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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Cezanne Clematis is a true painter's dream climbing vine. Photo Cynthia Brian

"Gardening is the art that uses flowers and plants as paint, and the soil and sky as canvas." ~ Elizabeth Murray

The verdant hills have turned golden as the peak of summertime splendor arrives in July. The sunsets are sensational while the wonders of nature captivate our senses. A girlfriend gifted me the book, "Color In and Out of the Garden" by Lorene Edwards Forkner, and I find myself swinging in my hammock under my magnificent magnolia perusing the brushstrokes and hues of the garden as I turn the pages.

Finally, my months of intense weeding are complete. My hands and fingers are still numb from the repeated motions, yet I am reaping the glorious joy of nature's painted floral magic. My garden is indeed the lens through which I see the world.

The tapestry of color helps me learn to see with eyes wide open what the landscape produces this month. The compact Cezanne clematis boasts deep purple flowers that cover the vine. (I seem to have numerous famous artists in my garden collection including a rabbit named Monet and a bird named Rembrandt.) Fluorescent pink perennial sweet pea has covered parts of my hillside and crept into my carpet roses. Speaking of roses, they are flourishing providing continual bouquets of beauty and fragrance. Pink and purple appear to be my summer theme as purple trumpet vine and potato vine climb together in my rose garden where cerise-colored Angel

Face roses reign and pink knotweed blanket the soil. A new succulent growing in a container on my front porch burst into bloom in shades of luminous pink/purple. What a joyous, festive summer surprise!

Birds of Paradise, both the orange and blue varieties, are showstoppers in gardens. Their flowers do indeed resemble birds. They are easy to grow, easy to maintain, and a wonderful addition to a garden when you are seeking a more tropical feeling. Speaking of birds, hopefully you have included birdhouses, bird baths, and bird feeders in your garden design. Birds are one of our best pest control options. As a bonus, they serenade us with song and provide entertainment as they flit from limb to limb. Install a porch swing, bench, or hammock (my go-to) and enjoy the performance.

As an experiment, I planted tomatoes, thyme, peppers, and shallots in a large container outside my kitchen window so that I could grab and go. The plants are happy and thriving. I've already harvested shallots, peppers and thyme, and the cherry tomato vines may eventually cover my window! The garlic I planted last fall had green leaves in June, but this past week I harvested it. My recipe for success is to harvest garlic between July 4 and Aug. 1. When the leaves are about one-third golden, gently dig up the soil around the bulb to see if the garlic is large enough. If so, use a fork to dig, not pull, the garlic out of the ground, shake off the dirt, and don't wash. If you let the leaves go completely brown the garlic won't be tasty. I braid my leaves and hang them in a dark, dry place for at least 30 days before consuming them. A dark garage or shed is a perfect location. As with all home-grown produce, home-grown garlic is more flavorful. Also, a solution with garlic and water sprayed onto plants is a natural pest repellent! I also add a clove of garlic to the soil around my roses to deter bugs.

In my last article, (Summer blooms brighter: www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1710/Digging-Deep-with-Goddess-Gardener-Cynthia-Brian-Summer-blooms-brighter.html) I discussed the importance of composting. I fill five-gallon buckets with compost, then spread it around my roses, and dig it into the soil in my potager. Compost works miracles and it is so easy to make. Save everything but meat and add to a closed container, pile or bin. Add scraps of soap if you want to keep the unwanted insects at bay.

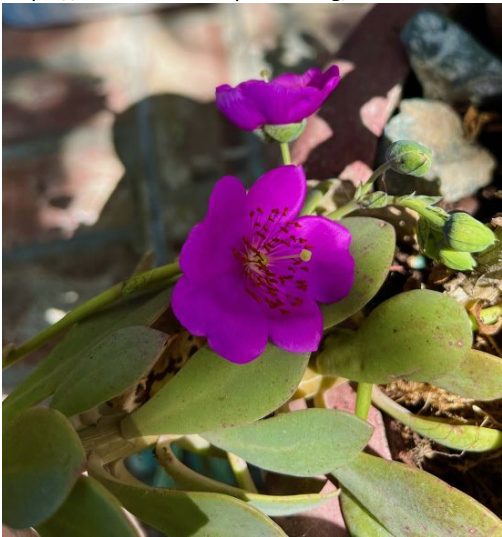
It is time to start considering the bulbs you may want to plant in the fall. Peruse garden catalogs or ask your nursery expert for suggestions. With ample sunshine and warmer temperatures, we can enjoy a dazzling summer of garden parties and floral displays. Going beyond our backyards, check out community gardens throughout our area that unite neighbors and foster a sense of camaraderie. The joys of July gardening include ecologically friendly practices, promoting biodiversity, conserving water, and supporting the artistic heritage of our environment. The Monarch Butterfly Garden created by the Moraga Garden Club at Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga is a favorite. Get inspired by the collective efforts of Lamorinda residents who have beautified each city by creating vibrant and sustainable green spaces.

Unleash your creativity and indulge in the art of cultivating colorful gardens and explore the wonders of nature in this glowing golden month.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy July!

Final Days: Shoe Drive for Be the Star You Are!r ends on July 30 with a goal of 2,500 pairs. Shoes

may be dropped off at <https://5aspace.com/>, 455 Moraga Rd. #F, Moraga or www.TeamHoogs.com, 629 Moraga Road (next to 7/11), Moraga. For more information, visit <https://www.bethestaryouare.org/shoedrive>



A surprise bright pink bloom on this potted succulent. Photo Cynthia Brian



For a tropical look and summer stunner, the blue-flower bird of paradise is a winner. Photo Cynthia Brian



Fresh garlic was harvested and will be dried for 30 days before consumption. Photo Cynthia Brian



Cherry tomatoes growing in a container with thyme and peppers. Photo Cynthia Brian



Purple trumpet vine and potato vine twine together.



A friend's daughter, Maria, created this hand-painted birdhouse from a gourd.



Cynthia loves roses all year round!

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, Family Forever, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available for PRE-ORDERS now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com <http://www.GoddessGardener.com>

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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