

Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Don't Doubt the Drought

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TURF WARS

Lawns are warriors. They can absorb a mountain of abuse as they give our eyes a rest from concrete chaos. I love a lawn for the visual appeal as well as the functionality of recreational activities and am not about to abandon my green space in order to be politically correct. Although lawns may not be as green as the Emerald Isle with minimal irrigation, they will survive when you take these steps:

1. Allow the grass clippings to remain on the grass to recycle nutrients and moisture.
2. Reseed or repair lawns with drought resistant fine fescues.
3. Set your mower height to three inches to encourage deeper roots.

Allow grass to go dormant when water is not available. Unless conditions are extreme, your lawns will return when the seasons grow cooler.

SAVING WATER

Gray water is good for your garden. Keep a bucket in your shower and near your bath. Rinse and wash dishes in a container to recycle the soapy suds. If possible reroute your washing machine hose to water your landscape. Use wine barrels to catch rainwater and divert downspouts to your flowerbeds. Don't use roof run-off on your edibles.



Tulips are the ultimate spring surprise.

CREATE SHADE

Use market umbrellas, canvas tarps, or canopies to create false shade. Move containers to covered patios or overhangs to reduce the direct sunlight from already stressed plants.

BUILD WINDBREAKS

Wind dries the soil. Natural windbreaks include trees, shrubs, grasses, and hedges. Use decorative screens, art, or furniture as man-made wind barriers.

RAISED BEDS

A magnificent solution to numerous gardening challenges is to buy or build raised beds. Self-contained cow troughs are excellent since no critters can get in for a nibble and they retain water. Whether your raised beds are made of wood, concrete, aluminum, or other material, make sure that the bottom is protected with wire and that you add a few inches of gravel to the bottom for drainage. Fill with good soil, compost, mulch, and crowd your plantings together. Raised beds save backs and knees as they eliminate the bending necessary for most garden tasks.

DRY FARMING

I grew up on a dry farm. The flavors from the harvest were always intense, robust, and delicious. To dry farm, build your soil first with extra amounts of compost and use cover crops such as alfalfa, oats, beans, or vetch. When you plant your vegetables and fruit teach them to survive without water by giving them only a few drops to keep them alive. Once the fruit is set, stop watering completely.

By using all of the tips of the past two issues of Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian, you will have begun your journey to xeriscaping.

My Drought Gardening series continues next month when Part Three features a list of drought tolerant plants. Stay tuned!



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SPRING IS IN THE AIR

Spring is here – it's time for spring cleaning but for your landscape! The trees and plants in the yard need to be inspected for water damage, remove dead or dying branches which may have been injured by disease/severe insect infestation or storm damage.

We also want to prune for improved plant appearance, tree and plant size to ensure all around health for your landscape.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping to make your yard a summer STAYCATION.

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