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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide

By Cynthia Brian



A variety of gourds on display at a Bergerac market. Photos Cynthia Brian

"Sitting quietly, doing nothing, and the grass grows by itself." - Zen saying

As we drive around neighborhoods we witness the spirit of the holidays in the landscape décor. Fall themes flow into Halloween then metamorphose into Thanksgiving. Christmas tree lots are already sprouting. It's obvious that the season of festivities is here.

The weather has been warmer this year and the changing of the leaves is appearing slowly. Boston Ivy has reddened climbing on walls, pumpkins and gourds are ready for picking and placing in spaces of prominence to be used as décor for the next month or two. Gargoyles and ghouls haunt our houses until Halloween. When I was a kid, freshly harvested apples and walnuts were always part of the trick-or-treat bag, but today these fruits will be featured only in lunches or in our autumnal meals.

Reseeding lawns and installing new turf is the primary horticultural chore this month if you seek a lush, green grass environment. As mentioned many times in my articles, I am a fan of Pearl's Premium (www.PearlsPremium.com) as I have found their testimonials to be factual. Through Oct. 31, you can get a 20 percent discount with my code STAR20 at the website at checkout. I have not been able to find Pearl's Premium seed for sale in any local store. The thin white coating on the seed holds 400 times the water around the seed, helping the seed to stay moist longer. The

white coloring also helps you see where you may have missed a spot. Birds don't seem attracted to the coating. The seed grows down to a depth of 20 inches or more and will not invade your flowerbeds. You can spread the seed over your existing lawn and this slow-growing, non-GMO seed will outcompete them, providing you with an emerald green lawn within about six weeks. I also like both red and white clover in my lawn because of the nitrogen that clover provides to keep lawns green year-round. If you like a mosaic feel, this is an interesting grass addition.

Instructions for Reseeding a lawn

- Mow the lawn as short as possible.
- Rake away all clippings and leaves.
- Get soil pH between 6.0-7.0 pH. To lower the pH use sulfur, to increase the pH use lime.
- Core aerate once a year, leaving the plugs on the lawn.
- Spread seeds at a rate of seven to 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet.
- Add organic fertilizer and top dress with 1/4 inch organic compost.
- Water twice a day in the morning and evening or until it begins raining.

Once the lawn is established you will water less frequently.

- Sharpen the blades on your mower and cut your lawn high ideally to 3.5 inches tall.

Leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide nutrients.

For the first year, you may experience a few weeds. Remove them and throw more grass seed. The lawn will become thick, lush, and healthy. You can then sit back, do nothing, and watch your grass grow.

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SEED or reseed lawns. If you prefer to install sod, autumn is the best time. Make sure you have prepared the bare soil with plenty of rich, organic matter before sodding.

FILL bare spots with a mixture of seed, compost and potting soil. Make sure to water thoroughly and keep moist until the grass sprouts.

RAKE leaves, especially off lawns, as grass needs as much sunlight as possible. You can also use your mower to chop the leaves.

MOW lawns shorter in fall until the grass stops growing to prevent matting.

WINTERIZE your grass by fertilizing heavily before the first rain. By feeding your lawn you'll give it the tools it needs to develop strong roots to survive winter.

PLANT spring blooming bulbs anytime through January. These include daffodils, tulips, crocus, Dutch iris, and hyacinths.

SCATTER wildflower seeds for a spring butterfly garden.

CLIP florets of basil and continue consuming as the herb will die completely back during winter. Any extra leaves can be frozen or dried.

SAVE seeds from your favorite sunflowers to sow next spring and if you carve pumpkins, dry these seeds for later planting or roast them as a healthy snack.

PLANT perennials that will reward you with blooms throughout the year including chrysanthemums, dahlias, statice, and hibiscus.

DEADHEAD roses for a final flush of flowers.

ENJOY the plethora of shapes, sizes, and textures of gourds and pumpkins. You can use them to decorate for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and spray paint them in our favorite holiday colors for Christmas and Chanukah displays.

FIX leaky faucets and pipes to deter thirsty ants.

FERTILIZE your entire landscape in preparation for the forthcoming cooler climate.

ADD a thick layer of mulch (three to four inches) to deprive weeds of light and to insulate plants from varying temperatures. Leaves, compost, shredded newspaper, cardboard, and straw add organic matter to the soil. Because organic matter deteriorates over time, you will need to replace as needed.?

GOAD your ghouls and rock All Hallowed Eve, All Saints and All Souls Day with cheer and gratitude.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.
Cynthia Brian



After clearing the ground, pumpkins decorate the bare soil alongside artichokes.



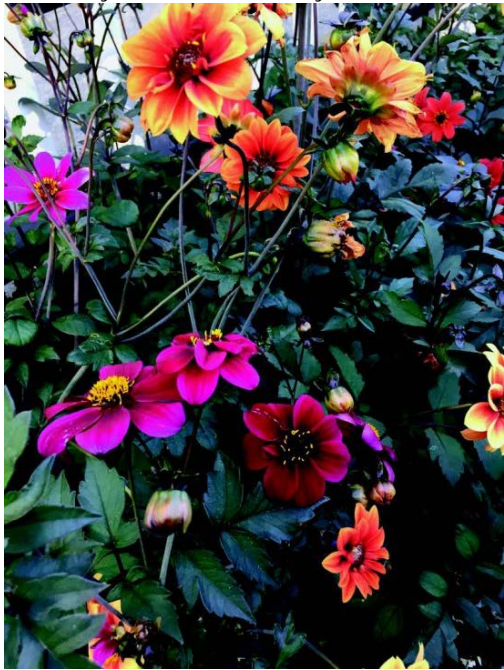
Final days of basil as it flowers and goes to seed. Every part of the plant is edible.



Did you invite a skeleton to your Halloween dinner?



Boston Ivy turns red and cherry in autumn.



Dahlias augment any garden. Photos Cynthia Brian



Red sunflowers.



Perennial chrysanthemums brighten the fall landscape.



Statice can be dried for winter arrangements



Cynthia Brian, touched by a ghoul.

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