

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Feng Shui, Creating a calming sanctuary for children
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian Grace and gratitude in the dirt



A thick pile of Japanese maple leaves blanket the garden.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

“Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.” – Charles Dickens, 1812-1870, Novelist

Pumpkins, gourds, and scarecrows decorate our yards. Thanksgiving has arrived and

we give thanks for our safety, the bounty on our tables, the flora in our curated gardens, our wide-open spaces, community camaraderie, and the benevolence of family and friends. Despite the electrical blackouts, evacuations and fires, for the most part, we have been spared despair and tragedy. As a gardener, I find solace, grace and gratitude

while toiling in the dirt. I encourage you to discover happiness and joy in nature. Pay attention to the details. Walk around your home and journey into the garden to observe how your world is colored.

Begin by practicing gratitude for the simple things you take for granted: the bright red hues on the Boston Ivy, the intricate patterns on a coleus plant, the varied textures of a mosaic of palms, redwoods and liquid ambers swaying in the wind, a thick blanket of leaves fallen from the Japanese maple. What about being grateful that in normal times, we have electricity at the flick of a switch or warm running water by turning on a spigot? As frustrated as we are with our power company, we still luxuriate with more conveniences than people in many countries. We can't become numb to the delights and challenges of living.

The increased popularity of foraging has resulted in a stream of articles in magazines recently. Although I do advocate adding a variety of wild weeds to our diets, it is also important to caution the inexperienced about the dangers of picking plants that are unfamiliar. Whilst purslane, dandelions, amaranth and lambsquarters are highly nutritious, there are many botanicals that can trigger major allergies or even be deadly when consumed. Hemlock, which resembles wild carrots or Queen Anne's lace and oleander will kill humans and animals. Until you are knowledgeable about what you are gathering for your next supper, it's best to purchase your “exotic” greens from a Farmers' market or local vegetable bin.

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