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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Christmas ornaments decorate Japanese maples.
Photo Cynthia Brian

"There is material enough in a single flower for the ornaments of a score of cathedrals." ~ John Ruskin

Like so many Americans, the day after

Thanksgiving I pulled out my stored Christmas décor. I'm not one to shop on Black Friday, preferring not to fight the crowds for sale items that I don't need. Instead, I chose to bask in the deliciousness of autumn by spending time meandering around my garden with my adopted animals in tow, deciding where to display my holiday treasures. It was a beautiful clear, warm day with a gentle breeze that tickled the leaves to fall like feathers. Songbirds caroled as hawks circled above in the air currents. As I inhaled the fragrance of pine needles, I exhaled joy and gratitude for such natural splendor.

What I realized was that Mother Nature had already decorated my landscape for the holidays with colorful leaves carpeting the flower beds and blooming white chrysanthemums imitating snow. The merry berry

bushes of nandina, cotoneaster, and pyracantha were chock full of fiery red fruit favored by wildlife. Hachiya persimmons resembled bright orange ornaments hanging on the near-bare branches. I mistook a lone red pomegranate hanging from the golden-leaved tree for a crimson Christmas bulb. Sprays of yellow Meyer lemons glowed like sunshine, while azalea bushes sported leaves in rainbow hues. I climbed the hillside steps to marvel at the multitude of cherry-pink pistache berries flanked by the redwood tree that the squirrels had not devoured this year. In the foreground, my weathervane of a prancing deer reminded me of Dancer flying through the night sky.

I hung gold and red giant ornaments on my Japanese Maples. They glistened in the afternoon glare, yet these trinkets made by humans could not compare to what Mother Nature had already designed.

Many people seek a Christmas tree or Hanukkah bush to brighten their homes in December. Every tree is a perfect tree, even those Charlie Brown ones, especially if a child chooses. If possible, buy a living tree that can be placed on your patio after the holidays are over this year and be reused for the next festivity.

When considering trees, it's essential to also think about safety. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, last year over 15,000 people ended up in the emergency room due to decorating falls, burns, cuts, strains, and electrical shocks. Here are a few suggestions to decorate safely:

Light your yuletide with the freshest tree whether you buy a tree from a lot or cut one yourself. Look for ultra-green needles that are not falling off the tree. Shake the tree and if the needles stay put, you have a winner.

If your tree is not a living tree, soak your tree for 24 hours before installing it and keep the basin always filled with water.

Keep all trees, branches, and flammable decorations away from fireplaces, radiators, and high-traffic areas.

Hang stockings on chimneys only when there is no fire burning.

Buy new lights that have been tested by the Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Make sure that lights for your garden are labeled as outdoor capable. All lights need good wiring, devoid of any broken or cracked sockets, frayed wires, or loose connections. Only use extension cords that are designed for the outdoors and beware of the number of light sets that may be attached.

Never add electric lights to metallic ornamentations as you could be exposing yourself to electrocution.

When climbing ladders, use the buddy system.

Unplug lights and all electrical devices whenever you leave the premises and especially when you go to bed.

Goddess Gardener December Garden Tips

CONSIDER purchasing a living Christmas tree instead of a cut one. Garden centers have a selection of cypress, pine, fir, and even rosemary clipped to resemble a Christmas tree. Place your tree in a charming copper container or wrap it with festive fabric. Live trees will survive year after year and prices are reasonable.

FERTILIZE shrubs and trees after all the leaves have fallen to provide food to last for the season.

RAKE the overabundance of leaves in your gardens to add to the compost pile.

RESEED lawns with Pearl's Premium Ultra Low Maintenance Lawn Seed if you are keeping a lawn. The roots grow down to six feet with 75% less water, and no chemicals are needed which keeps children, animals, pollinators, and biodiversity safer. Pearl's Premium lawn seed sequesters 10 times the carbon compared to shallow root grass. Best of all, scatter it over your existing grass to outcompete everything.
www.PearlsPremium.com

GATHER pinecones, berries, twigs, and grasses to add to your arrangements.

ATTRACT birds to your backyard throughout the cold months by keeping feeders filled and baths ready.

PICK persimmons, pomegranates, quince, and lemons to use in displays and holiday cooking.

PRUNE dormant fruit trees including peach, apricot, prune, plum, apple, and pear. Save the wood for barbecues next summer.

LIGHT up your decorations with battery-powered twinkle lights, or other outdoor lights set to timers. Trees trimmed with lights inspire delight.

HARVEST cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.

ALLOW rosehips and berries to remain on the bushes as holiday bird feasts and picturesque ornaments.

Nature provides enough material to decorate the holidays with ornaments as glorious as cathedrals. Embrace them as part of your festivities.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Holidays!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Saturday, Dec. 10 is Santa Day at 5A in collaboration with Be the Star You Are!r charity. Come get your photo taken with Santa and his elf plus a book signing of the children's book, "No Barnyard Bullies," the perfect holiday gift delivering kindness. Thanks to Mark Hoogs of State Farm Insurance (www.TeamHoogs.com) for sponsoring BTSYA. Info: www.bethestaryouare.org/copy-of-events



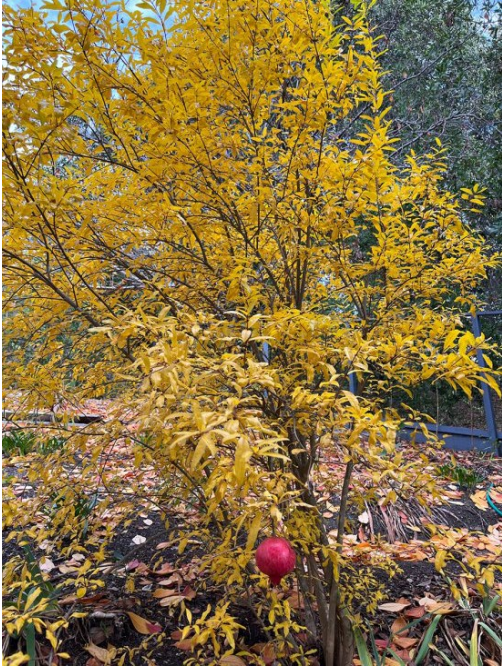
Colorful maple leaves on the ground. Photo Cynthia Brian



The third flush of florets of cauliflowers. Photo Cynthia Brian



Golden orbs of Meyer lemons. Photo Cynthia Brian



Single pomegranate dangles from yellow-leafed branches. Photo Cynthia Brian



Red nandina berries are beautiful but poisonous.



Cynthia Brian by the Meyer lemon tree.

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. Her newest children's picture book, No Barnyard Bullies, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store For an invitation to hang out with Cynthia for fun virtual events, activities, conversations, and exclusive experiences, buy StarStyler NFTs at <https://StarStyleCommunity.com> Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com
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