

Published February 8th, 2017

Digging Deep

By Cynthia Brian



Camellias blooming and getting ready to drop Photos Cynthia Brian

competing with professional breeders and adult hobbyists. Chanticleer still won Grand Champion and soon I was being heralded as a "California Champion Rooster Raiser" and "The Chicken Lady." (Of course when I was a teenager I wasn't enamored with those titles, but today I cherish the honors.) Throughout my teens I raised hundreds of hens and several roosters, but Chanticleer remained the king of the roost, a media star and a winning companion.

☐ Weeds and grass were fed to the barnyard animals as well as scraps from our table. The hens scratched, ate worms and fertilized the yard. The manure from the chicken coop was shoveled into a pile to age for three years before it was mixed into the flowerbeds. (Chicken manure is "hot" and will burn your plants if it is not seasoned.) Everything was recycled in the perfect circle of organic living. Eggs were gathered twice a day and delivered to customers twice a week. I saved every penny and documented every expense.

☐ Chanticleer lived a very long, happy life and I will always be grateful for his friendship, his beautiful stature, and his profitable deportment. By the time I was 18 I had indeed earned enough dollars from my poultry project, farm labor jobs and scholarships to pay my college tuition at both UCLA and UC Berkeley. And that is something to crow about!

☐ Celebrate the Year of the Rooster. Gung Hay Fat Choy!

☐ Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February fun

☐ TRAIN a climbing rose up an arch, arbor, obelisk, or wall to enjoy the strong fragrances of myrrh, tea, and fruit. For 15 percent off David Austin Roses use coupon code ULA before Feb. 24 at www.davidaustinroses.com.

☐ PICK up all camellias that fall to the ground to eliminate disease to the mother plant.

☐ CLEAN outdoor garden drains. When water flooded my patio it was because five gallons of mud was clogging two drains. The good news...lots of earthworms.

☐ CUT a few branches from willows to experience the opening buds.

☐ WATCH out for woodpeckers damaging your buildings.

☐ BRING cymbidium orchids indoors to enjoy months of beautiful blooms.

☐ PRUNE grapevines while the canes are dormant and brittle.

☐ PROTECT citrus trees from freezing. If your trees are too large, pick the fruit before a freeze threatens.

☐ PLACE a bouquet of blooms by your bedside for a better night's sleep.

☐ PLANT your favorite summer blooming bulbs including pollinator magnets like dinner plate dahlias.

☐ CROW at the clouds and scratch in the dirt. It's the year of the red fire chicken.

☐ HIKE a trail that meanders through our beautiful creeks.

☐ LAST chance to get your roses and vines pruned. My pruning is finally completed.

☐ AGE your chicken manure before adding it to the garden. To tickle your imagination, Eartha Kitt raised her chickens in Beverly Hills!

"I raised chickens because I love that feeling of being in the country and living from the soil" - Eartha Kitt

☐ With 2017 being the Year of the Rooster, I am excited to share my gratitude to the poultry that graced my life.

☐ Chanticleer may be the reason I am where I am today. When I was 8 years old I announced to my parents that I wanted to be able to go to college. Since my grandparents had barely finished sixth to eighth grades and my parents had high school diplomas, I would be the first person in my family to strive for a university degree. It was decided that the only way this dream would be possible is if I financed it myself. My brilliant idea was to raise chickens, sell the eggs, and enter competitions at fairs to earn the cash.

☐ My first clutch of chickens yielded nine pullets and three cockerels. My favorite rooster was Chanticleer, a beautiful Rhode Island Red, who followed me everywhere. A great deal of time was spent with my brood of 12 as I began my farm fresh egg business through my membership in the 4-H Club. When fair season rolled around, I entered Chanticleer and my hens in the appropriate categories including showmanship. Chanticleer and I won blue ribbons and were named Grand Champions in every competition at every event, including the California State Fair. At fairs outside the county where I resided it was necessary to enter Chanticleer in "open division," meaning I wasn't competing against other children or 4-H-er's but was

competing with professional breeders and adult hobbyists. Chanticleer still won Grand Champion and soon I was being heralded as a "California Champion Rooster Raiser" and "The Chicken Lady." (Of course when I was a teenager I wasn't enamored with those titles, but today I cherish the honors.) Throughout my teens I raised hundreds of hens and several roosters, but Chanticleer remained the king of the roost, a media star and a winning companion.

☐ Weeds and grass were fed to the barnyard animals as well as scraps from our table. The hens scratched, ate worms and fertilized the yard. The manure from the chicken coop was shoveled into a pile to age for three years before it was mixed into the flowerbeds. (Chicken manure is "hot" and will burn your plants if it is not seasoned.) Everything was recycled in the perfect circle of organic living. Eggs were gathered twice a day and delivered to customers twice a week. I saved every penny and documented every expense.

☐ Chanticleer lived a very long, happy life and I will always be grateful for his friendship, his beautiful stature, and his profitable deportment. By the time I was 18 I had indeed earned enough dollars from my poultry project, farm labor jobs and scholarships to pay my college tuition at both UCLA and UC Berkeley. And that is something to crow about!

☐ Celebrate the Year of the Rooster. Gung Hay Fat Choy!

☐ Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for February fun

☐ TRAIN a climbing rose up an arch, arbor, obelisk, or wall to enjoy the strong fragrances of myrrh, tea, and fruit. For 15 percent off David Austin Roses use coupon code ULA before Feb. 24 at www.davidaustinroses.com.

☐ PICK up all camellias that fall to the ground to eliminate disease to the mother plant.

☐ CLEAN outdoor garden drains. When water flooded my patio it was because five gallons of mud was clogging two drains. The good news...lots of earthworms.

☐ CUT a few branches from willows to experience the opening buds.

☐ WATCH out for woodpeckers damaging your buildings.

☐ BRING cymbidium orchids indoors to enjoy months of beautiful blooms.

☐ PRUNE grapevines while the canes are dormant and brittle.

☐ PROTECT citrus trees from freezing. If your trees are too large, pick the fruit before a freeze threatens.

☐ PLACE a bouquet of blooms by your bedside for a better night's sleep.

☐ PLANT your favorite summer blooming bulbs including pollinator magnets like dinner plate dahlias.

☐ CROW at the clouds and scratch in the dirt. It's the year of the red fire chicken.

☐ HIKE a trail that meanders through our beautiful creeks.

☐ LAST chance to get your roses and vines pruned. My pruning is finally completed.

☐ AGE your chicken manure before adding it to the garden. To tickle your imagination, Eartha Kitt raised her chickens in Beverly Hills!

EMAIL me when you need a consultation.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Marvelous mustard fields in the vineyards



The branches of this budding creek willow look like cotton balls on sticks.



The last freeze damaged this orange tree.



An arrangement of roses, camellia, star thistle and heather is cheerful and uplifting.



"Chicken Lady" Cynthia Brian with a prized rooster, but not the famous Chanticleer. (c)2017 Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are1(r) 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show at www.StarStyleRadio.net Available for hire for any project. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com 925-377-STAR

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA