



*A moment of Zen in one Moraga man's backyard  
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## *Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian* **Planet pivots**



Photos Cynthia Brian

**Pale pink roses imbue solace in warm weather.**

**By Cynthia Brian**

“I should like to enjoy this summer flower by flower as if it were to be the last one for me.”  
– Andre Gide

Summertime and the living is easy! Or is it?

This year will be a year like no other highlighted by the frightening health pandemic and sorrowful civil unrest. As the economy slowly reopens, people are clamoring to shop, dine, socialize, get haircuts, and have their teeth cleaned. The

line of masked individuals waiting outside reopened stores for their turn to enter is a testament to the yearning to gather. Protesters fill the streets across the country demanding needed national changes. It’s time to listen, re-evaluate, and educate ourselves. Connecting with the natural world is one prescription for finding healing and balance.

While I was researching grants to assist the literacy charity, Be the Star You Are! ([www.BetheStarYouAre.org](http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org)) financially survive during this crisis, I marveled at a constant question: How have you pivoted? At first, I had no idea what that question meant. What did we have to do to pivot? Where were we supposed to pivot to? After many Zoom conferences, meetings, webinars, and phone meetings, I finally understood.

But how can pivoting apply to gardening? The entire world is experiencing chaos. People who have spent minimal time with nature, who have never thought of growing anything, have become interested in planting and protecting. I’ve had emails from individuals from many walks of life who want to get their hands in the dirt as they are sheltering at home. As they decide to pivot, nature is a salve. When times are stressful, gardens become a refuge. Shoveling, digging, pruning, planting, and watching seedlings grow into something to admire or eat are therapeutic endeavors.

Whether you decide to grow a few herbs on a windowsill, tomatoes on a balcony, or an abundance of your favorite vegetables, flowers, and fruit in a large garden, there is nothing better than a summer of flavor and colors grown in your personal paradise. When you pivot to your garden, you’ll slow

down a bit and feel appreciation. Research consistently indicates that being around growing plants benefits you physically, psychologically and emotionally. You’ll decompress, gain more muscle mass, increase aerobic endurance, reduce stress and experience more joy.

Summer has always been my most favorite season because of the delightful warm weather and bountiful baskets of fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs that I harvest from my orchard and potager. The plethora of glorious blooms constantly changes keeping my elation peaked. Unlike most people, I prefer not to travel in the summer months to other destinations. Instead, the beauty of my backyard becomes the playground for family and friends where we barbecue, engage in lawn games, watch the flamboyant sunsets, and wander the grounds watching the parade of wildlife.

Flowering plants are hummingbird, bee, and butterfly magnets while the seeds attract the birds. Agastache, echinacea, hollyhock and roses enchant for months. In my orchard, the loquats, mulberries, tangelos, citrus and plums are ripe. The birds, deer, turkeys, squirrels and I skirmish for our fair share. Soon apricots, prunes and peaches will be ready for harvesting and the wrangling will begin again. I adore these encounters with nature. There is abundance for all.

My field of chamomile is richly fragrant and the petals when plucked and dried will make a comforting tea. The seeds from nigella (love in the mist) have scattered throughout the orchard creating a sea of blue. Bumblebees race from star-shaped blossom to blossom grabbing the sweet nectar.  
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