

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

By Cynthia Brian

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



This peony has blossoms the size of dinner plates.

Photo Cynthia Brian

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 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.

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