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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A glut of gaga gourds and petite pumpkins.  
Photo Cynthia Brian

"Landscapes move us in a manner more analogous to the action of music than to anything else. Gradually and silently the charm carries over us: the beauty has entered our souls we know not exactly when and how."  
~ Frederick Law Olmstead

It was in the 1860s that America's pioneer landscape architect brought calming, pastoral public areas to urban dwellers with his design of New York's Central Park. Throughout his life, Frederick Law Olmstead, designed 100 public parks and recreation grounds and his successor firm has seen the development of over 1,090 parkway systems over the last 100 years. With all his parks, he planted peace and tranquility for posterity.

With the approach of Thanksgiving, it is finally feeling like autumn with cooler and crisper air, turning leaves, and stressless strolls through bucolic parks. Our climate is changing and as gardeners we struggle to keep pace.

November is the best time to begin planting spring-blooming bulbs. I picked my first bouquet of narcissi of the season on Nov. 1 before I had even begun planting any other bulbs. Once the ground chills to about 55 degrees, start the process of planting naturalizing narcissi as well as other bulbs in well-drained sandy loam where they'll receive at least six hours of sunlight daily.

With our dense, nutrition-lacking clay soil, we need to amend it with sand, peat moss, and compost before

digging the holes. All flower bulbs require neutral pH soil around 7.0 to develop a strong root system that supports flowers. Mother Nature is busy spreading her wild seeds via the wind, birds, animal fur, and even our stocking feet. Most flowers need the next few colder months to rest and germinate. Before the geese head south, walk around your yard to ponder what you'll want to improve, include, edit, or change for the spring. Our year of outdoor work is winding down as our celebration of gratitude approaches. After your big slice of pumpkin pie, work off the calories with garden chores in preparation for a respite in winter. Head to the park to unwind, encounter stillness, and appreciate beauty.

PROTECT plant roots by mulching your garden.

GRIND fallen leaves with a mower to reduce particle size and increase decomposition time.

TURN the soil in your vegetable garden, pull out any unwanted growers such as mint, add buckets of compost, and plant a nitrogen-rich cover crop like fava beans or clover. Blanket the ground with straw and continue mulching until planting time in spring.

SUPPRESS weeds while enriching the soil by laying newspaper (three or four sheets) on your bare earth. The newspaper will biodegrade and the zinc in the ink adds nutrients to the mulch. Cover with straw, leaves, or wood chips to continue adding nutrients.

DIG up bulblets of mother bulbs with numerous offshoots. Separate and replant in other areas.

SOAK ranunculus and anemone tubers in tepid water overnight or for at least three or four hours before planting three inches deep and six inches apart in well-draining soil in full sunlight.

PLANT spring bulbs beginning this month. Make sure you have refrigerated your tulips and crocus for at least four weeks before being dug. The best bulbs to plant for spring radiance include:

Daffodil: Hardy in cold or warm climates. Daffodils grow great in pots, too!

Tulip: Also great in containers. Group like colors together for the greatest impact.

Freesia: Magnificently scented in a rainbow of colors.

Ranunculus: Cottage-style flowers with peony-like blooms.

Hyacinth: Tough, fragrant, growing in sun or shade.

Iris: Purple, blue, white, yellow, and mauve Dutch iris make great cut flowers.

Anemone: Single or double colorful tubers prefer light shade.

Crocus: Only a few inches high, you'll know winter is waning when they sprout.

FORCE hardy flower bulbs of amaryllis, freesias, and paperwhites for Christmas blooming by potting them in sterile, neutral pH potting soil in an area where they will enjoy a temperature of 72-82 degrees Fahrenheit with good air circulation and low humidity. Give them a big drink of warm water, tamp down the soil, and do not water again until green sprouts. Amaryllis will sprout spectacular shows within eight weeks.

CUT stalks of peonies to ground level and discard the cuttings as they are not good for compost. If your peonies didn't bloom, they may be planted too deep. Dig them up this month, rework the soil, and replant 1/2 inch higher than the soil level.

TURN OFF sprinkler systems. Water by hand when necessary.

LOWER mower height as lawn growth slows. If you didn't fertilize in October or earlier in November,

fertilize now with an organic fall blend.

GUARD against an unexpected frost by watering deeply and covering susceptible shrubs with burlap, fabric, or blankets the afternoon before the cold arrives.

REDUCE your garden work out by seeking out plants that are identified as "compact." Look for tags that say dwarf, patio, knee-high, tiny, or baby in the variety name. If a plant tag says "perfect for cut flowers" it will grow to be too large for a small space.

PICK pomegranates as they ripen or split. Harvest persimmons on trees that are being ravaged by birds and squirrels even before they are ripe. Leave on the countertop to ripen as needed.

DECORATE for Thanksgiving with pumpkins, Indian corn, and gourds.

COOK a pan of cubed winter squash with rosemary for a healthy and satisfying Thanksgiving side.

VISIT our local parks to inhale autumn aromas and savor the sensational fall foliage.

This year marks the 200th birthday of Frederick Law Olmstead. As we celebrate Thanksgiving, we can add his legacy to our thankfulness list for introducing America to the beauty, tranquility, and necessity of experiencing nature through the development of idyllic parks in towns and cities.

Let us also give our thanks to the hard-working volunteers of local garden clubs who have planted a multitude of bulbs that will blanket our roadways and hillsides with glorious blooms come spring!

My gratitude to you for being part of my Digging Deep family. Plant peace this Thanksgiving with friends and family and celebrate the melodic beauty of our rural landscapes.

Happy gardening and happy growing. Happy Thanksgiving!



Pretty Pistache trees light up fall at local parks. Photo Cynthia Brian



Harvest red or pomegranates that are splitting to enjoy for the holidays. Photo Cynthia Brian



Add pumpkins and scarecrows to your outdoor Thanksgiving display.



Cover frost-tender plants with burlap or sheets.



Plant deep pink freesia bulbs for an explosion of spring color.



Narcissi is already in bloom, but you can plant additional bulbs now.



Pick Fuyu persimmons while green if squirrels and birds are a problem.



Cynthia Brian enjoys the colors of fall.

Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia Brian 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). Her newest

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[back](#)

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