

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

2020 Garden Trends, Part 2

Dream green



Photos Cynthia Brian

Water lilies oxygenate a pond or water source.

By Cynthia Brian

“A dreamer dreams that everyone else in his dream must awaken before he can awaken.”

~ Ramana Maharshi

After my column, “The Power of RE” was published, I received numerous positive comments about how readers were implementing RE into their lives. It is gratifying to know that people read my articles, but I’ve always wondered what people do with the information they receive.

Orinda resident Kathy Boyle showed me. She wrote: “I was intrigued by your ideas in your Lamorinda Weekly article about the power of RE. As I was reading your article, I was envisioning those ideas in the context of gardening and recycling in my everyday life. But then that wonderful Cervantes quote inspired me to amplify the ideas to how I am trying to live my life, especially during these very odd times.” (“Take a deep breath of life and consider how it should be lived.” ~Miguel de Cervantes)

An elementary school resource specialist for 40 years, Kathy had learned the power and effectiveness of ideas being created as colorful bulletin boards for kids. Now in retirement, she uses doors, walls, windows, mirrors, and even the shower door as her special bulletin boards by designing colorful visual pages to inspire herself. She also crafts pocket cards to carry with her on her hikes in nature. Her innovations helped me re-imagine my dream for this second part in the 2020 Trends series. Thanks, Kathy for sharing your talents and for



Aloe is a plant that everyone needs as it heals burns and cuts.

reaching out. Your art has reinvigorated me.

Green careers are on the rise. From Boomers to Generation Z, people are finally understanding the call of the wild. From watering vacation gardens to talking to struggling plants, jobs are waiting to be filled. Horticultural therapy and plant blogging can become full-time careers.

As our climate warms and more natural disasters occur, it is time for everyone to wake up to dream green.

Growing up on our farm, to be “dirt poor” meant that we had plenty of land, but not enough money. I remember the first time I visited New York City when I was 19 and witnessed tiny bags of “dirt” being sold for \$5 and more. I telephoned home and told my Daddy that we could be rich if we packaged and sold our acres of dirt. He responded that there was a big difference between soil and dirt in our century. Healthy soil is rich in vitamins, minerals and organic matter. Dirt doesn’t have any nutritional value and isn’t valuable for growing anything. Unfortunately, today soil has been stripped of its nutrients. Erosion and deforestation have washed away one-third of the world’s topsoil. Crops are planted for yield, not for nutrition. According to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, if this negative trend doesn’t retreat soon, organically rich soil will be eliminated by 2050.

We have to dream green.

By embracing regenerative gardening practices, changing methods of farming and forestry, we can mitigate carbon and reverse the damage. We need to rebuild soil with organic matter, restore degraded



Kathy Boyle’s creative poster for The Power of RE.

soil, and reduce runoff. By composting, cover cropping, and no-tilling practices we can conserve wildlife and return to native soil. People are waking up to sustainability and the importance of caring for our environment. Composting reduces household waste by 40%. By growing organically, we revitalize the soil naturally. Planting cover crops of alfalfa, clover, beans, and mustard will control weeds and add nutrients to the soil. When planted in lawns, clover adds nitrogen to the earth, eliminating the need for additional fertilizer.

What about the greening of indoor spaces? Houseplants are connecting people with nature while cleaning the indoor air. Many young people have less income and live in smaller spaces. Succulents, bromeliads, peace lilies, snake plants, aloes, and fiddleleaf fig are easy to grow and long-lasting. Taking a class, attending a seminar, or watching how-to videos on YouTube are all terrific ways to learn more about growing nature inside.

Pollution, pesticides, UV radiation, and climate change are all leading to the destruction of habitat for amphibians and wildlife. If your garden is silent, it is not healthy. We need the croaking of the frogs, singing of the birds, and the hooting of owls. They keep our gardens vital by dining on mosquitoes, beetles, snails, rats, gophers and other pests. Plant ferns near water sources to protect frogs, toads, and turtles. Submerge water lilies to oxygenate the water while providing cover.

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