

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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Home repair advice

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*Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

## The birds know best



A basket of Bing and Queen Anne cherries.

Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

*"I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than of cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs." ~ Joseph Addison, essayist and poet (1672-1719)*

After months of intently watching my two cherry trees blossom and form fruit, I was aghast as flocks of birds began to daily swarm the branches and fly away with unripe cherries in their beaks. Joseph Addison's quote eased my anxiety a bit as the happy trills of full bird bellies filled the air with soulful melodies. From my bench perch, I witnessed Stellar jays, blackbirds, sparrows, finches, warblers, orioles, robins, doves, and other unknown feathered friends dining on my crop. Although I kept instructing my flying diners to eat at the buffet at the top of the trees, since I don't speak avian, they ate wherever they landed. My reward was the entertainment of

witnessing so many species mingling and caroling.

In general, cherries don't ripen once they are picked. It took patience for me to wait until the Bings turned purple and the Queen Anne's had a blush rose on their yellow skins before I grabbed a basket to harvest what was still available. Netting a tree is the way to protect your investment when you have a small tree, but when your trees are 20 feet or larger, netting is more rigorous, although not impossible. My daughter-in-law was able to gather enough cherries from her family plot to make my favorite cherry pies. Her family uses extra-long bamboo poles wrapped with netting to cover their tall trees to protect them from the marauders. It takes several family members to accomplish the task.

The mulberries and loquats are also ripe with birds, squirrels, deer, and me all fighting for the feast. The plums will be next on the agenda within a week. The marvelous part of the sparring and squabbling is nothing goes to waste. Even the fruit that falls is gulped up by rabbits, quail or other critters. (While weeding around the tree, I disturbed a momma quail sitting on her eggs. When foraging, quail eggs are also a delicacy. I didn't touch them!)

These exhibitions made me think about how much humans waste. One-third of all the food produced in the world never gets eaten; 63 million tons of food was sent to landfills by Americans in 2018, producing methane, a greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change.

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Cynthia's daughter-in-law's homemade cherry pie with home-grown cherries.