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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

By Cynthia Brian



This peony has blossoms the size of dinner plates. Photo Cynthia Brian-

me grateful to be alive in our bucolic rural locale.

This week I received my East Bay Municipal Utility District home water report with my water score and this congratulatory note: "Way to go, WaterSaver! You ranked in the top 20 percent!" While the American average usage according to the Environmental Protection Agency is 400 gallons per day, we used only 147 gallons per day versus the average EBMUD household of three at 280 gallons per day. Households in the top 20 percent used an average of 213 gallons per day. I'm using 29 percent less water than the previous 12 months, perhaps putting me in the top 10 percent of water savers. But I'm scared of what will happen when summer comes. The drought is real and it will affect each of us. I plan on watering by hand with a hose as much as possible as this will save approximately 33 percent more than turning on the sprinklers. -Soaker hoses will be great assets for water conservation in my vegetable and herb gardens. I will only be planting a smattering of color spots with specimens I am certain can withstand less moisture. Any extra water used for washing or rinsing dishes and bodies is collected and used in my patio pots. What are your plans to keep your garden alive through the forthcoming hot weather while conserving H2O?

CHECK your irrigation system and consider investing in newer drip or weather based controllers.

START seeds in any recycled container from plastic cups to coconut hulls. Drill a hole in the bottom, add good potting soil, and you are ready to roll. If you plant in orange rind halves, you can plant the entire "container" in the ground.

SAVE water by placing a bowl under your colander when washing greens and vegetables in the sink. Dump the water in the garden.

SCRUB your outdoor furniture and organize your patio. Spring is here and it's time to start the party planning.

FRESHEN your curb appeal with fragrant flowering plants such as star jasmine that will welcome guests with their heady spring perfume.

EMPTY any standing water in saucers, old tires, buckets, gutters or barrels. Mosquitoes are already on the prowl. If you have a pond and want free mosquito fish, contact Vector Control at (925) 685-9301. Vector Control is also your resource for problems with skunks or yellow jackets.

WATCH for holes of voles in your lawn and garden. Voles are extremely destructive and non-

"Nothing is so beautiful as spring - when weeds, in wheels, shoot long, and lovely, and lush ..." - Gerard Manley Hopkins

Poppies and lupines dot the green hillsides and roadways. The skies are azure blue, the weather is wickedly warm, turkeys hobble and gobble in neighborhoods. Spring is in full swing.

As it always is every April, my orchards and hills are carpeted with weeds. This year I sprinkled seeds of mustard throughout my landscape as a cover crop to heighten the nitrogen levels in the soil. A sea of yellow waves in the wind, greeting me on my morning walks. Large black crows call my casa their casa. The birds are back, splashing in the fountain outside my office alongside the occasional red-tailed hawk popping in for a drink. A covey of quail with their baby chicks darting behind them munch insects and dandelions around my lawn. The rebirth of nature recharges my energy and makes

discriminating when it comes to eating everything and anything growing. For major infestations, call in the professional eradicators.

BRIGHTEN your garden with drought tolerant succulents. With so many shapes, sizes, textures and colors, you'll be able to create a palette of striking performance that requires minimal moisture.

CUT and turn into the soil any cover crops you planted last fall to add nitrogen and nutrients. Clover, mustard and fava beans are ready to be tilled.

CASCADE lantana from retaining walls and containers for long-lasting color that attracts beneficial bees and butterflies.

TRELLIS thornless lady banksia roses or purple wisteria for a glorious spring mix that will continue to delight year after year.

VISIT the Moraga Gardens plant sale from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through April 19 for a wide variety of home-grown-from-seed vegetables, herbs and other plants. Each four-inch pot is only \$3. Address is 1370 Moraga Way, Moraga.

SHEAR and shape conifers, removing any dead or diseased branches.

FERTILIZE roses, lawns and all perennials.

DIVIDE, transplant or share iris, delphinium, daylily, and chrysanthemum with friends.

RE-SEED lawns with clover or high quality grass seed for a thicker, lush mat.

TAKE any moveable houseplants outdoors to give them a good shower and thorough drink. Put them on your lawn when you wash and water them, giving your grass a bath as well.

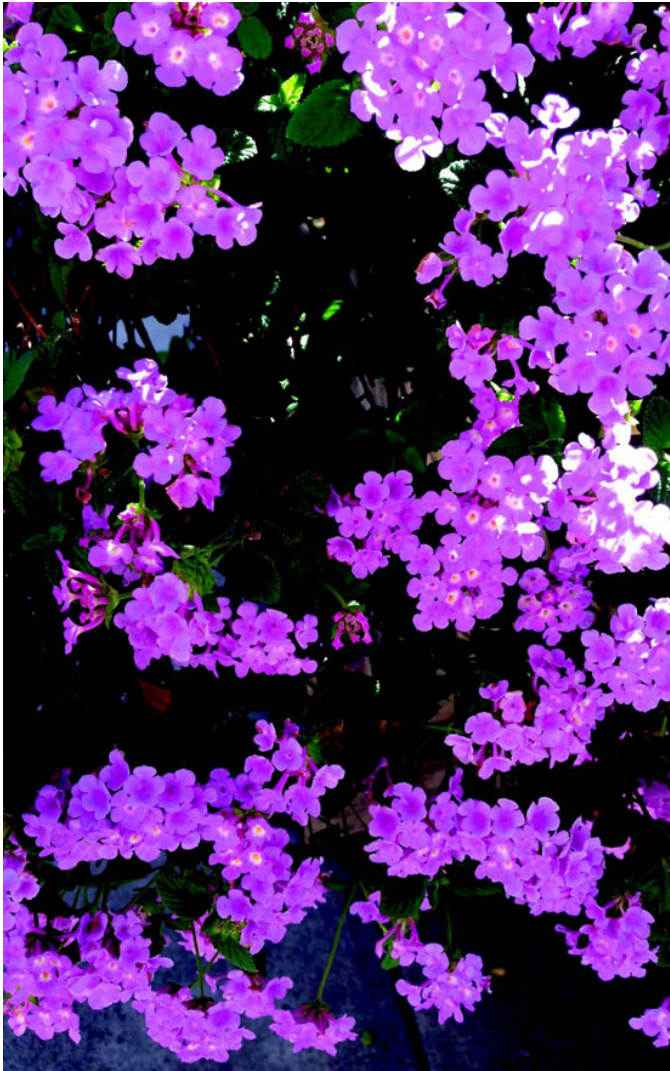
THANKS for all the wonderful comments about my last Digging Deep column, Paradise Found. Special thanks to Lamorinda Weekly reader, Sydney, who shares this tip about growing her 65-year-old spectacular peony: When winters are mild, put ice cubes around the base of your peonies. Prune stems low to a bud in January. Fertilize with fish emulsion and deadhead after blooms are spent in April.

COME to the Be the Star You Are!(r) charity Book Bash Blow Out on April 25 at 5A Rent A Space in Moraga to buy brand new books at discount prices. Pick up your free seed packets and complimentary potpourri when you say you read the Lamorinda Weekly! For information, visit <http://ow.ly/K3zXG>.

PRAY for April showers!

Enjoy the beauty and scents of springtime. May all your weeds be flowers. Continue being water savvy and garden smart.

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing.



Purple lantana cascades over a container. Photos Cynthia Brian



Mustard flowers and leaves are delicious in salads and the entire plant is good for the ground.



Vole holes in the lawn must be dealt with to eradicate these destructive creatures.-



Cynthia Brian relishes the spring wisteria vines. (c)2015 Cynthia Brian The Goddess Gardener Starstyle(r) Productions, llc Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com 925-377-STAR I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

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