

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 18 Issue 2 Wednesday, March 13, 2024



Lamorinda Home Sales

... read on Page OH2

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian **The Garden Melting Pot**

By Cynthia Brian

Photos Cynthia Brian



From East and Southeast Asia, the spectacular *Magnolia Soulangeana*, AKA tulip magnolia, AKA saucer magnolia blooms profusely in California.

“When a flower opens, the whole world appears.” Zen Saying

Unless you are a member of an Indigenous tribe, you are a part of the great melting pot that we call the United States of America. Even if your ancestors arrived on the Mayflower, you are still not considered a native. Like people, plants have immigrated to our shores and have found love, compatibility, and regions to survive and thrive. We often read about the need to plant more “native” plants, but what are they? Are “natives” any better than “non-natives” that have acclimated to our climate and soil while claiming our hearts?

The definition of “native” by the United States Department of Agriculture’s US Forest Service indicates that a native plant species has “evolved and occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, and habitat. Plant species native to North America are generally recognized as those occurring on the continent before European settlement.” For example, California poppies, the state flower of California, are native from the slopes of Western Oregon to Baja. However, people

assume that *Echinacea purpurea*, known as Purple Coneflower, is native to our area, while in fact, it is only endemic to states east of the Rockies. Yet borders are not observed by plants, so perhaps a better description of a “native” would be a plant that has adapted over time to thrive in conditions that were like their endemic habitats.

Because true natives are well-suited to the climate and soils of a region, gardeners believe that they won’t require as much attention. But being “native”

doesn’t mean that a species doesn’t require water, fertilizer, pest protection, and maintenance. Natives are not immune to drought, predators, temperature fluctuations, and other garden stressors. Our landscapes are not natural environments; our gardens are man/woman made! Forests, woodlands, deserts, and marshes have evolved over millennia to be biodiverse and resilient.



Ceanothus, California lilac, is a drought-tolerant, flowering native.

... continued on Page OH8