

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

By Cynthia Brian

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." ~ Aldo Leopold



Yellow oxalis is also known as shamrock, perfect for St. Patrick's Day.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Sunshine and patchy clouds. Mostly sunny and very warm. Cloudy with rain possible. If you are like me, you are checking the online weather channels to determine when our gardens will be getting a shower. Unfortunately the weather predictions are not accurate. The conversations around the water cooler as well as at the dinner table revolve more and more about the weather than anything else. While we see stories on the news of "the worst winter in Boston," California is facing the driest three-year period in California history, stretching back to the Gold Rush in 1850.

Farmers throughout California indicate their livelihoods are at stake, with their needed water levels cut by nearly 25 percent. Snowfall in the Sierras is at dismal levels. Beyond California, the world is suffering from global droughts affecting over 2 billion people. Public awareness of the importance of conservation is an issue that can't be watered down.

With spring just a few days away, and our weather totally incomprehensible, gardeners need to be vigilante and diligent when it comes to the needs of our landscape. You can conserve water while protecting the environment and your pocketbook by following a few of this month's tips:

- **COMPOST** your scraps, leaves, grass clippings, newspaper, eggshells, coffee grounds, tea leaves and other organic materials. Keep your pile or bin wet, turn often, and be ready to reap rich matter to add to your garden.
- **MULCH**, mulch, mulch. I know I sound like a broken record, but by providing that extra three or four inches of top dressing in your garden, you are protecting your plants from heat, frost, and other weather conditions, conserving water, adding to the texture and absorption of the soil, and keeping erosion at bay.
- **GROW** your own fruits, vegetables and herbs. You know what you put into your soil. You reap the nutritional benefits. You have control over water, fertilizer and attraction of beneficial insects. Thyme, sage, oregano and rosemary are all easy to grow in the ground or in pots adding perennial goodness to savory dishes.

- **START** seedlings in half an orange or grapefruit after pulp has been removed. Put a hole in the bottom and when the seedling is large enough, plant the entire rind in the garden.
- **INCREASE** magnesium and sulfate in your garden by sprinkling Epson Salt around plantings.
- **RID** walkways and paths of weeds with a homemade brew of weed killer. Mix one gallon of white vinegar with one cup of table salt and one tablespoon of Dawn liquid dish soap. Use as a spray when the sun is shining. Do not use around lawns or flowerbeds.
- **CUT** the neck off a large soda bottle and place over small pots planted with seeds to act as a mini greenhouse, eliminating the need for watering.
- **CLEAN** bird feeders and birdbaths with a solution of soap, water and bleach. Allow thorough drying before refilling to ward off avian diseases.

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A rustic arrangement of daffodils, succulents, calla lilies and twigs.



Does any flower top tulips for signaling spring?