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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Arizona Roses will continue to bloom until January pruning. Photos Cynthia Brian

"I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all year!" ~ Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol"

One sentiment was universal this season in the holiday cards and emails . hope for a safe, healthy, prosperous future. This has been a year of enormous challenges, chaos, and crisis amid a frightening pandemic that rendered many people feeling hopeless and helpless. Even with shelter-in-place mandates and Zooming taking the place of "being there," resilience will rule the roost as we celebrate at home during the holidays.

Gardening has seen a rise in popularity throughout this year as people craved fresh air while social distancing. Farm fresh food graced the city tables after fruits, vegetables, and herbs were planted by first time gardeners. Green thumbs were grown!

Every day those who tend gardens work hand in hand with Mother Nature. As the Grand Dame, she is always in charge. Gardeners are her faithful stewards, nurturing the land that feeds our bodies while clothing our spirits with beauty, fragrance, and spiritual wellness.

As the earth settles down for its winter nap, we also slow

our pace in our outdoor spaces with preparations for the at-home holiday celebrations and a new year.

Being in a garden provides relief from stress and lowers blood pressure. Gardening transports us to another realm where nature charts the course. Even looking at a beautiful photograph of nature will enhance your mood and elevate your joy.

I have spent more hours in my garden these past few months than ever before. No matter how well I know my landscape, it is ever-changing, never ceasing to amaze and awe me. My body is getting extra exercise from hauling redwood chips to my barren hillsides to stop erosion and enrich the soil. When it began to rain, I fertilized and planted more perennials including guara and golden breath of heaven plus more bulbs for next season. Jonquils are already blooming with their heady fragrance wafting through the chillier air. Azaleas and rhododendrons have burst into bloom and the cyclamen pops with luminous colors. The delicate orange persimmons dangling from the almost leafless branches and the glimmering red pomegranates masquerading as ornaments hanging on the tree fill me with wonder at their annual holiday display. Both delicious and nutritious, they are my December garden gifts.

This is a good time to cut branches from redwood, pine, fir, or other low-hanging conifers to swag staircases and doors with fresh garlands. This practice accomplishes two goals: 1) you get free, fresh holiday greenery and 2) you are preventing future fire-laddering by removing the branches.

For those unable to celebrate in person with families scattered far and wide, this will be a quieter, less ebullient Christmas. Yet the magic of the season will buoy hearts as we anticipate a vaccine allowing us to gather in 2021.

Devote a few hours to hoe, hoe, hoe and the melancholy of the past 10 months will help you carol ho, ho, ho even while you observe the holidays home alone.

Waving a magical virtual wand over your home and garden, I wish you a blessed, safe, and healthy holiday.

We'll be together again next year with faith, hope, and love!

Happy gardening. Happy growing. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

- FERTILIZE trees, shrubs, and ground covers.

- APPLY snail bait to areas where slugs and snails do damage.

- SPREAD elemental sulfur to citrus, azalea, rhododendron, camellia, and hydrangea to lower the soil

PH.

- DEEP feed smaller shrubs to accelerate growth in the gaps of hedges.

- ADD a swath of fluorescent red, white or pink cyclamen to add pops of color to the winter landscape.

- DEADHEAD roses to extend blooming until heavy pruning in January or if you prefer, allow the

rosehips to form. Rosehips are a source of vitamin C and can be harvested for tea.

- STUFF stockings with gardening goodies including a hand trowel, gloves, seeds and a garden guide.

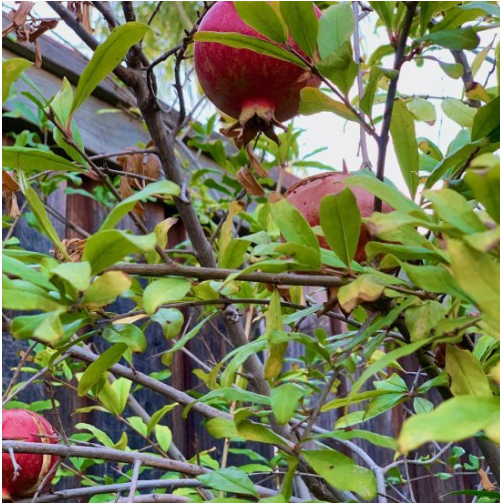
"Growing with the Goddess Gardener" offers 12 months of helpful advice and comes with free seed packets and a relaxing CD. [www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store](http://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store)

- CUT branches of berries from heavenly bamboo, cotoneaster, holly, or pyracantha to add to mantels and wreaths.

- RAKE leaves from lawns to keep them from matting.

- MOVE mower to a higher cutting level and don't mow when the ground is too wet.

- PROTECT tender plants from frost and freeze by moving potted plants inside or close to the house.
- BUY camellias now in the colors to suit your landscape décor while they are stocked as blooming specimens in nurseries.
- CUT back chrysanthemums to six inches after blooms fade.
- PLANT any remaining spring-blooming bulbs.
- CELEBRATE your home and garden for the holidays!



Bright red pomegranates resemble ornaments hanging on the tree. Photos Cynthia Brian



Hachiya persimmons are ripe to make a yummy Christmas pudding. Photos Cynthia Brian



Golden Breath of Heaven (*coloeonem pulchrum*) translates to "pretty" in Latin will bear pink flowers. Photos Cynthia Brian



Incorporate the red berries of heavenly bamboo holiday wreaths and arrangements. Photos Cynthia Brian



The fluorescent red cyclamen illuminates any holiday landscape.



Aptenia, also known as red apple, is a firewise and drought-tolerant ground cover.



Rosehips can be harvested for teas rich in vitamin C.



Cynthia Brian is at home and in her garden for the holidays.

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, 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](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardener.com](http://www.GoddessGardener.com)

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