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## Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian A New Leaf

By Cynthia Brian



Meyer lemons are ripe and juicy. Photos Cynthia Brian

furnishing designers are taking their cues from nature with brighter, bolder colors and textures that trees, flowers, birds, bees, rocks, streams, and anything from the natural world uniquely provide. We have the opportunity to enhance our lives, increase our positivity, and boost our immune systems through our horticultural endeavors.

From eco-scaping to native plants, living green walls to houseplants, herbs to edibles, together we will energize our lifestyles, lower our blood pressures, and freshen our indoor and outdoor spaces. In casual conversations, people often tell me they want to know and not wonder where their food comes from. My response is if you want to know for certain, grow your own! You and only you know what is in your soil. By going organic and being a conscientious steward of our earth, we will not only be sustainable, we'll be healthier and subsequently happier.

Plant thornless and dwarf raspberries and beautiful blueberries as landscape shrubs for a double whammy of attractiveness and wellbeing. Want to give yourself the gift of super nutrients in a bush? Instead of paying high prices for the juices or dried fruit of goji berries, plant The Vitamin Berries(tm) Collection from Proven Winners. The company has introduced Sweet Lifeberry and Big Lifeberry which boast a plethora of purple flowers followed by juicy red berries gracing long branched shrubs. The bushes are showy, easy to grow with the fruit ripening in autumn. Fresh or frozen, this exotic super fruit will reap health benefits all season.

Herbs are the gateway drug of gardening. If you think you have a black thumb, plant rosemary, oregano, or Russian sage and you'll soon be singing the praises of green while enjoying the flavors of savory dishes. For cleaner indoor air, buy orchids, palms, and peace lilies to scrub away the toxins. Do you love the exotic flavors of Thai food? Plant a kaffir lime with hourglass-looking double leaves, or take a cutting of a green lemongrass stalk from an Asian grocer to root in water. Heirloom seeds including tomatoes, eggplants, and squash, Canterbury bells, delphinium, foxglove, and many other fruits and vegetables may be from old-fashioned gardens, but they are the future of gardens today. Check out [www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com) from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company offering over 1,400 seed varieties from 70 countries.

Shatter the limits, blow up the barriers, and multiply the possibilities with soulful mindfulness. Hurray, it's a brand new year and we're planting a new leaf!

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

"Here's to the bright new year,  
and a fond farewell to the old;  
here's to the things that are yet to come,  
and to the memories that we hold..."

Winston Churchill said, "The optimist sees opportunities in every danger, while the pessimist sees danger in every opportunity!" As gardeners we'll look at life from a positive perspective. Failure is fertilizer. If something doesn't grow, we pull it out and dump it in the compost pile to start a new garden. Winter rains water our yards but won't dampen our spirits. We may not be able to choose exactly what happens to us, but we can decide how we respond to any occurrence. We'll turn our lemons into lemonade to enrich our souls. Here's to a bright new year with plenty of cheer. Welcome to 2013.

"The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul." G. K. Chesterton

The world didn't end Dec. 21, 2012 as prophesied and there are new seeds sprouting as we birth the year of 2013. With a rosy pink zinnia, the cover of the January issue of Reader's Digest shouts, "Cheer Up! 17 Reasons It's a Great Time to Be Alive." This year will be a time of optimism, a time for channeling our inner gardener. In the Chinese tradition, this will be the year of the water snake. I have renamed our next 365 days "A New Leaf" as we dig deeper to add beauty and wellness to our lives through gardening.

As you look around, you'll notice that everyone is "wired" with smart phones, apps, texting, Skyping, and the latest gadgets that supposedly make our lives easier, faster, stress-free. But according to reports from the Garden Media Group, what people are really searching for is a connection with Mother Nature. People want to be happy and the joy of gardening offers satisfaction. Being in nature, whether it is walking the paths at the Lafayette Reservoir or digging a hole in your yard to plant your redbud offers a bliss that is not found on Facebook, Tumblr, or Twitter. Fashion and

- RECYCLE your Christmas tree. Make sure to remove all decorations, stands, lights, and tinsel. Check your local curbside service for pick up dates.
- CONTINUE composting. Yes, it's January, but composting is necessary every day in every way to suppress weeds and add active organic matter to the soil.
- PACK in the phytonutrients with a green winter soup. Pick fresh kale, spinach, parsley, Swiss chard, broccoli, and beet tops, saute with onions, garlic, vegetable stock, white wine, blend and enjoy. Yummy!
- COZY up your interiors with a magnificent, colorful amaryllis from South Africa or the Netherlands.
- COOK quince in a simple syrup and add rose hips for a healthy boost.
- PRUNE roses, geraniums, vines, and crepe myrtle trees heavily before the end of the month. This is the time to cut back wisteria and passion vines to discourage overgrowth and accumulation of decaying layers.
- PICK up all fallen camellia blooms to avoid disease.
- ENHANCE the longevity of your holiday plants like poinsettias and Christmas cactus by fertilizing every two weeks. You can keep them colorful and beautiful through May or longer.
- WATER indoor plants more frequently if you have central heat. Test soil moisture by plunging a pencil in the pot. If muddy when retracted, don't water. If pencil comes out dry, it's time for a drink.
- MIST plants when they seem droopy. Heaters zap moisture out of plants just like it dries your skin. Misting in the morning and evening provides relief.
- PERUSE seed catalogues in the dark dreary days: [www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com), [www.kitchengardenseeds.com](http://www.kitchengardenseeds.com), and [www.bountifulgardens.org](http://www.bountifulgardens.org) are a great start!
- PLANT Chinese cabbage, bok choy, asparagus, eggplant, dill, celery, borage, kohlrabi, lettuce, arugula, snow peas, and indoor flower seeds to germinate for spring sowing.
- REDUCE erosion with three inches of wood chips or other mulches.
- BUY your bare root roses locally for a better selection. Your nursery will be able to advise you on the latest best buys.
- SOAK bare-root fruit trees, roses, and vines in a bucket of water for a full day before planting. Anything in a cardboard box must be removed to spread out the roots. Cut off any damaged or broken roots.
- WARM someone you love all winter long with dream-inspiring spearmint tea from your herb planter.
- PROVIDE food for our feathered friends throughout winter to keep them happy living in your garden.
- PICK tangerines and Washington navel oranges at their sweetest in January and February.
- TRANSPLANT azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons now as this is the safest time to move them without inhibiting growth.
- PROTECT your precious plants from Jack Frost by covering them with cloth or plastic at night or moving containers closer to the house or overhangs.
- PLUCK snails and slugs or trap with plates of beer to keep the damage at a minimum.

The leafless trees signal that winter is in full swing as we begin to prepare for the birth of spring. Admire the bare bark. What are we waiting for? Put a smile on your face and spring in your step. Happy New Year! Let's get growing!

Happy Gardening to You!

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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.



Cymbidium orchids start blooming outdoors and are great in or out.



Violas and pansies perk up a dreary landscape.



Spider orchids are beautiful indoors in January.



Swiss chard is an excellent green for winter sautes.

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