525 Polk Street
Monterey, Ca. 93940
831-649-7111
www.parks.ca.gov/mshp
Open Year Round. Free.

Elizabeth Gamble Garden
1431 Waverly Street
Palo Alto, Ca. 94301
650-329-1356
www.gamblegarden.org
Open Year Round. Free.

Filoli (I shot the movie, Heaven Can Wait, here. Three months of exquisitely manicured horticultural perfection!)

86 Canada Rd.
Woodside, Ca. 94062
650-364-8300
www.filoli.org
Seasonal. Fee.

Gardens at Lakeside Park
666 Bellevue Ave.
Oakland, Ca. 94610
510-339-2818
Open Year Round. Free.

Gerda Isenberg Native Plant Garden
Yerba Buena Nursery
]19500 Skyline Blvd.
Woodside, Ca. 94062
650-851-1668
www.yerbabuenanursery.com
Open Year Round. Free.

Japanese Tea Gardens
75 Hagiwara Tea Garden Dr.
San Francisco, Ca. 94118
415-752-1171
www.japaneseteagardensf.com
Open Year Round. Fee.

Luther Burbank Home & Gardens
Santa Rosa Ave. at
Sonoma Ave.
PO Box 1678
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95402
707-524-5445
www.lutherburbank.org
Open Year Round. Free.

Markham Regional Arboretum Society
1202 La Vista Ct.
Concord, Ca. 94521
925-681-2968
www.markhamarboretum.org
Open Year Round. Free.

Matanzas Creek Winery
6097 Bennett Valley Rd.
Santa Rosa, Ca. 95404
800-590-6464
www.matanzascreek.com
Open Year Round. Free.

Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens
18220 N. Hwy. 1

Fort Bragg, Ca. 95437
707-964-4352
www.gardenbythesea.org
Open Year Round. Free.

Niles Rose Garden
36501 Niles Blvd.
Fremont, Ca. 94536
510-792-2923
Open Year Round. Free.
San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum
Golden Gate Park
9th Ave. & Lincoln Way
San Francisco, Ca. 94122
415-661-1316
www.sfbotanicalgarden.org
Open Year Round. Free

Shinn Historical Park & Arboretum
1251 Peralta Blvd.
Fremont, Ca. 95636
510-656-7702
Open Year Round. Free.

The Gardens at Heather Farm
1540 Marchbanks Drive
Walnut Creek, Ca 94596
www.gardenshf.org
(925) 947-1678
Open Year Round. Free

University of California Botanical Garden at Berkeley
200 Centennial Dr. #5045
Berkeley, Ca. 94720
510-643-2755
www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu
Open Year Round. Free.

If you enjoy garden shows, these are the three upcoming major exhibitions in three states:
Northwest Flower & Garden Show, "A Floral Symphony", Washington State Convention Center, Seattle, Wash.,
February 8-12. www.gardenshow.com

Portland Yard, Garden & Patio Show, Oregon Convention Center, Portland, Ore., -February 17-19, 2012, www.ygpgshow.com

San Francisco Flower & Garden Show, "Gardens for a Green Earth", San Mateo Event Center, San Mateo,
Calif., March 21-25, 2012, www.sfgardenshow.com

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

"I've had enough of gardening-I'm just about ready to throw in the trowel." Anonymous

If you think you are done with garden chores because it's winter, think again! Besides perusing the seed catalogues and reading home improvement magazines, pruning takes center stage this month in the "to do" list. Because of last month's warm weather, roses, fruit trees, and vines may have been given a short reprieve. Get out there now and take care of business. Save a rose stem or two for your Valentine and give the rest of the canes to friends. My rose canes will be available to you for free beginning February 6th.

Email me, Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com for details.

- BEAT the winter doldrums by forcing bulbs indoors. All you need is a sunny window, a jar, water, and bulbs. Try Paperwhite Narcissus, Amaryllis, and Lily of the Valley
- RELIEVE sunburn by cutting a tomato in half and rubbing the tomato on the burn. Allow the juices to dry.
- STOP bleeding on your hands or arms after pruning those rose bushes by saving teabags. Place the cool teabags on the cuts and they'll heal swiftly.
- POWER up your palate by planting heart smart greens such as kale, collard, and mustard for super sources of fiber, phytonutrients, electrolytes, and antioxidants.
- RAISE your happiness quotient by placing a bouquet of blooms by your bed to boost your optimism and enthusiasm.
- MIX perennials into bulb beds for longer lasting splashes of color. Fern and hosta are excellent companions as filler foliage.
- PICK UP a Rainforest Ecological Sprinkler which breaks-up water droplets to improve delivery of water to the root zone,

preventing pooling and running off. Lowers water consumption and covers up to 2000 feet with an adjustable spray.

- LEAVE moles alone. Although their runs may be unsightly for a short period, moles are meat eaters and not interested in

your plants. They actually munch on snail larvae, harmful insects, and grubs so think of them as garden helpers.

- OCCUPY a green philosophy and plant a new cultivar, perhaps an impressively colored Echinacea "Solar Flair" or the Korean ground cover fern, "Sohuksan."

- REFRAIN from dressing broken limbs or injuries on trees. Wound wood will develop on trees to protect them. By putting a commercial salve on the damaged tissue, you may be inviting infections and pests.

- TAKE a trip to a botanical garden, public garden, flower show, or arboretum for inspiration, entertainment, and family fun.

- MOVE your backside off the couch and into the backyard.

- DON'T depend on the groundhogs to determine an early spring. When male groundhogs awake from hibernation they

are not looking for their shadows but for females. They are the original Romeos!

- TRANSPLANT deciduous shrubs before the buds swell.

- APPLY final application of dormant spray to fruit trees.

- TILL your vegetable garden now to break up clods and help eliminate weeds.

- FEED houseplants when you notice signs of new leaf growth.

- PLANT strawberries.

- ADD curled parsley and garlic chives to a bed near your kitchen for all year beauty and culinary flavoring.

- TURN your compost pile.

- FEED the birds to keep them attached to your garden. Remove old nests as most avian fellows prefer to build new houses each year.

- CLEAN and sharpen your tools in preparation for spring.

- SAY "I Love You" with a colorful bouquet, a potted orchid, or a spray of fragrant posies. Flowers and amour go together.

My daffodils began blooming on January 6th and the jonquils are at their peak right now. Spring is just around the corner.

This month I salute groundhogs and Cupids. Happy Valentine's Day. Let your arrows fly.

Happy Gardening to You!

(c)2012

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



The pitcher plant drinks from its cup to satisfy it's water needs.



Pink Lantern lights up a wintery day in the Strybing Arboretum.



Seaside succulents.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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