

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 16 Issue 1 Wednesday, March 2, 2022



Handyman Jim Hurley's New Home Primer
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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Designing for drought



Red Chinese lantern is a perennial.

By Cynthia Brian

"That which surrounds you is within you." ~ Karl Schmidt

Days of heat followed by days of near-freezing cold! Out of nowhere, a beautiful hailstorm covers the ground in white pebbles. The weather forecasts sunshine or cloud cover, but no rain in future days. According to the New York Times, the seven hottest years on record globally were experienced in the last seven years. The atmospheric river of December provided a respite and a hopeful prospect for drought relief. January, February and March are traditionally the wettest months here in California, but this year, January and February were the driest in years and March isn't looking much better. Maybe the Irish leprechauns will exert their magical powers to make it rain on St. Patrick's Day!

Designing for drought:

As I gaze upon my peach tree blossoms intermingled with crabapple buds blooming much too early, I admit that I am basking in this



Calla lilies are perennial charmers.

Photos Cynthia Brian

early spring. Although I am an eternal optimist who imagines positive outcomes, if we want our gardens to survive and thrive, we need to design for the drought. Here's how to get started now to be ready for whatever transpires as the months warm.

1) Check for leaks. Make sure that your outside pipes are insulated against freezing. Water expands when it freezes causing pipes to burst. Even a tiny 1/8-inch crack could spew 250 gallons of water per day. If you witness wet spots, water running along driveways, or puddles, investigate for a leak. Check hose bibs for drips, replace washers, and routinely inspect automatic sprinklers and connections.

2) Amend the soil. The foundation of every garden is the soil. The ideal soil drains quickly while storing water. For drought toleration, add several inches of rich, organic compost to encourage deep root formation while trapping moisture. Make your compost by adding kitchen scraps, eggshells, coffee grinds, tea leaves, shredded newspaper, leaves, lawn clippings, fish bones, aged manure, non-diseased weeds, and other organic matter to a bin or pile.

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