

Cynthia Brian's Digging Deep for July

Hammock Time

By Cynthia Brian

"Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



Tying a hammock between trees offers a place to relax.

Photos Cynthia Brian

While I was traveling in Southeast Asia, I was enthralled with the multitude of hammocks hung everywhere ... on balconies, under eaves of storefronts, under houses built on stilts on the Mekong River, between trees in a field, in marketplace stalls, even on rickety boats. Because of the intense heat and humidity that assaults life between noon and 4 in the afternoon, workdays begin in the early morning, then continue until 9 or 10 at night, while in between everyone cools off with a swinging siesta.

In the Amazon rainforest, my husband and I slept in hammocks covered by mosquito netting. The first hammocks date back to over 1,000 years ago and were made from the bark of the Hamak tree. Christopher Columbus is credited with bringing hammocks back to Europe after his encounter with the Taino tribes who tied these nets between trees for their slumber and protection. Because

hammocks were off the ground, there was less chance of bites from insects, snakes, rats, or other creatures.

My favorite hammock experiences have always been at beaches in tropical locales where hammocks are attached to swaying palm trees. In Hawaii, Tahiti, Bermuda, the many islands of the Caribbean, and throughout the coastlines of Central and South America, I have always scouted the sand for the perfect rocking repose where I can read a book, take a nap, or just listen to the pounding waves while the birds chirp in paradise.

Summer is the perfect time to lounge in a hammock under the shade, especially after a few hours of strenuous gardening. Swiss researchers published a scientific explanation why hammocks are loved the world over. The gentle rocking motion of a hammock synchronizes brain waves allowing us to get to sleep quicker while attaining a deeper state of relaxation. No wonder babies quiet when

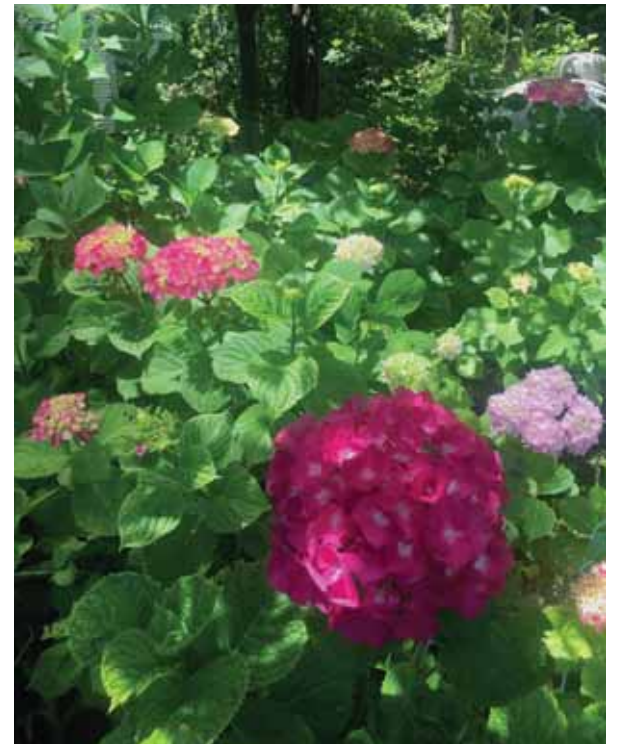
being rocked!

Between my Japanese maples and my magnolia trees, I secured two double hammocks so that two to four people could enjoy the benefits of a summertime break. It is restful to sway in these hammocks with the fragrance of my roses and lavender wafting around me. I watch the butterflies and bees darting throughout my flowers while I listen to the sound of the breeze and the crooning songbirds.

Hammocks are versatile because they are affordable super space savers, flexible, and are easily moved and stored. They are perfect camping trip companions. The net hammocks purchased in Vietnam pack into a small ball, while the heavier cloth hammocks I bought state-side roll into a cloth bag for storage.

If traveling is not on your agenda for this summer, consider a staycation with the potential to transport your dreams to exotic distant lands by installing a hammock in your backyard. Undulating in my hammock, I can be anywhere my imagination takes me.

It's hammock time. You can't touch this!



Dark pink hydrangeas are a favorite for root cuttings.