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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian It's Eco-Optimism for the 2024 Garden Trends Report!

By Cynthia Brian



Clip baby arugula to add to salads as it grows.
Photos Cynthia Brian

hottest year on record with record-high temperatures since record-keeping began 150 years ago, it is no wonder that eco-anxiety is rising. From January through September, Earth's average temperature was 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the 20th-century average of 57.7 degrees Fahrenheit; 200 million people could be displaced by 2050 and 25,000 species are in danger of extinction due to climate change (and we better do something so that humans are not among those listed). Since 2000, climate-related disasters including fires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanoes, storms, droughts, landslides, melting glaciers, and extreme temperatures have increased by 50%.

□ Where's the optimism in these statistics?

□ The good news is that 68% of people ages 18-24, more than 1.2 billion individuals, are acting to make positive climate impacts. Hurray for our young people! Wind and solar power broke energy use records this past year. If we eliminated greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide), within three years, global temperatures would begin to lessen. In March of 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced over \$1.6 billion in apportionments to support states, commonwealths, and territories in their efforts to connect people with nature and conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats. When we support wildlife and their habitats, we support ourselves.

□ As gardeners, scientists, horticulturists, and communicators, we have a responsibility to understand the environmental roadblocks and ease the very real eco-anxiety that permeates our global population. We all need to be worried and stressed about climate change yet know that we can create solutions. As the trends study says, "stubborn optimism needs to motivate us daily because the future IS worth fighting for." We can make a meaningful change.

□ Twenty-five years ago I founded the 501 c3 charity, Be the Star You Are!r (www.BetheStarYouAre.org) with a mission to empower women, families, and youth through increased literacy and positive media messages. Throughout this quarter of a century, I've had the honored opportunity of working with several generations. Gen Z is without a doubt the most climate-aware and the most willing to speak up and out. Because they will inherit the world that older generations have created, they want to make a difference now. And 52% of the world believes that Gen Z will find the answers.

□ How do you see the future and what are you going to do about it? Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Garden trends for 2024 will include terrariums and night gardens that shine in the starlight. Plants to pick will be more alien-looking, bright, variegated, and/or neon-hued. We will be encouraged to illuminate our gardens with glowing orbs. If weather permits, cosmic cocktails will be the new trendy concoction.

□ Will you delight in the darkness? Interestingly, cemeteries are becoming the hip hangouts, some across the United States offering movies, yoga, and horticultural therapy. In modern cemeteries, gravestones are also planters. Not a style that I embrace, this new trend is called Goth Gardening. Planting eerie, dark-hued plants are the norm as well as leaving gardens a bit untidy where withered and dying

"With gratitude, optimism is sustainable." ~ Michael J. Fox

□ Welcome to 2024. New cheer for a new year!

□ Here we go again. Every year the Garden Media Group scouts global consumer trends, including fashion and home design, plus everything in between via global experts to bring resources, new products, and ideas to help companies and gardeners become trendsetters, gatekeepers, and influencers.

□ I have never considered myself a trendsetter, gatekeeper, or influencer because I believe in creating a style that reflects one's individual tastes and aesthetics. My company is StarStyler Productions, LLC because I believe that we each can design a life that allows us to live in a style as the stars of our own lives. Yet, every year, I look forward to the Garden Trends Report because it is filled with information that anyone can utilize to craft their horticultural year in a positive, affirmative manner.

□ As an ultra-optimistic person, I find their 2024 trends theme of Eco-Optimism especially critical and thought-provoking. This column is based on their findings, and I hope you find it as fascinating and noteworthy as I do.

□ First the bad news.

□ Did you know that 67% of Americans 18-23 years of age experience eco-anxiety, which is a chronic fear of environmental cataclysm? With 2023 ranking as the

plants add to this dark, ghostly theme.

□ I fancy curating garden experiences with up-lit trees and plants. My statuary reflects a preference for angels rather than devils. When I create memorial gardens for my loved ones who have gone to the great gardens beyond, I plant trees, shrubs, and flowers that remind me of them. My gregarious gardener mom's memorial garden area is called "Alice in Wonderland" and my farmer dad's is "Daddy's Outstanding in His Field." Planting memorial gardens filled with plants that they grew and were fond of is a wonderful way to honor and remember their contribution to my life.

□ Bugging out is another trend. The National Gardening Survey saw a 10% increase in gardener's planting for bees, butterflies, and birds. More people are planting natives. How can you do your part? Plant early and late-blooming flowers. Bees need all the food they can get. Queens are the only bumblebees that survive winter. Without them, future generations will not exist.

□ Many weeds provide bees with important food sources. Piles of brush or other "messy" piles of rocks or shrubs add valuable backyard nesting habitat. Let the dandelions flourish in winter.

□ Don't disturb any nests that you may stumble upon.

□ A few winter notices from my garden:

□ My yellow cherry tomato plants are still putting out flowers and creating delicious tomatoes so I'm letting them grow.

□ Roses are also still blooming and flourishing. I will do a hard pruning either at the end of the month or the beginning of February.

□ Potatoes are sprouting.

□ Every day I cut shoots of my baby arugula to add to salads. Yummy!

□ Bergenia (elephant ears) is my trusty pink-blooming plant in winter.

□ Apple trees are feeding humans, birds, and other animals. The most delicious apples ever!

□ When it rains, my rain chains have been a wonderful addition to my rooftop.

□ We will investigate more trends and data in the next Digging Deep column. Until then, I wish you, your family, friends, and colleagues, a simply wonderful 2024 with gratitude for your readership and optimism for the future from my immediate family to yours!

□ Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy New Year!



Roses are still performing and blooming. (Tournament of Roses) Photos Cynthia Brian



Yellow cherry tomatoes continue to set blossoms and fruit. Photos Cynthia Brian



When it rains, RainChains is a pretty and practical choice. Photos Cynthia Brian



Sign at the garden entrance, Angels Gather Here, with primrose plantings in the rear. Photos Cynthia Brian



From Cynthia Brian and her family, wishing you a very happy, healthy, optimistic 2024.

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. 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 <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com>

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