

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly

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Expert's advice on decluttering sentimental items read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

It's Eco-Optimism for the 2024 Garden Trends Report!

By Cynthia Brian



Photos Cynthia Brian

Clip baby arugula to add to salads as it grows.

"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



Roses are still performing and blooming. (Tournament of Roses)

tastes and aesthetics. My company is StarStyle® 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 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.

... continued on Page OH6

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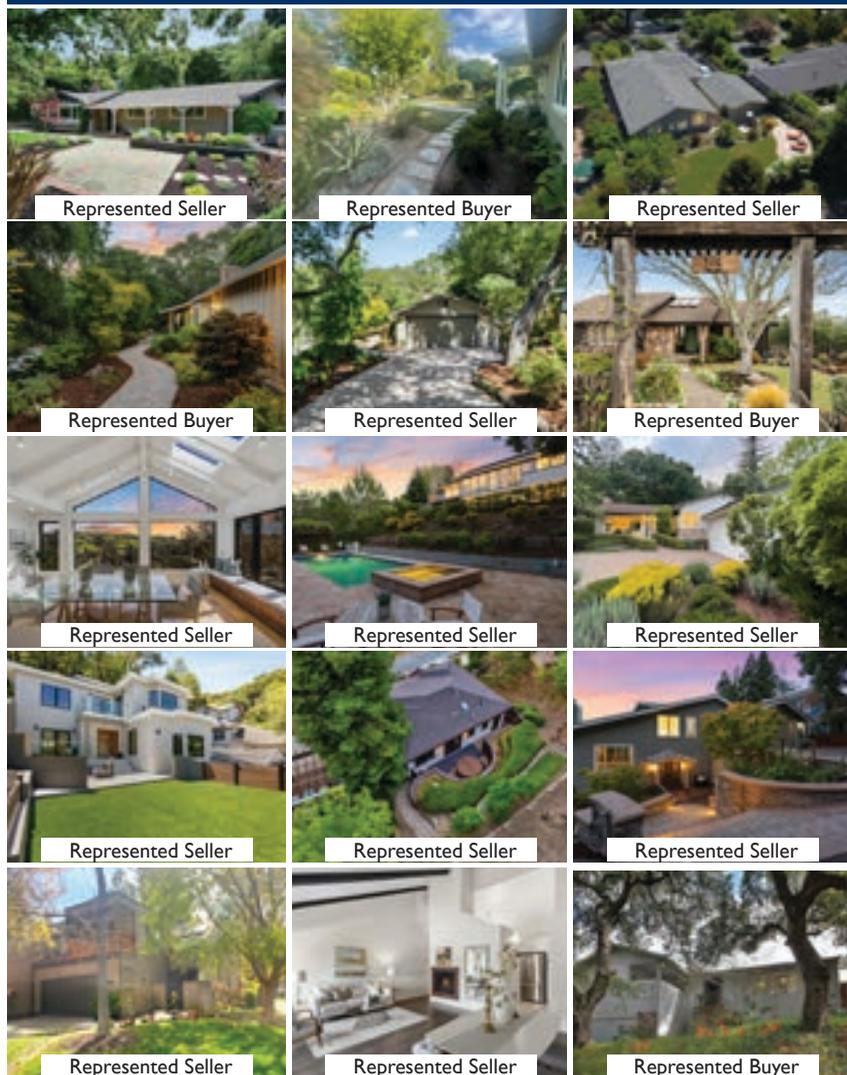


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The sentimental person's guide for letting go of belongings

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO



Photo Shutterstock

When it's time to start reducing your belongings for whatever reason – downsizing, decluttering or there's a move in your future – it's often very difficult for the sentimental person to let go of their possessions.

Sentimental people see the memory value in their belongings and have a hard time letting go of them, which can create trouble when their possessions start to take over their space. This often leads to large amounts of clutter everywhere and can cause overwhelming feelings and even depression.

The sentimental person often keeps items because they represent or remind them of someone that they have lost or of fond memories from the past. They keep items from their kid's childhood, things that reflect their accomplishments, things that remind them of who they used to be and the things they used to do. This is why it can be so hard to let go of these items. Rather than letting go of all of these things, the goal is to keep a small amount of the most precious items. Items stuffed in a box in a garage cannot be easily enjoyed. Culling a special few items out of hundreds or thousands of items that have been stored can reduce the volume of

belongings and do a better job of honoring the memories of the people and events in your life.

"I inherited my family's belongings and I can't seem to let them go" is something I hear from many of my clients. The items that you have inherited from your family may not fit into your life, but you're afraid it will upset other family members if you decide to get rid of them. They might take up space in your garage and they might even have been there for years and years. Because you feel so guilty getting rid of anything, you decide not to decide because decisions are just too hard. One of the reasons the decisions are so hard is that we are afraid if we give up the item, we will lose the memory. One of the most effective ways to keep the memory for you and for your family going forward is to create memory books with photos of the items. This is a great way to honor the legacy of the person it belonged to. The photo memory books are also a super way for you to start your own legacy memories for your family – these books can include photographs of your accomplishments and experiences.

... continued on Page OH4

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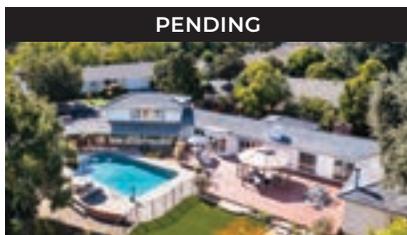


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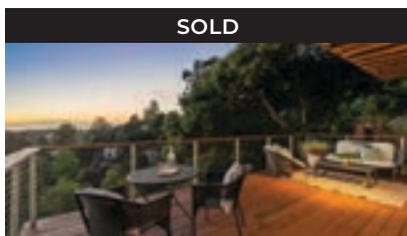
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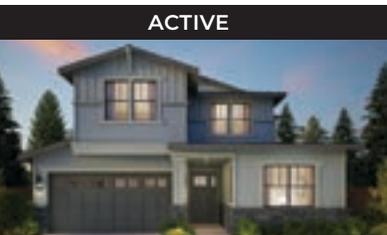


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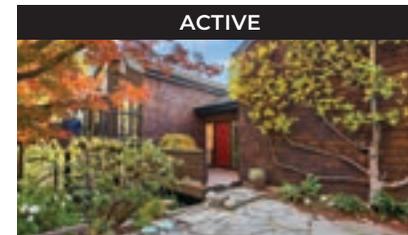


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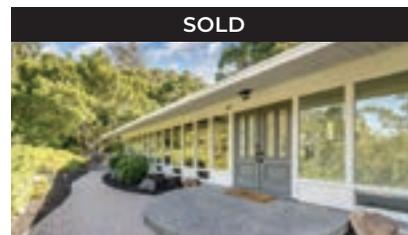


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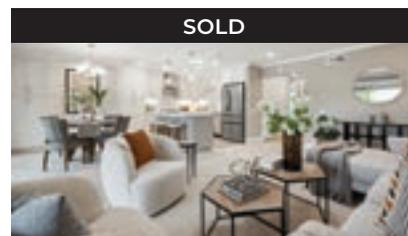
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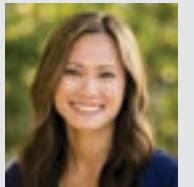
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The sentimental person's guide for letting go of belongings

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO

... continued from Page OH4

Another hurdle to getting rid of things is the feeling that we want to make sure they go to a good home. If we know somebody will appreciate them and the items are not being trashed, it can help us let them go. I would recommend spending some time doing the research as to where you want your items to go. What charities are close to your heart? Have you already asked your family and friends if they would like any of the items?

Once you have decided to let items go, I recommend taking them out of your house as soon as possible. The sooner you let things go the sooner you will see progress. I do not recommend leaving those boxes in your car or your house as you might be tempted to go back through them. It's kind of like ripping off a Band-Aid – if you go slowly, you prolong the pain; if you do it fast, you'll get it over with.

Kids' memorabilia can be a very difficult category for many people. I recommend only keeping a few items from grade

school, junior high, high school and college for each child. You could create a memory book or box for each child with photographs of all of their accomplishments.

If your kids are grown and they do not have interest in keeping their old toys, are you hanging on to them for the day you may have grandkids? Even if you do have ample space to store these items, will they last over time to be safe enough, clean enough, and interesting enough for your grandkids? I know some people like the nostalgic value of old toys, but again these nostalgic items can be shown in a picture album to your grandkids instead of holding on to all of the actual toys.

For many people, giving up items that have sentimental value is always going to be challenging. Sadly, we can't hold on to everything. The more we hold on to from the past, the less meaningful items from our present can come into our lives.

I hope everyone has a very happy New Year and that you enjoyed spending time with your loved ones over the holidays.

Professional Organizer, Jennifer Raftis, CPO® founded Efficiency Matters, LLC to help you with all of your organizing needs for your home and business. She is a Certified Professional Organizer and an active board member with NAPO, National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals.

She is also an independent representative for The Container Store and has expertise in designing closets, garages, pantries, playrooms and more. In addition, she is a Corporate Organizing and Productivity Consultant and has worked with Fortune 500 companies across the U.S. Another large part of her business is move management especially working with seniors who are downsizing. She and her husband have lived in Moraga for 30 years, raising 3 kids and working countless volunteer hours with many local non-profit organizations and schools. Jennifer@efficiencymattersllc.com, 925-698-3756
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Photos Cynthia Brian

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

It's Eco-Optimism for the 2024 Garden Trends Report!



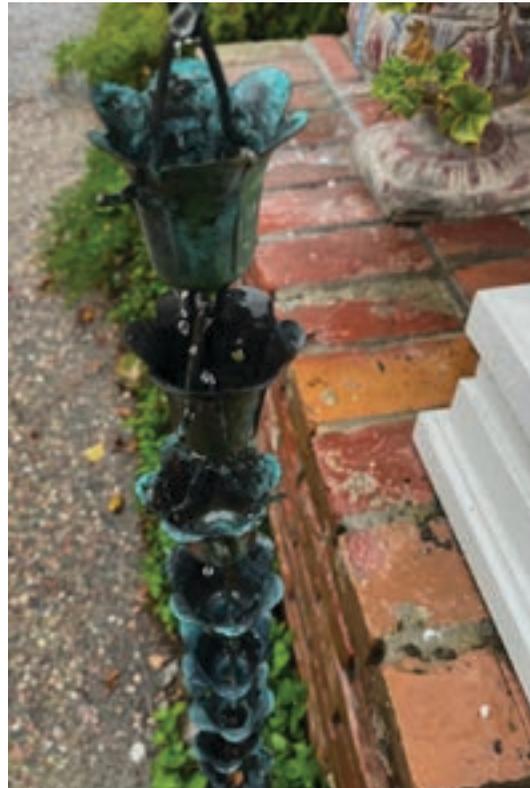
Yellow cherry tomatoes continue to set blossoms and fruit.

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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!® (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



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

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 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!



Photos Cynthia Brian

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



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!® 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® 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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