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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Spring blooming tulips planted in fall are interplanted with delphiniums and pansies. Photo Cynthia Brian

"When the ancients first observed Sirius emerging as it were from the sun . they believed its power of heat to have been so excessive that . the Sea boiled, the Wine turned sour, Dogs grew mad, and all other creatures became languid." ~ John Brady, 1813, a Compendious Analysis of the Calendar.

Forever the optimist, when I penned my last column, "The Dog Days of Summer," I intentionally left out the part of the Old Farmer's Almanac, 1817 that indicates, "Make both hay and haste while the sun shines, for when old Sirius takes command of the weather, he is such an unsteady, crazy dog, there is no dependence upon him."

In the last few weeks we have witnessed the ravages of Sirius with thousands of lightning strikes causing more than 600 wildfires, millions of acres burned, gusty erratic winds, radically unhealthy air quality, and ash blanketing the state. More land has burned in the last few weeks than burned in all of 2019. Death and destruction are the

horrific aftermath.

Our Napa county farm was amongst the blazing landscapes. Everyone living in the valley where our vineyards and ranch reside was evacuated, yet, with firefighters engaged elsewhere battling numerous other infernos, my brother stayed behind on his tractor to cut roads, create safety zones, and clear debris. The hills and pastures burned. He saved the vineyards, barns, and our family home.

Between the brutal pandemic, perverse politics, sizzling heat and suffocating smoke, we all have a reason to despair. To thwart a fire on my hillside, I have cut my dried perennials and annuals to ground level. The only beauty is offered by my faithful blushing naked ladies and lavender society garlic plants and the passionflower vine that is twining up my peach tree. The ground is parched.

As I was repairing a broken water pipe so that I could irrigate this arid field, my optimism suddenly resurged. Swallowtails flitted through the smoke-filled air searching for a colorful landing place. A hummingbird settled on my string of patio lights before nuzzling my pink jacobinia growing in a cement urn. A five-lined skink, also known as a blue-tailed lizard, perched on a nearby boulder completely uninterested in my cutting and gluing efforts. I completed my project, picked a ripe tangerine from the tree, headed for the hammock, and savored the juice as it dripped down my chin. Swinging, I contemplated my future gardening desires.

This is the season to start making a list of what you want to grow for the forthcoming months. Bulbs to order or buy for autumn digging include daffodils, tulips, freesia, ranunculus, hyacinth, Dutch iris, anemone, and crocus. Freesias are one of nature's greatest gifts with splendid scents, a cornucopia of colors, and the ability to naturalize. Daffodils are probably the most popular and least expensive of all the bulbs. They also will naturalize. Deer, rabbits, and other critters won't eat them, allowing their happy flowers to bloom for long stretches. When winter is nearing its finale, crocus will make you smile as they push through the soil to reveal their rich colors of blue, violet, yellow and white. Treat yourself to a garden filled with tulips. You'll want to buy your bulbs soon as they need to be refrigerated for at least six weeks before planting. For more impact, group colors, shapes, and sizes together in a swath. They are wonderful interplanted with delphiniums, pansies, and other annuals or perennials for a very merry greeting.

After a traumatic summer filled with climatic extremes, sowing seeds for a bountiful harvest of late fall to early winter salad greens and vegetables is a welcome endeavor. What seeds do you want?

Try any of these:

Lettuce

Spinach

Arugula

Swiss Chard

Kale

Beets

Fennel

Turnips

Broccoli

Carrot

Kohlrabi

Shallots

Garlic

Radish

With the seriousness of the sizzling Sirius and the dangerous air quality outside, stay indoors and peruse catalogues and gardening books to get ideas for fall planting. On Thursday, Sept. 17, I'll be doing a Zoom presentation, "Tips, Tricks, and Tonics in the Garden" for the Moraga Garden Club celebrating its 50th anniversary. For information on this Zoom meeting, call Membership Chair Jane Magnani at (925) 451-7031 for times to join in the conversation and presentation. We'll keep it light and fun.

Summer is coming to an end and this is a great time to check for sale and clearance items that you may want for our outdoor landscaping for next year. I have found great deals at <https://bit.ly/3aG6qOI> including covers for patio furniture. As much as I love the heat, the chance of wildfires is omnipresent. Make sure to read my article on how to be prepared in the event of any emergency (see Page D14).

The Roman poet, Virgil described Sirius as "bringer of drought and plague to frail mortals, rises and saddens the sky with sinister light." The veracity of his narrative has been realized in 2020. Now more than ever, we can use large doses of humor, hope and healing. Let's employ kindness and empathy for one another as we prepare for planting autumn bulbs and seeds. A bright and beautiful spring display is only two seasons away. Embrace optimism.

Happy gardening. Happy growing.



Powerful pink jacobinia grows well in containers and is a hummingbird magnet.



Plant seeds of two varieties of Swiss Chard.



Turnips, fennel and beets.



Cynthia Brian swings in the hammock. 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 and receive extra freebies, 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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