

Published September 13th, 2023

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Clipped topiary with blue hydrangeas Photos  
Cynthia Brian

"The Land! That is where our roots are. There is the basis of our physical life." ~ Henry Ford

As a gardener, I spend copious amounts of time thinking about roots. Healthy roots are critical indicators of the overall health and survival of plants and trees.

Why are roots essential?

**Anchorage:** One of the primary functions of roots is to anchor the plant firmly in the soil so that it is not uprooted by wind, water, or other forces of nature.

**Absorption:** Roots absorb water and nutrients essential for growth and development. The extensive network of roots maximizes the plant's ability to access these resources.

**Storage:** The root system also stores energy in the form of starches and sugars which can be utilized during periods of drought or new growth.

**Transport:** The vascular system extends from the roots to the leaves to the stems facilitating movement of water and nutrients.

**Stabilization:** Roots reduce erosion by binding the soil particles together making the plant strong and stable.

**Microbial Support:** Roots contribute to improving soil structure by promoting microbial activity and organic matter decomposition. Mycorrhizal fungi and nitrogen-fixing bacteria enhance nutrient uptake and protect plants from pathogens.

**Aeration:** Roots create tiny channels in the soil as they grow. These channels allow oxygen to penetrate deeper into the soil, which promotes a healthier ecosystem. Roots also prevent soil compaction which aids in better water infiltration and growth.

**Drought Resistance:** Periods of drought are survivable because of deep root systems and taproots.

Without healthy roots, all plants would struggle to survive.

Human roots are also important.

Recently friends invited my husband and me to a picnic and a private wine tasting at Beringer Brothers in St. Helena. "How fun," I responded. "It will be great to be back in my stomping grounds." Although we had been friends for years and they knew that I'd grown up in the vineyards, they didn't know the story of my roots. I'll share a snippet of my heritage with you.

My paternal grandfather, Fred Abruzzini, was the son of Italian immigrants who emigrated to America via Canada at the turn of the century. As a boy, he began working with my great uncle at Cribari Winery in Madrone where he became the winemaker.

Between Prohibition and the Great Depression, many California wineries closed. Beringer Brothers was faltering. Federal agents suggested to Bertha Beringer that she hire someone with integrity and knowledge, someone like Fred Abruzzini. He motored up to St. Helena and when he saw the caves, he believed that he could make some excellent wine. In 1932 at the age of 28, in exchange for free rein, he was hired to be Beringer's manager, winemaker, and chief promoter. He gambled that Franklin Delano Roosevelt would be elected President and end prohibition, so he began crushing more grapes, making wine and port.

Prohibition ended in 1933 and in 1934 Grandpa had the innovative idea to open the cellars to the public for tours, and on special occasions, free tastings. For the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, a World's Fair held at Treasure Island, he created the first colorful map of "one of California's most delightful one-day trips" where all roads led to Beringer. He, my grandmother, father, and uncles would drive the 60 miles every evening to hand out maps. The tourists came. He sent boxes of wine to Hollywood celebrities inviting them to stop over and made certain that local and national newspapers reported these events with photos in front of the carved cask. Clark Gable, Carol Lombard, Charles Laughton, Tom Mix, Ginger Rogers, Roy Rogers, Abbott and Costello, Max Baer, Rudy Vallee, and a bevy of other luminaries visited often and became friends. Fred became a legend in Napa Valley with his publicity for the wine industry and put it on the map.

As children, we rode horses, barbecued, roamed the caves, and played at the winery. For many years, the grapes from our vineyards were crushed into Beringer wines. Grandpa was killed in 1988 when a gigantic elm tree toppled on him while he mowed his lawn. He would be proud to know that the roots he planted as the first person to offer tours and tastings to the public have grown into Napa Valley being the beautiful and renowned wine destination it is today.

Cuttings from those first grape canes planted by my grandfather are rooted and thriving in my garden. His children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have continued his legacy.

Roots. Yes, they are the basis of our physical life.

The Goddess Gardener's September Gardening Guide

DEEP SOAK roots of trees in need with a soaker hose during dry spells.

REMOVE aphids on plants by mixing into a spray bottle two tablespoons of dishwashing liquid. Spray affected plants daily to smother the aphids.

HARVEST apples, Asian pears, Bartlett pears, grapes, blackberries, tomatoes, prickly pear, and quince. CUT and dry big heads of hydrangeas for indoor bouquets.

PLAN to plant cover crops to add maximum benefits to your soil over the winter. Fall mixes can include seeds of legumes, grass, grains, brassica, vetch, rye, clover, and radish. These will suppress weeds, add aeration, and increase soil aggregation.

SEND a plant off to college with your student to keep the indoor air clean while offering memory and concentration improvement. Prayer plants, peace lilies, pothos, and snake plants are easy-to-grow specimens that will acclimate well to dorm rooms.

SAVE seeds from your favorite perennials.

DEADHEAD roses for several more flurries of blooms before January.

PRUNE a shrub into a creative topiary!

ENJOY the bright colors of impatiens in borders and beds.

RELISH your roots!

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!

Mark Your Calendar:

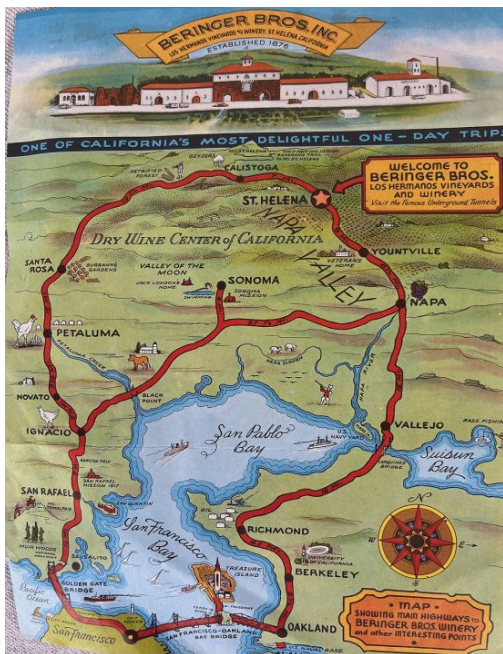
On Saturday, Sept. 30, Be the Star You Are!r will host a booth sponsored by the Lamorinda Weekly Newspaper and MBJessee Painting at the Pear and Wine Festival in Moraga. Stop by to plant seeds and pick up bags of free potpourri. More info at <https://www.bethestaryouare.org/events-1/2023-pear-and-wine-festival>



Bright impatiens are perfect in fall borders. Photos Cynthia Brian



Winemaker, Fred Abruzzini with Clark Gable in front of the famous carved Beringer cask. Photos Cynthia Brian



The map from 1939 with a delightful one-day trip from the Bay Area. Photos Cynthia Brian



Zinfandel grapes are ripe. Photos Cynthia Brian



Chinese fringe flowers with a spiral topiary.



Continue to deadhead roses for continual blooms.



Prickly pear fruits are delicious. Wear gloves when peeling.



Quince makes excellent jams and jellies.



For more gardening advice for all seasons, check out Growing with the Goddess Gardener at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/books>. 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](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Her newest children's picture book, Family Forever, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) <http://www.GoddessGardener.com>

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