

# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February

By Cynthia Brian

*"I believe that the reason of life is for each of us simply to grow in love." ~ Tolstoy*

Love is in the air! Every February we are reminded about the importance of amour in every day living. Recently my gardening mentor, my mother, was hospitalized in the Intensive Care Unit of a major hospital when her lungs filled with fluid from an undetected virus. Picking two cultivars from my garden, fragrant narcissi and pink bergenia that she had originally given me from her garden years ago, I ambled to her bedside with a jar filled with these beloved winter blooms, only to be told by the head nurse that flowers weren't allowed in the ICU. With her saddened eyes, my mom pleaded, "Oh please, may I keep them? They make me happy." She survived her ordeal and her bouquet went with her as she was moved from room to room. I like to think that these small reminders of her home and the love she has for her garden spurred her miraculous recovery.

One of the most popular ways to show we care is to give those we love flowers. Florists sell more bouquets at Valentine's than any other time of the year. Last year over 200 million roses were grown for Cupid sales with men purchasing 75 percent of all blooms according to the Society of American Florists. Depending on what message a person wants to convey, there is a flower and a color that corresponds to the emotion. The Victorian era popularized the language of flowers with floriography, a poetic way to exchange messages with posies. Giving 12 red roses meant, "I love you. Be mine!" in the late 19th century, and it still means that today. I wonder what giving 12 red rose bushes would mean in the 21st century?

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*The beautiful tulip magnolias are showing their colors earlier this year.*

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*Fragrant narcissi brighten the February garden.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*