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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Marigolds, sweet potato plant, coleus, and verbena are perfect in the autumn yard.  
Photos Cynthia Brian

harvest your grapes, take away the trash, tidy up the vegetable patch, clear away the dead stems. Over-wintering pests and diseases will take refuge in the hideouts of debris left in the garden. Corn stalks must be cut (use them for Halloween decorations). Pick the ripe apples, figs and Asian pears. Leaves from deciduous and evergreen trees may be raked into the compost pile. Or, if you have space, stack leaves separately to create a rich leaf mold that can be used next season as a valuable ingredient in your potting soil.

Most garden projects are best begun in autumn when the soil is still warm with cooler evenings. Create new paths, add a rock garden, terrace a hillside, plant a fern grotto, sow a new lawn. If you have a greenhouse, start bringing frost tender potted plants into the structure. If you don't have a greenhouse, identify plants that need protection and if they are in containers, move them closer to the house, preferably under an awning. For plants growing in your garden that will be susceptible to winter's chill, wrap them in burlap. I am currently covering my bougainvillea and blue flowering Birds of Paradise.

With the change of seasons, our houseplants require a bit of TLC. For all of the smaller, movable plants, bring them outdoors for a final refreshing shower to remove built-up dust. Give them a deep drink on a warm, but not a hot day, and let them dry in the shade before returning them to the house. For large plants such as fiddle leaf fig or philodendron, take a damp cloth and wipe each leaf, top and bottom, as well as the stems. With shorter days, less intense light, and a different indoor atmosphere, our houseplants may suffer. Make sure to keep the soil evenly moist without being soggy. If you want your Christmas cactus to bloom for the holidays, keep it in a cool room without watering so that it can rest.

Red flag days will be more common through November as winds kick up and the heat of fall keeps the thermometers rising. If you pruned your begonias and roses in the last few weeks, you'll enjoy bountiful flowers until the downpours begin. I am truly enamored with begonias, both the tuberous and the wax leaf or fibrous. In some areas, the wax leaf begonia is an annual but in our warmer Mediterranean climate, they are perennial like their sisters, the tuberous begonias. Don't make the mistake of pulling them out when they die back. Just cut them to the ground to allow them to overwinter and you'll be rewarded with even a fuller plant next blooming season.

"Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall." - F. Scott Fitzgerald

The recent Pacific Gas and Electric Company Public Safety Power Shutoff due to high gusty winds and dry conditions didn't make me happy because if there is no electricity, there is no internet connection on my computer. Without an internet connection, I can't submit my articles and photographs to the newspaper. I'm not one to use my cell phone for my writing or photography assignments, thus, this announcement meant that I had to stop my autumnal garden cleanup to write and publish.

The silver lining to potential future shutoffs is that you, my dear readers, will get a jumpstart on your fall chores. Yes, it is time to get back to work in your yard.

The next 30 days are the optimal time to get your landscape prepared for the winter sleep and the spring awakening. Before the rains come,

## Cynthia Brian's 'Back to Work' Gardening Guide for October

The chores already discussed need doing before inclement weather begins.

Once we have a deep soaking of life-giving rain, October is one of the best months for planting, seeding and digging.

CREATE meandering borders filled with perennials and shrubs.

PLANT trees and bushes as the temperature cools.

SCATTER wildflower seeds, especially California poppies and lupines.

START a new lawn or reseed an existing lawn.

DEADHEAD annuals.

ROOT out any remaining weeds.

DIG a pond and add a water feature.

CHOOSE fall planting bulbs that will have different bloom times from early to late spring. Don't forget muscari (grape hyacinth). This fragrant bulb will multiply, growing in sun or shade.

REFRIGERATE hyacinth, crocus, and tulip for six weeks before planting.

SOW cool-season vegetables including turnips, peas, lettuce, rutabagas, kohlrabi, carrots, kale, spinach, cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts.

ADD a tropical ambiance with New Guinea impatiens, red-hot poker and palms.

PROVIDE long-lasting beauty for sunny areas with ornamental grasses, geraniums and elephant ear.

FIX nitrogen and increase biomass with a cover crop such as mustard, alfalfa or crimson clover.

ENJOY your begonias. Once they start dying back, do not pull them out. They will return more robust next fall.

TAKE pleasure in photos of beautiful gardens, such as those from Butchart Gardens in Canada.

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[/issue1316/Cynthia-Brians-Gardening-](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1316/Cynthia-Brians-Gardening-Guide-for-October-Benvenuto-to-Butchart-Gardens.html)

[Guide-for-October-Benvenuto-to-](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1316/Cynthia-Brians-Gardening-Guide-for-October-Benvenuto-to-Butchart-Gardens.html)

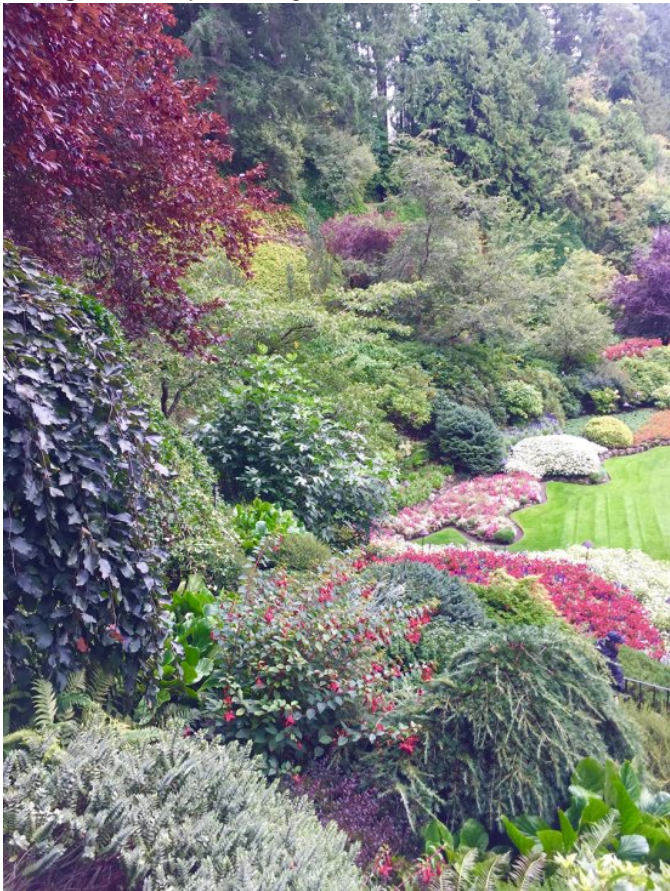
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Our gardens are winding down and so too will we. Get to work finishing your tasks this autumn in anticipation of a restful winter. Life begins again!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Bring the tropics to your landscape with New Guinea impatiens, red-hot poker, and palms.



Create meandering borders filled with perennials and shrubs.



Feathergrass, geraniums, and elephant ear add beauty to the garden.



Sweet, delicious Mission figs are ready to harvest.



This fern grotto is reminiscent of Jurassic Park.



Colorful, perennial tuberous begonias should be left in the garden after their leaves die.



## Cynthia Brian in the vineyard by the vintage Chevy.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, 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!r 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyler Radio Broadcast at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Buy a copy of her books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardene](http://www.GoddessGardene)

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