

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Plant this. Don't plant that!



The petals of euphorbia are intricate and fascinating, but don't be fooled!

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My mother grew the most spectacular lilacs and I am continuing the tradition. Lilacs are low-maintenance plants that thrive in a variety of soil conditions and climates, making them a versatile choice for gardeners. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, lilacs provide valuable ecosystem services. Bees and hummingbirds are attracted to the delicious and substantial nectar produced by lilacs. Some studies suggest that the scent of lilacs may have a calming effect on the human nervous system, making them a great choice for creating a relaxing outdoor environment. My verdict: Plant this.

Euphorbia

While euphorbia may be a beautiful and eye-catching addition to a garden because of the chartreuse-colored blooms, it is important to exercise caution when considering planting this species. Euphorbia contains a toxic sap that can cause skin irritation, and in some cases, severe allergic reactions. In addition, euphorbia self-



Mock orange attracts bees and smells delightful.

seeds and spread quickly, making it difficult to control and invasive. Seeds from euphorbia blew into my garden from the surrounding hillside. At first, I was thrilled because I had seen this specimen in the nursery and thought the color was so unique. A single plant multiplied the following year to hundreds, then thousands, suffocating and killing most of my other plants as the roots strangled other roots. For the past five years, I have been pulling plants by hand and discarding them into the garbage bin. Despite my earnest efforts, euphorbia still invades my orchard and attempts to creep into my garden beds. My verdict: DON'T PLANT EUPHORBIA.

Mock Orange

The mock orange tree, also known as Philadelphia, is a beautiful flowering shrub that produces fragrant, white, or cream-colored blooms that attract butterflies and hummingbirds. This shrub is relatively low-maintenance and easy to grow, making it an ideal choice for novice gardeners. It is often used as a natural screen or hedge, providing privacy, and adding



Photos Cynthia Brian

The crimson streaks on the stalks of poison hemlock make it easy to identify.

aesthetic value to your outdoor space. I planted my two trees next to a brick stairway to enjoy the soothing and relaxing fragrance as I passed. Prune and shape the way you wish. My verdict: Plant this.

Poisonous Hemlock

Despite being highly toxic to humans and animals, poisonous hemlock was introduced to the United States from Europe as a decorative plant in the 1800s. All parts of the plant are poisonous. It contains a toxin called coniine, which can cause respiratory failure, paralysis, convulsions, and ultimately death if ingested in large amounts. (Remember Socrates?) Poison hemlock is a member of the carrot family and resembles Queen Anne's lace. Hemlock is easy to identify by the crimson streaks on the stems. The leaves are fern-like and the white flowers delicate, but beware, this invasive plant grows to 12 feet or more and is very difficult to eradicate with its long tap roots. Wear protective clothing when pulling or mowing. Do not put the plant in the compost pile. Dispose of the entire plant in the garbage and make sure that the seeds have not spread. Like euphorbia, poison hemlock seeds blew in from the adjacent open space and began to take over my hillside. Euphorbia and hemlock often grow in tandem. Both are extremely difficult to control. Every year I get a bit closer to extermination, but plants still find their way to grow. My verdict: DON'T PLANT HEMLOCK!

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