

Digging Deep - Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Why We Garden, Part 2

"In the depth of winter I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer." ~ Albert Camus

After zero precipitation in January, we reveled in the rains of early February. Soon thereafter, the sun shone brightly again and spring appears to be arriving a month early. My flowering peach, plum, and pear trees have all completed their burst of color and my landscape is alive with blooming daffodils, tulips, iris, freesia, magnolia stellata and periwinkle. Somehow we've managed to skip the normal dreariness of February and jump right into Camus' invincible summer. A reader in Norway was shocked to read that bergenia blooms here in California in January while it doesn't show its pretty petals in Northern Europe until May. Which brings me to more reasons why I love to garden ...

Surprises

As gardeners we know that we are not in charge. No matter how much we attempt to control the outside forces, Mother Nature rules. We can no longer say that daffodils bloom in March or gladioli in summer. Our climate is changing, and we are constantly surprised at what pops up – and when. Gardeners are stewards of the earth and we must adapt to her unpredictability.

Love

Gardens evoke love. The birds and bees are making love and passion is in the garden air. How many of us chose a beautiful garden for our wedding nuptials or as the setting for birthdays, showers, graduations and other celebrations? Since I was a child, our family gatherings were always held in a garden, weather permitting. My husband and I, as well as all of my siblings, held our wedding receptions in the spectacular gardens of our ranch. My mother planted for months creating an artistic palette using the colors each of us had chosen for our special day. Now that is love!

Responsibility

After several decades of marriage, whenever I am asked how to maintain a relationship, my advice has always been to become a gardener. It takes responsibility to be a gardener. We have to be attentive to the needs of each individual specimen. We need to know when to water, when to prune, when to fertilize, when to transplant. This is responsibility. If you want to grow a relationship, start with a plant. For first timers, I recommend a spider plant. They don't demand much, and they prosper with neglect. Or, if you prefer a colorful connection, orchids are not fussy prima donnas, yet they are radiantly beautiful.

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Fragrant Daphne adds color to the shade garden.

Photos Cynthia Brian

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