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## Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

By Cynthia Brian



When pruned properly, crepe myrtles make a dramatic statement in the landscape. Photos Cynthia Brian

"A gardener is one for whom the prospect of the future is not threatening, but happy." - Anne Morrow Lindbergh

Welcome to a new year filled with abundant cheer and probably too many deer! Okay, an accomplished poet I am not, however, I am a dedicated nature girl. I look forward to being your personal gardening guide every month. Most everyone begins January with big dreams, expansive goals, and resolutions to be and do better. We want to lose weight, get a better job, find our Romeo/Juliette, or move to our dream location. Statistics indicate that by Feb. 1, four out of five of those sacred resolutions have died like a plant that isn't watered. Why do we give up? Because it's hard work to change, morph, and grow. It takes dedication, perseverance, and a deep commitment to imagine magnificence and know we deserve to receive the best. Gardeners have the strength of character and the desire to make the world a more beautiful place, one seedling at a time. We are optimists. Even in a drought, or the long December freeze, our glasses remain half full. We know that failure is fertilizer for the compost pile. I look forward to meeting each landscape challenge with you this year with tenacity and courage. We are gardeners and we are strong. Most of all, we are not threatened and we are super happy. Together we will grow where we are planted!

- CREATE a budget for your gardening desires for the year. By including everything you want to do in your private paradise, you will be armored to meet the unexpected.
- THINK next winter harvest by putting a few different squash varieties on your spring planting list. Flavors, textures, and growing times vary. Consider Bush Delicata (80 days), Gold Nugget (95 days), and Sweet Mama (84 days), all appropriate for smaller garden spaces.
- ALLOW the bright berries of cotoneaster, pyrocantha, holly, purple beautyberry, and viburnum to remain on the bush to give nourishment to the hungry birds.
- REFRAIN from pruning any foliage damaged by the December freeze. Wait until March when the frost danger has passed.
- PRUNE rose bushes towards the end of the month. Cut above the bud and also remove all crossing or deadwood. Your prized bushes will be sprouting new growth within six weeks.
- PRUNE wisteria, deciduous flowering vines as well as crepe myrtle, apple, pear, and peach trees. There is no need to prune cherries.
- FEED your citrus trees. Check with your local garden center for the best fertilizer combinations. A feeding of nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium in a ratio of 2-1-1 is usually a smart bet when used according to the directions.
- BRIGHTEN the dreary garden with paths of pansies and primroses.
- CUT back the dried foliage from ornamental grasses as well as any old stems from perennials.
- SPRAY diluted horticultural oil on fruit trees and roses to kill the overwintering insects and insect eggs.
- AVOID walking on your lawns when they are very wet or when there has been a cold spell as you will damage the grass blades.
- PERUSE seed catalogues to discover the new offerings for 2014. Stick to GMO free heirloom varieties. Check out [www.sowtrueseeds.com](http://www.sowtrueseeds.com) and [www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com) for suggestions on varieties.
- MIST houseplants and check for dryness often. During the winter months our houseplants suffer from our heating sources.
- PLANT bare root fruit trees, roses, and berries this month.
- REMOVE all ornaments, tinsel, lights, and hanging wires from Christmas trees. If at all possible, shred your tree and add to your compost pile. If you will be recycling through your waste service, make sure to check the pick-up days for your area.
- PLAN your spring and summer garden. We may be going into a very dry season. Consider drought resistant specimens. 2013 may be the driest year in California history since 1895. We need a mindset of "spare the water!" Plant more yarrow, sedums, sage, and gaillardia.
- SHARPEN and clean tools in preparation for spring.
- TAKE your mower and shredder in for annual maintenance.

- BEWARE of bees in your boots! Yes, before putting on your shoes, check if any living creature is visiting. My right foot will attest to the sting.
- ENJOY winter downtime by wandering in your backyard and daydreaming of what could be.
- FIND evergreen varieties of azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons that suit your style, sun/shade exposure, and color preferences that bloom in late winter.
- VISIT a secret garden this year. Find out open days on private places at <https://www.gardenconservancy.org/opendays>.
- SET your sights high and grow for it!

Let's make this the best year ever in our gardens and in our lives. We'll do it together! Happy Gardening, Happy Growing, Happy New Year!

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Geraniums before the freeze are pretty and perky.



Geraniums look sad after the freeze. Once they are pruned in March, they return to their normal splendor.

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