

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Planting peace



Add pumpkins and scarecrows to your outdoor Thanksgiving display.

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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 bulbets of mother bulbs with numerous offshoots. Separate and replant in other areas.

SOAK ranunculus and anemone tubers in tepid water overnight or



Cover frost-tender plants with burlap or sheets.

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 ½ inch higher than the soil level.

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