

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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The Real Estate Quarter in Review ... read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Spring sojourn

Photos Cynthia Brian



Red tulips in Prague, Czech Republic



Tulips and white pansies in Belgrade, Serbia



Forsythia grows throughout the region.

By Cynthia Brian

"Every spring is the only spring, a perpetual astonishment." ~ Ellis Peters

My legs feel like jelly and my back is breaking. And the pain is not from gardening. It is from walking an average of 10 miles per day on cobblestone streets, up steep hills, down into the woods of national parks, and climbing medieval stairs to fortresses and castles throughout my springtime journey to the former Eastern Bloc countries of Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, as well as Croatia and Serbia. Besides learning more about the history, culture, customs, people, and food, I was on a quest to identify the botanical specimens that we have

in common.

The original weather reports indicated mild temperatures, but a cold front suddenly appeared broadcasting freezing winds, rain, snowfall, and overcast gray days. Locals blamed the meteorologic conditions on climate change and global warming. Yet Mother Nature earnestly wanted to birth spring in a magical awakening from its winter slumber. The rich soil of these European countries provides a foundation for a variety of plants and trees, many of which are familiar to Californians.

Each country has a special association with a specific flower. During the Ottoman conquest, tulips were brought to these countries and tulips were blooming profusely in every land. Hungary claims the tulip as its national flower.

Home to diverse wildflowers, including the Pasque flower, a harbinger of spring, Croatia calls the Dalmatian iris its own. The national symbol of Serbia is the plum tree, which was in full bloom throughout the country. Their national drink, šljivovica, is made from plums. In Romania a wild climbing rose called Rosa Canina is utilized for both health and drinking and the purple Carpathian crocus is the first sign of spring. Bulgaria is the world's leading producer of rose oil used in perfumes and cosmetic products. The roses were not yet in bloom, but the bushes were filled with buds. I was compelled to purchase rose oil which is supposedly excellent for skin revitalization.

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