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Digging Deep

By Cynthia Brian



Fragrant French lilac. Photos Cynthia Brian

"God gets mad if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."- Alice Walker, "The Color Purple"

As I amble through my April garden, I know that God is very happy. Purple, the color of royalty, wisdom and luxury is favored in the majority of my botanical blooms. The nobility of the season is highlighted with the elegantly perfumed lilac, the scented grace of cascading wisteria, and the pride of the dark and handsome hellebore as it changes from its deep shaded amethyst of winter to the violet and chartreuse of spring. Bees are swarming, sucking the sweet nectar from the fragrant flowers of lavender, freesia and the Chinese fringe. Shades of indigo, mauve, and sangria pepper the landscape offering a powerful presence yet calming expression.

Purple bearded iris and Dutch iris tender their brilliance in the middle of the weed-filled hillside where Jerusalem star, also known as goat's beard, thrive. Bulbs and rhizomes are the ultimate VIPs of my garden. Once planted, I forget about them until they burst into bloom, a welcome surprise especially when other plants are failing. If you are a beginner gardener, I highly recommend indulging in bulbs for all seasons. Most require little maintenance and effort with minimal water while providing maximum results. Some of my perennial favorites that are available in hues of purple include calla lily, gladiolus, oriental lily, bearded iris, Asiatic lily,

dahlia, anemone and naked lady.

I love the color purple and have dedicated this month to everything purple. If you'd like to bring a bit more of the richness of purple into your outdoors, I recommend checking out a few of these favorite cultivars:

- Agastache Violet Vision
- Aquilegia Swan Lavender
- Aster Kickin' Purple
- Astilbe Purple Candles
- Azalea
- Buddelia Miss Violet
- Campanula Milan Lilac
- Chinese Fringe Plant
- Clematis Jackmanii
- Delphinium Pagan Purples
- Digitalis Sugar Plum
- Echinacea Magnus
- Freesia
- Hellebore Dark and Handsome
- Hemerocallis Black Stockings
- Heuchera Fire Alarm
- Hollyhock Crème de Cassis
- Hydrangea Let's Dance Rave
- Iris Superstition
- Liatris
- Lantana
- Lavender
- Lilac
- Monarda Piurple Rooster
- Nepeta Little Trudy
- Purple Potato Vine
- Phlox Laura
- Prunella Puprle Daze
- Rose Angel Face
- Rhododendron
- Salvia May Night
- Society Garlic
- Sea Foam Statice

Tulips (Black Parrot or Victoria's Secret)

Veronica Hocus Pocus

Wisteria

Ask your nursery if they carry inventory from Bluestone Perennials, Brent and Becky's, White Flower Farm or Proven Winners. While perusing the gardens, buy petunias, pansies, zinnias and other annuals in the hues that will brighten your landscape.

"Purple haze, all in my brain

Lately things they don't seem the same

Actin' funny, but I don't know why

Excuse me while I kiss the sky!" - Jimi Hendrix

I am kissing the sky with joy for spring. Get your purple haze on!

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for April

SPLASH your barbecue grill with white vinegar then scrub with half an onion to clean the grates and get ready for outside dining.

BUFF your garden tools by plunging them in a five-gallon bucket of sand mixed with a cup of vegetable oil. The sand will keep them sharper and the oil wards off rust. Small hand tools can be stored in the sand bucket.

PLANT frost tender plants as the weather warms towards the end of the month. Ground covers, citrus, bougainvillea, and summer annuals are available for purchase.

SOW seeds of scarlet runner bean, sweet peas, or morning glories to climb on fences and wire.

RESIST cutting back the dying leaves of narcissi and daffodils. The frongs are gathering their nutrition for next year's blooms. Cut them back only when as dry as potato chips.

BAIT the snails and slugs, pick them off by hand, use copper barriers, or bowls of beer. These slimy crawlers will devour new seedlings.

BUY ladybugs from your nursery or garden center if you see aphids or other pests on your plants. Remember ladybugs fly to infested gardens.

VISIT the Be the Star You Are! booth at the Moraga Faire 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, May 13 to get a bag of complimentary spring potpourri. Bring your gardening questions and I'll be there to answer them. www.BetheStarYouAre.org/events.

SELECT appropriate plants in one- or two-gallon pots for your shade garden. Smaller sizes don't root as quickly. Hostas, ferns, vinca minor, anemones, begonias and impatiens mingle beautifully without much sunlight.

PLANT purple anything this spring and be delighted all year.

WEED, weed, weed. Because of the heavy rains this year, weeds are ubiquitous, yet easy to pull. If they don't have seed heads, add to your compost pile.

PREORDER my forthcoming garden book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," Book I in the Garden Shorts Series. All preorders will receive extra goodies such as heirloom seeds, bookmarks and more. Email me for details, Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com. Twenty-five percent of the proceeds benefit the 501c3 Be the Star You Are! charity.

Win \$50,000 for your Garden: As a judge in America's Best Gardener Contest, I encourage you to enter your best garden photo. The top prize is \$50,000. www.americasbestgardener.com.

BUY a beautiful potted purple lavender plant to show your love for your mother or anyone's mom's on Mother's Day.

A heartfelt shout out to every mom! You are the nurturers and our teachers. Happy Mother's Day! Let it rain purple.

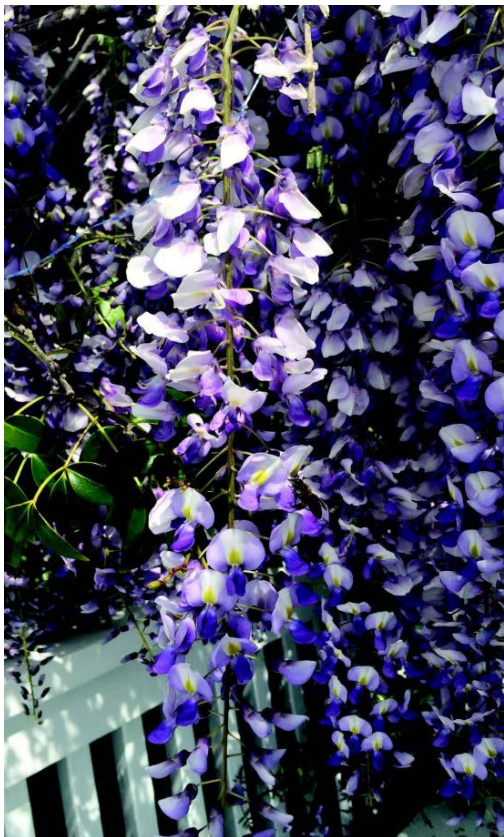
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Chinese Fringe with its plum colored flowers.



Jerusalem star, also known as goat's beard.



Close-up of violet-hued wisteria.



Lantana and lavender comingle in rock garden.



Purple vetch is a nitrogen-rich cover crop



Deep purple bearded iris.



Cynthia Brian in shades of purple.

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 Are 1(r) 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show at www.StarStyleRadio.com Available for hire for any project.

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