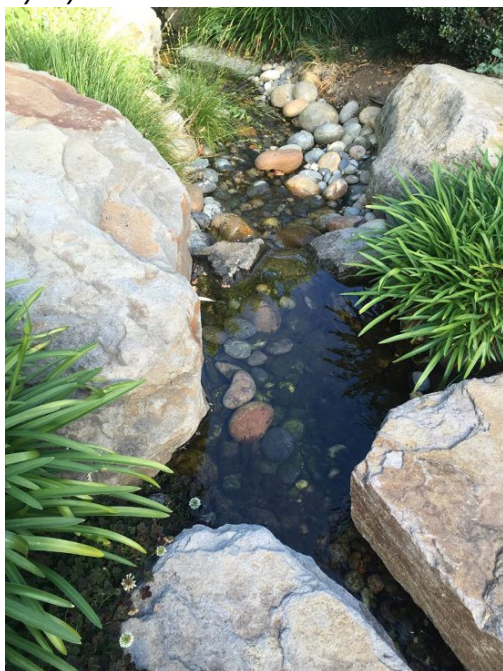


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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A man-made garden stream offers the sound of trickling water over river rocks. Photo Cynthia Brian

stream heightens my creativity. Birds splashing in a birdbath bring a smile to my face. A pond with a recirculating pump provides a happy home for frogs, and if deep enough, fish.

Hammock

Hanging a hammock from two trees is the ultimate in shaded relaxation. I have double hammocks strung between a giant magnolia and Japanese maples. There is nothing quite like swaying in the hammock looking up at the light as it dances between the branches. The colors of the leaves are forever changing. For an afternoon nap on a hot day, a hammock provides a piece of paradise.

Swing

I've installed a metal garden swing behind my pond flanked by orange Birds of Paradise and midnight blue agapanthus. By adding comfy cushions, I can silently swing while listening to the aerating pond and watching the aerial antics of squirrels spiraling through the loquat tree.

Tables, Chairs, and Benches

Throughout my landscape, I have placed multiple tables, chairs, and benches in specific areas to encourage me to take a break from the hard labor. A wooden picnic table under an apple tree begs me to take a lunch period. A bench facing the hills beckons me to behold a doting doe with her twin fawns as they forage. A small rocking chair in a cozy nook allows me to remove my mud boots and watch the sunset.

Paths and Walls

Whether you use gravel, bricks, decomposed granite, pavers, or flagstone, creating paths throughout the garden allows for interesting patterns and yard exploration. Because I believe in recycling, upcycling and repurposing, I always utilize whatever materials are available when I'm building stairs, paths or walls. A former built-in redwood bench is turned on its side to be reused as a retaining planter box. Used bricks add a separation element to the revamped below-deck walkway bordering the tangled wisteria forest.

Pergolas, Gazebos, Decks

A deck is always a great gathering spot. A gazebo or pavilion is a stately structure to sit, embrace the view, and offer gratitude for outdoor rooms. On my deck, under my grape, wisteria and bower vine-covered pergola, I unwind after a long day by soaking in the hot tub. This is my prayer place as I gaze at the twinkling stars above.

Plantings

The selection of specific plants is critical to the overall color and scale of any garden. My goal is always to witness botanical interest 365 days a year through express attention to the trees, flowers, shrubs, bulbs, vegetables, herbs and bushes. Every season brings a change to the landscape. Roses bloom for nine or 10 months when regularly dead-headed. Perennial sweet peas flourish with their pretty purple pea heads from spring until autumn. Pink naked ladies pop up to smarten the summer soils when most other plants find it too hot to shine. Deciduous trees such as a Japanese maple, pistache, crape myrtle, and liquid amber offer spectacular autumn colors.

When you think about creating your sacred spaces, make sure you are bringing the indoors out and

"Nature is the original church. Worship there daily." ~ Alan Cohen

If we have learned anything from the pandemic of the past 18 months, it is that our greatest blessing is to be able to go outdoors to breathe fresh air. Many people choose to hike the hills, walk the reservoir, or take a jaunt to the ocean to calm nerves and preserve sanity. For those of us fortunate enough to have a garden, balcony, porch or patio, we can open a door to escape the confines of lockdown.

The majesty of Mother Nature rivals the most exquisite man-made cathedral. Throughout my landscape, I have designed special areas that stimulate my senses, inducing a sense of tranquility and connectivity with the natural world. I have dubbed these my "sacred spaces," places where I can meditate, watch the wildlife, listen to birdsong, commune with the breeze, rest my weary legs, take a nap, or just sit and contemplate life. My "sacred spaces" provide a structure amidst the chaos, a respite against the turmoil of the times.

We can expand our living environment by crafting outdoor elements that nurture our spirits, emotions, and bodies. Here are a few of my favorite strategies to help gardeners recast their yards into a serene, yet lush oasis.

Water

The sound of water is immensely soothing.

Listening to the gurgling of a fountain or the rippling of a

the outdoors in. Expand your home environment by mimicking and mingling colors, patterns, themes, and shapes through both areas. Great design amplifies your emotional well-being. Rediscover forgotten or overlooked spots. Feel the vibes as you develop your scheme keeping comfort and safety at the forefront. Use your imagination to unearth the endless possibilities.

Mother Nature is the original church. When we honor Her, we will attain a more balanced life with peace as a bonus gift, no matter what is happening around us. As this latest Delta variant spreads its dangerous virus tendrils, I urge everyone to talk with their physicians, listen to the science, and get vaccinated. Discover your sacred space, breathe, and spend as much time outdoors as possible.

A Be the Star You Are!r volunteer from Minnesota emailed me, "I go for walks on our nearby trail as often as I can because it's a way to escape to nature, and I know how you feel about that!?! So off I go." Off you go!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Saturday, Sept. 25, Be the Star You Are!r will participate in the first live event at the Pear and Wine Festival with a booth sponsored by the Lamorinda Weekly (www.Lamorindaweekly.com) and MB Jessee painting (www.MBJessee.com). Wear your mask and visit us! Details at www.bethestaryouare.org/copy-of-events

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Recline on a hammock for the best view of the branches and rustling leaves. Photo Cynthia Brian



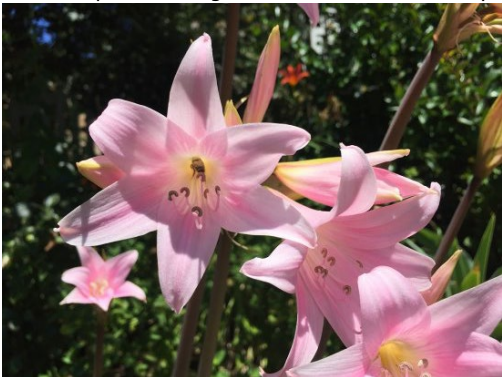
Utilize spaces that are often forgotten, such as the repurposed area below a deck. Photo Cynthia Brian



Perennial sweet peas spread throughout the hillside. Photo Cynthia Brian



A close-up of the elegant Arizona rose. Photo Cynthia Brian



A bee drinks from the pink throat of the Naked Lady.



Comfy cushions bring colors from the indoors to your outdoor sacred spaces.



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 books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Receive a FREE inspirational music DVD and special savings. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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