

Published October 28th, 2020

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Carve pumpkins and bake bread with ghoulish faces. Photos Cynthia Brian

their children. Although most everyone has probably decided how to celebrate, I'd like to add a bit of nature to the mixture.

When I was raising my two children, Halloween was always a major event, but not in the way that most kids participate. Every year our family would join with two other families to enjoy a full weekend of scary festivities in a circa 1900 Victorian in the middle of an isolated mountain forest that had been in the family of our friend for over 80 years. The drive to get to our destination was on a bumpy, winding, pot-holed road, with gnarled trees that jutted out of nowhere and deep canyons that could be perilous to the amateurish driver. The ride alone was frightening!

The house had no electricity (unless we used a generator) and the water was pumped from the creek. We always began our adventure with a hike to pick wildflowers and gather feathers, branches, colored leaves, and grasses to make decorations. Sometimes, we'd saddle the horses on the property to carry our bounty,

The landscape boasted a big vegetable garden that enthralled the kids. "What do you want for dinner?" we'd ask. Each child would grab a basket to pick their favorite vegetables. The fun began with the children helping to prepare our evening meal. On Halloween, we'd start the day picking apples in the orchard. We'd take the apples to the barn where we'd press them into apple cider, saving some to make apple pies. We would also play a fun game, Bobbing for Apples, giving prizes to the winner. (Not a recommended activity during this pandemic!)

Next was the pumpkin carving. Each person was given a pumpkin to carve or decorate. We saved seeds for roasting and some for planting in the spring. Again, the kids would go to the vegetable garden to pick their favorite vegetables. We'd craft with our found nature treasures and decorate the "haunted house." Everyone would get dressed in their home-made costumes, followed by our Halloween feast.

Of course, the best was yet to come. The kids, all decked out in their Halloween regalia, couldn't wait.

Trick-or-treating!

All the lights would be extinguished except for lanterns and candles. Darkness dropped with the haunting sounds of the night and a bit of help from the hidden boombox. One parent corralled the kids on the porch as the rest of the costumed parents hid behind doors of the house with bags of candy. On "go," the kids ran door to door knocking, shouting "trick-or-treat." An adult would jump out with a trick and fill their Halloween bag. After all the treats were distributed, like all kids, the trading and negotiating for candy began.

And, after the youngsters were totally exhausted, (and probably on a sugar high), we adults would celebrate Halloween, too.

The fond memories of these sacred Halloween traditions can be easily translated to our current situation with COVID-19 to ensure a safe and memorable Halloween. This year Halloween is on a Saturday. Make a weekend of it!

If you have a pod of people that you are already socializing with because you are all social distancing, one family could host the Halloween party. Or, make the Halloween event virtual to include more people.

"Listen to them-the children of the night. What music they make!" ~ Bram Stoker

During this season, life is about the kids. This is a time of magic, wonder, and things that go bump in the night. Halloween has always been a favorite holiday for most children in the United States but this year, Halloween, the way it has been celebrated for decades, is canceled.

No random trick-or-treating, no gatherings, no haunted parties.

Since school has been online, kids yearn to get together to socialize with a bit of raucous fun - and candy. With COVID-19 isolation, this year's Halloween is going to be different . very, very different.

For weeks families have been brainstorming innovative ideas to provide a safe, yet enjoyable experience for

- ? Plan and prepare a meal together.
- ? Dress in costume.
- ? Buy a few bales of hay to create a maze. (The hay can be used in the garden afterward as top dressing.)
- ? Carve or paint pumpkins.
- ? Save seeds for roasting and spring planting.
- ? Bake bread with menacing faces.
- ? Make a candy shoot out of PVC to send candy from one person to another yard.
- ? How about a slingshot to catapult candy across the street to your friends?
- ? For those with gardens, employ the kids to pick vegetables and fruits that are festive and fun. For example, guavas are self-harvesting now, so if someone has a guava tree, try a new recipe.
- ? Add a tiny pumpkin to an autumn floral bouquet.
- ? Have a nature scavenger hunt followed by a mask making shindig with found elements: feathers, bark, twigs, flowers, acorns, pebbles, leaves, and more.
- ? Press apples to make a brew of witch cider.
- ? Visit a pumpkin patch with social distancing.
- ? Howl at the moon with the coyotes!
- ? Hoot with the owls.

Adults can hide in closets, bathrooms, or behind any doors. Just make sure to have the treats and a few tricks! Make sure to include the spooky tunes.

Finally, don't forget the candy swap. Whether it is in person or virtual, swapping candy is an age-old tradition that every kid adores. Don't forget the toothbrushes!

Wearing a mask is always appropriate on Halloween and this year it takes on special meaning. Be creative and safe. Make masks!

Shake your broomsticks. A ghoulish, ghostly midnight jamboree may be right outside in Mother Nature at the witching hour. It's time for some hocus pocus.

Have a secure and joyful nature's Halloween.

Happy gardening. Happy growing. Make sure to VOTE!



An alley of pumpkins invites trick-or-treaters into the garden. Photos Cynthia Brian



Bedeck your yard with a bale of hay and big, bright pumpkins. Photos Cynthia Brian



A bucket of guavas with more self-harvesting on the ground. Photos Cynthia Brian



Cynthia Brian's costume encourages voting! 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](http://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](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Cynthia is available for virtual writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardener.com](http://www.GoddessGardener.com)

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA