

Extraordinary Ordinary

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
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Hummingbirds are constant companions of my four o'clocks. Unlike their namesake, they don't keep time in my garden, blooming at ten in the morning instead of four in the afternoon. On our country road when I was growing up on the farm, we could tell the time of day by the four o'clocks. They always opened at exactly 4 p.m. Obviously that source memory didn't continue in my heirloom seeds. Although they are considered annuals, they reseed every year producing bigger, better, more fragrant blooms that kill the black beetles and entice the butterflies.

Although many people call them an invasive weed, Mexican primroses are welcome invaders in my large landscape. Growing wildly with diaphanous white or pink petals that grow in any type of inhospitable soil, they naturalize and may take over if left to their own accord. Be forewarned, this may be an extraordinary plant you don't want, especially in a small garden, as once it takes root, Mexican primroses are almost impossible to eradicate. (Unless you bring in the deer!)

What fruit grows inside its own paper sack tasting like a cross between pineapple, tomato, and lime? It's the tomatillo, a distant cousin of the gooseberry and tomato used especially in Mexican salsas and savory sauces. Tomatillos thrive on neglect and produce hundreds of delicious fruits from late summer to late fall. You'll know when it's time to harvest when the papery husks start to pop. Pick and store for six weeks or more, removing the husk only when ready to eat raw or cook. They reseed themselves supplying the essential ingredient for a sassy salsa verde and tangy salad fresca.

Alas, all of my extraordinary ordinary garden delights are also favorite foods, especially the Mexican primrose, of my dear deer. Currently three bucks, a doe, and her twins have taken up residence in my front yard. They have devoured and decimated these underrated beauties, thus I have been forced to grow them exclusively in the fenced back territory.

As much as I admire the antlered nomads, I deem eating my plants violent acts. If I could consider the house finches that hatched in a nest built in my wreath on my back door "sexy," perhaps sponsors would be interested in a resurrection of *Live Your Dreams* as a garden program featuring extraordinary, ordinary plants doing what they love!

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