

Digging Deep - Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Pollinator Paradise!

By Cynthia Brian

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." ~ Albert Einstein



A plethora of colorful homemade bird houses, feeders, and baths adorn Tom Gieryng's garden. Photos Cynthia Brian

Everyone seems to love the birds. After reading my previous month's column, "For the Birds," many people contacted me with stories of the birds in their gardens including hardwood floor installer and refinisher, Tom Gieryng. He sent me photos and asked me to come see the numerous avian amenities he had installed in his garden. Birdhouses, bird feeders, fountains, and perches occupy every tree, wall, and crevice. Most were built by Gieryng, many were someone else's trash turned into Gieryng's treasure, and all of them have been embellished, hand painted, or given a touch of whimsy. Gieryng gave new life to tossed out items including wrought iron gates, hanging baskets, pots, tricycles, and even stained glass windows with his garden ingenuity.

Growing up in Poland, Gieryng was like most teens across the world. He looked forward to making enough money to buy nice clothes and go out with

friends to party. His job was with a wood flooring company and at the time he didn't realize this teenage occupation would become his life-long career when he immigrated to America. After a few years of working for a flooring business in San Francisco, Gieryng wanted more creativity and control and opened his own company, TG Hardwood, where he was able to implement his own designs. Curiosity and a desire to reclaim discarded objects fuels his inventive nature both in his woodwork and outdoor spaces. After a hard day's work, he finds inspiration, entertainment and relaxation in his garden.

Gardens offer each of us a place to chill out, relax and be inventive. In today's high tech environment, the garden presents an instant environment to unplug, unwind and be imaginative. When I'm in my garden, I lose track of time. Although pulling weeds, turning the soil,

planting, pruning, watering and paying attention to potential pests is work, it is invigorating, offering me precious time to think without the distraction of phones, emails and pinging calendar appointments. Our gardens can be an extension of our artistic selves when we allow ourselves to be inquisitive. In my mother's garden, an ancient walnut tree has become Nonie's Bird Tree. She hangs feeders of all shapes and sizes attracting a variety of birds and hummingbirds. Vines twine around a rusted chicken chair in my front yard next to an antiquated tin birdhouse. Butterflies flit amongst the blooms and bees pollinate the various fruit trees.

Strolling with Gieryng through his garden, his obvious enthusiasm for his creations was contagious. Clients have given him cuttings of various species that he has transplanted and tended, many of them becoming prize possessions. Fuchsias, hydrangeas, roses, pelargoniums, geraniums, lavender, agapanthus, and numerous grasses found homes in his yard. A waterfall cascades down the hill adding the sound of trickling water and a place for the frogs to congregate and the hummingbirds to drink and dip. It's a haven for birds, butterflies and bees ... a true pollinator garden.

After my "For the Birds" publication, many readers asked how to attract other pollinators. To have a truly healthy garden, create a pollinator paradise. It's easy to do.

You won't need any special talents, just lots of curiosity, and this simple tip sheet.

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Nonie's Bird Tree at night is an ancient walnut.