

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Fruit frenzy



Delicious Queen Anne cherries are crunchy and sweet.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

*“Trees are giving fruit
Earth is giving grain
Sun is giving warmth
Moon and stars are giving light.” –
Chitrabhanu*

The doves and I are in a battle to consume the mulberries. The deer have already munched on the lower branches, and now the sound of happy cooing surrounds me as the birds feast on the black berries. Not many people have delighted in mulberries. I can't describe the flavors, but I grew up singing “All around the mulberry bush” as my siblings and I chased one another, pulling handfuls of this delicious fruit from the tree. My gigantic trees are shoots from that

original mulberry bush that were offspring of grandparents' and great grandparents' mulberry trees. Unfortunately, the birds leave me only the red, unripe fruit, which will not get sweeter if picked before maturity.

Yet, all is not lost. Both my Queen Anne and Bing cherry trees are brimming with luscious ripe cherries. While the birds gorge on the mulberries, they are leaving my precious cherries alone. In years past, I was lucky to harvest a handful of cherries before the birds arrived, but this year, probably because of the copious amounts of rain, my orchard is overflowing with fruit. As we farmers like to say, we have a bumper crop this season.

May was the month that ushered in the season of fruit picking for farm families

when I was growing up in Napa County. It began with cherries, proceeding to plums, prunes, apricots, peaches, pears, figs, grapes, apples, and walnuts with blackberries, citrus, kiwi, and all varieties of vegetables ripening through November that would be sold directly from the farm or at local fruit stands and co-ops. I was probably about 4 when my first job outside of our farm occurred, helping neighbors harvest their cherries. That neighbor's farm was a bit less than a mile away and the first day of cherry picking was highly anticipated. My parents, siblings, and I drove over at dawn in our World War II Willy jeep, hauling our tallest ladders accompanied by our biggest buckets. The ladders would be set up in the orchard with a pail dangling from a hook. Up we'd climb to begin our haul, with a paycheck determined by the crates of cherries picked, not the hours it took.

... continued on next Page



Branches of red mulberries are devoured by the birds and deer.