

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Rolling in the leaves

By Cynthia Brian



Golden leaves of a male Chinese pistache.

Photos Cynthia Brian

“Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away; Lengthen night and shorten day! Every leaf speaks bliss to me, Fluttering from the autumn tree...” ~Emily Brontë

There is something so comforting and beautiful about watching the falling leaves of autumn. Winter is just three weeks away and the nights are colder, yet I'm not willing to abandon rolling in the leaves just yet. The sensory, aesthetic, and cultural factors of fall are reasons that I appreciate this season.

The vibrant colors on my deciduous trees range from golden yellow to rustic sienna to persimmon orange to deep crimson, creating a visually stunning and warm landscape. The changing foliage transforms the environment from natural to decorated as we enter the holidays. Within the next few days, the trees will have shed their autumn cloaks and I'll begin hanging boisterous balls of Christmas cheer on their naked branches.

But for now, the rustling sound of leaves underfoot, the scent of decaying foliage, and the crispness of the air evoke a pleasure that only this time of year can provide. Watching the leaves flutter to the ground re-

minds me of butterflies in search of nectar. Like many young people everywhere, raking leaves into a big pile and jumping into it, rolling around with carefree joy, is a fond memory of childhood. As an adult, I am filled with nostalgia for those simple traditions. Never too old to be silly, I make angel wings on a bed of fallen leaves. The power of nature unearths the awe, amazement, and wonder in such an enjoyable endeavor.

Our gardens are winding down for their long winter nap. Landscapes look lonely and lacking color, except for a few favorites. If you've been deadheading your roses, your bushes will continue to bloom and delight through January when it will be time for the heavy pruning. Persimmon and pomegranate fruit are delicious ornaments hanging on trees as they quickly ripen to embellish the forthcoming holiday table. Ripe Hachiya persimmon pulp can be used to make a delectable barbecue sauce that can be frozen for summer gatherings. Pomegranate seeds are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants. Add the seeds to salads. They are worth the effort involved.

In preparation for Christmas décor, I am drawn to adding pots of poinsettias to a variety of plantings. Poinsettias look festive anywhere and are readily available in stores. Try tucking samples into your succulent garden or combine them with cyclamen and impatiens.

Before winter arrives, savor the fluttering fall finale, allowing the leaves to speak bliss.



Cyclamen and impatiens planted with pots of poinsettia.



Red-vein Chinese lantern flowers look like holiday ornaments.