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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A painter's palette of purple, gold, cream, and orange include bearded iris, statice, calendula, rose, and euphorbia. Photos Cynthia Brian

"My garden is my most beautiful work of art" - Claude Monet

A vase filled with cascading jasmine sits on my nightstand just inches from my bed, its heady scent perfuming the entire room. Not only is it beautiful, but it is my sentinel alerting me when I awake that I still have my sense of smell. Since one of the symptoms of contracting COVID-19 is the loss of taste and smell, I appreciate the fact that I can smell the roses as well as all the marvelous fragrances breezing through my garden. I have always been filled with gratitude for the simple things in life, but now, more than ever, I am cultivating artful gratefulness with increased urgency.

I am so thankful for my lush landscape. I live in what I call my "private botanical garden" where every day I am greeted by surprising sprouts, sounds, and sights. It's been eight weeks since I've worn any make-up. My daily wardrobe consists of my grubby garden garb, tool apron, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, and boots. Splinters, scratches, bites, and itchy poison oak are a

blight to my body, yet I am so joyful to spend my days weeding, seeding, and feeding as I witness the magnificence unfolding in this labyrinth of blossoms. Rose entwined arches, mustard growing 15 feet into the trees, clematis bowered on trellises, a mosaic of colorful floral layers dazzling on the hillside, a parterre of bearded iris, cornflags, daylilies, and roses hemmed by clipped boxwood, butterflies flitting from flower to flower, bees humming in the citrus. nature is a living painting!

My garden is my most spectacular artwork. Some of it is messy and wild, other parts are formal and civilized. As my camellias wane, my florescent pink rhododendrons take center stage. Azaleas in containers, as well as those planted in the ground, are on a continual blooming cycle.

A variety of trees, both deciduous and evergreen, fruiting and flowering, screen and define the property. I've been pruning, thinning, and cutting deadwood in anticipation of fire season.

My goal during this coronavirus crisis is to keep our immune systems strong by eating as many fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruits from my garden as possible. Artichokes are almost ready to be harvested. My citrus crop has been supplying my family and friends with daily doses of vitamin C. After delivering lemon limes to my neighbor, she offered me a goji berry plant which I am excited to grow as a living fence. Also called the matrimony vine, goji berry plants can be pruned and shaped to keep them small so that the red fruit which will ripen from July to October can be easily harvested. The berries contain more vitamin C than oranges, more potassium than a banana, and more iron than a steak. In addition, I learned that goji berries contain a high concentrate of vitamins B1, B2, B6, C, E, and 18 different amino acids and zinc. I am so thankful to grow this new specimen that will enhance our health.

Gardening is not a hobby; it is an essential part of my creative being. Gardening is a survival skill and an art form. It is gratifying to sow a seed, water, fertilize, prune, and nurture that tiny seedling to full bloom. No matter how small a home is, we can always grow herbs in a pot on a windowsill or fill containers with vegetables and flowers displayed on a balcony or porch. With a garden, we bring beauty into our lives. Especially in troubling times, beauty is critical to grow our hopes and dreams. This lockdown has sparked an increased appreciation for the solitude and splendor of gardening.

Let your garden be your most attractive work of art. Plant a painter's palette of exquisite color. A garden is a refuge, a sanctuary, a quiet, safe place. Propagate positive possibilities and cultivate artful gratitude.

Stay healthy. Stay safe. Stay home. Stay grateful.

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Gardening Guide for May

SCATTER snail and slug bait before they destroy all your sprouts.

PREPARE for fire season. Cut out the deadwood from bushes and trees, prune limbs and clear brush.

CLEAN leaves from gutters.

CUT tall wild grass to the ground.

CHOP leaves and flowers from wild mustard for salads and sandwiches.

WATER deeply and when needed.

PULL daffodil and other bulbs spears as they dry.

DEADHEAD roses, calla lilies, and calendulas as blossoms fade.

CLEAN greener this spring by using friendlier ingredients found in your garden such as lemon juice to remove grease, mildew and stains.

WALK a nature trail for exercise, beauty, and curiosity satisfaction, keeping your distance from others and bringing a mask.

PLANT beans, squash, cucumbers, corn, gourds, melons, and pumpkins directly into the garden now. Because of their tender taproots, they do not transplant well.

BUY tomato seedlings to plant anytime.

COMPOST your coffee grinds, eggshells, vegetable peelings and tea leaves.

BAG your lawn clippings only every other mow. It's best to leave the clippings on the lawn as feed for the roots, but many people find the extra grass too messy.

TUCK edibles into your flowerbeds. Parsley and garlic chives look especially handsome as a border.

REGROW scallions by sticking the root ends in water after snipping. You'll get a fresh crop very quickly.

THIN apples and stone fruit to ensure a bigger, healthier harvest. Leave two to three fruit per cluster.

HARVEST artichokes, arugula and Swiss chard.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



The lush hillside luxuriates in a mosaic of verdant green foliage.



Snails snacked on Jackmanii clematis wrestled from the roses.



An overabundance of blossoms on citron lemon trees are perfumed bee magnets.



Artichokes will be ready to harvest soon.



Rhododendrons burst into fluorescent bloom as the camellia flowers wane.



Clipped boxwood hem a parterre of bearded iris, cornflags, roses, and daylilies.



Selfie of Cynthia Brian, without make-up, standing under the 15-foot mustard flowers. Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your spring garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia 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. Buy copies of her best-selling books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Cynthia is available for virtual writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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