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Digging Deep

By Cynthia Brian



Fluorescent pink azalea shines. Photos Cynthia Brian

"Blossom by blossom the spring begins." - AC Shuburne

It took exactly one full day of warm sunshine a week before the vernal equinox for the garden to spring into action. Everywhere I looked, bulbs, wildflowers, perennials and plants burst into blooms. Muscari, Dutch iris, tulip, bergenia, freesia, hyacinth, lamium, rosemary, honeysuckle, calendula, California poppy, and even my outdoor cymbidium orchids strained for the solar shine. Deciduous trees are budding, leaves unfurling, all of nature is alive with expectation. With the abundance of rain we've enjoyed this winter, our gardens are determined to showcase their brilliance. Wherever you look, beauty awaits.

Spring is by far my favorite season of the year. As I witness landscapes awakening from their long hibernation, I am anxious to get my hands in the dirt. Weeds are abundant, yet they are easy to pull. Spading is excellent exercise burning 179 calories in just 50 minutes of digging. Snails and slugs have begun their migration making it necessary for us to be vigilant. New growth and tender seedlings are their favorite food. Frogs have begun their annual mating calls while the chirping birds are busy building nests. As tempted as we may be, it's still too early to sow vegetable and flower seeds outdoors. It is time, however, to get lawns into shape and prepare the soil for April planting. Allergy sufferers need to be on the alert as pollen is abundant in the air.

□ We have so much work to do to get ready for the next season. Make a play date with Mother Nature and enjoy fun in the sun soaking up vitamin D.

□ Spring ahead!

□ Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March Magic

□ INSPECT your irrigation system. Mud might be clogging sprinkler heads while grass or lawn may have grown over the sprinklers. Spend time to get your system working properly before the heat begins.

□ MOW lawns without the bag, "sin bolsa" en espanol. The lawn cuttings are filled with nitrogen and nutrition that will green up your lawn. Don't waste that free fertilizer. If you find that clumps are left behind, rake or blow them into the lawn.

□ SOW lawn seed now. If you want to add a bit of color that will withstand dogs and kids, isotoma called blue star creeper looks great with its tiny blue flowers. Clover is always green boasting pink or white flowers. For a real conversation piece, create a living rug with a variety of ornamental grasses including ajuga, woolly thyme, pink chintz thyme, creeping speedwell, Irish moss and brass buttons.

□ GROW red and golden beets for their anti-inflammatory qualities. With only six grams of sugar in the average two-inch diameter bulb, beets lower blood glucose and increase insulin sensitivity. The leaves are delicious sliced, diced, raw, or steamed. Rich in fiber, folate, potassium and vitamins A and C, beets are heart healthy, lowering blood pressure while providing plenty of antioxidants. After boiling, save the water to add to your juice or other veggies.

□ WASH patio furniture with a solution of water and bleach to remove mildew or mold that has grown over the winter.

□ CUT a few errant shoots from any budding fruit tree to add to a vase of water. You'll enjoy watching the buds burst to blossoms over several weeks.

□ PLAN your vegetable garden by creating a map of what you want where. Design in geometric patterns, semi-circles, and circles for whimsy and interest.

□ CLEAN birdbaths, fountains, bird feeders, and birdhouses to attract songbirds to reside in your garden.

□ CONTINUE to pick up fallen camellia blossoms until the blooming ends next month. Do not leave the dead blooms on the ground.

□ ADD a trellis as a focal point in your landscape for climbing blue morning glory, clematis or red runner

beans.

FERTILIZE grass, trees, shrubs, and perennials.

BRING inside plants outside for a good soaking and a few hours of morning sunlight. Check for insects and wipe the exterior of the containers as well as any leaves with a damp cloth to remove the dust.

ASSIGN kids an area to grow their favorite vegetables. Research indicates that children who garden eat healthier. Tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, radishes, carrots and beans are all easy-to-grow.

PICK snails and slugs off of plants at night by using a flashlight. Beer in saucers attracts snails or bait with organic pellets.

CHECK that you have proper, well-made garden tools. You'll need a wide handle shovel, trowel, knee cushion, hoe, pick and pruning shears in at least two sizes. The right tools make the job simpler and faster.

ORDER the Whole Seed Catalog from Baker Creek if you seek rare heirloom seeds. When you grow your own food, you'll know you are providing your family with non-GMO pesticide, and chemical free nutrition. www.rareseeds.com

PRE-ORDER my forthcoming garden book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," Book I in the Garden Shorts Series. All pre-orders will receive extra goodies such as heirloom seeds, bookmarks and more. Email me for details, Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com. 25 percent of the proceeds benefit the 501c3 Be the Star You Are! charity. The book is expected to be available in April, just in time for spring planting.

A Garden in a Box: If you don't think you are much of a gardener, you can always order a preplanned garden from High Country Gardens. Type in your zip code and you'll easily see what will work for you. You'll get instructions, a design map and special plants. Visit www.highcountrygardens.com.

Flowers, Fotos, and Food: Artist and photographer Anne Morrison Rabe's Spring Flowers exhibit begins Thursday, March 23 at home/made Kitchen and Bakery, 337 Rheem Boulevard, in Moraga. Check it out and get inspired.

Win \$50,000 for your Garden: I have been selected as a judge in America's Best Gardener Contest. America's Best Gardener is the premier event for recognizing and celebrating the talents of indoor and outdoor gardeners. Show the world that your thumb is the greenest by showing the world pictures of your garden today. You can win \$50,000 so I encourage you to enter. www.americasbestgardener.com.

WEED, weed, weed, then weed again.

EMAIL me when you need a consultation.

CATCH flower fever. It's contagious and oh, so healthy.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Yellow cymbidium orchid comes indoors.



Honeybee on rosemary.



A spectacular tulip magnolia tree (*Magnolia x soulangean*) along a path.



A close up of an unfolding magenta parrot tulip .



A shocking blue hyacinth pops up under the redwoods.



Tiny grape-like muscari fill the garden



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(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

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