

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Spring sojourn



Kerria Japanese rose in Croatia



Lunaria, also known as Annual Honesty, in Djerdap National Park, Serbia



A lawn of dandelions, Snagov, Romania

Photos Cynthia Brian



Colorful pansies in metal umbrellas in Vukovar, Croatia

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The Czech Republic is home to a variety of spring-blooming flowers including crocus, tulips, and roses, and is known for its spectacular display of cherry blossom trees which create a stunning pink canopy over the cities and countryside. Blooming tulip magnolia trees were in glorious abundance, adding beauty to the already spectacular architecture.

Bright yellow forsythia, called golden bells, was flowering throughout the region, along roads, in parks, and in forests. Forsythia is stoloniferous, which means when a branch meets the soil it takes root to start another bush. Part of the Brassicaceae mustard and cabbage family, rapeseed/canola farms were ubiquitous as a prosperous and financially lucrative crop. The rapeseed oil is used for diesel fuel and other industrial processes and the edible variety produces canola oil. Many people have allergies to the flowers and don't welcome the blanket of yellow blooms. Living walls of exotic plants, many of which we use as houseplants, were featured in several hotels and restaurants in Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic. Apple, pear, and plum trees were in full blush throughout my sojourn, perfuming the chilly air.

I was surprised to see "lawns" consisting of dandelions, which were very attractive with their edible greens. Pansies in a variety of colors and patterns dotted the landscapes. There were specimens for which I was unfamiliar and intrigued including the butter yellow puff balls of the Kerria Japanese rose in Croatia, the Lunaria dotting the hillsides in the Djerdap National Park in Serbia, and the bright orange Crown Imperial perennial in Croatia.

The Czech Republic enjoyed the most dramatic displays of horticultural bliss. The parks and squares were filled with blossoming European crabapples, tulip magnolias, and colorful tulips, as well as curated window boxes of colorful hyacinths, primroses, forget-me-nots, and other flowering bulbs.

My spring sojourn through Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic has been a time of great beauty, wonder, and education. From delicate wildflowers to bold and bright flowering trees, these countries offered a stunning array of blooms, despite the wintery weather.

It is with appreciation that I return to my gorgeous garden in full bloom albeit overgrown with weeds. May is a busy time in the garden, but with a little effort, we can keep our plants healthy and thriving. Follow these tips for gardening chores, and you'll be well on your way to a beautiful landscape. With all the garden work ahead of me, I anticipate jelly legs and an aching back! Spring is a perpetual astonishment and worth the pain.