

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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The Real Estate Year in Review

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

April showers



Photos Cynthia Brian

Jasmine twines around a birdbath filled with succulents.

By Cynthia Brian

“April hath put a spirit of youth in everything.” ~ William Shakespeare

If experiencing rain in a dry season doesn't put a spring in our step, what will? After months of no precipitation, finally, in April we experienced a few showers. A critical ingredient of California's water supply, the Sierra snowpack is less than 40% from its peak. The drought will be with us this summer and fall but these mid-spring storms will deliver May flowers.

Jasmine is the delightful scent permeating the air, especially after a rain shower. The intoxicating perfume is rejuvenating. I grow jasmine throughout my landscape, various vines twining up trees. Mul-

tiple colors of bearded iris tender their brilliance in the middle of my hillside, where, after the rainfall, new weeds sprout. Proliferating is Herb Robert geranium, a fragrant weed that is pretty when small yet suffocating to other plants when full-grown. The positive aspect of this weed is that it is very easy to pull out by the roots when the soil is moist. Weeds shooting up on my gravel paths demand attention.

Bulbs and rhizomes are the ultimate celebrities of my garden. Once planted, I forget about them until they burst into bloom, a welcome surprise especially when other plants are failing. If you are a beginner gardener, I highly recommend indulging in bulbs for all seasons. Most require little maintenance or effort with minimal water while providing maximum results. Some of my perennial favorites that are available in hues of white, pink, purple, yellow, and mixed colors include calla lily, gladiolus, oriental lily, bearded iris, Asiatic lily, dahlia, anemone, and naked lady.

The April showers also brought a swath of wild onions or more accurately, *A. triquetrum* three- cornered leek. The invasive, yet edible wild field garlic and three-cornered leek boast delicate white bell-shaped flowers with a distinct onion aroma. If they are growing in your landscape, enjoy them as in culinary dishes as you would chives or green onions, albeit with a stronger flavor. If you are not a fan of garlic or onions and you have these growing in your garden, it can be almost impossible to eradicate an abundant population. Also, be aware that there are other toxic species of flowers that resemble the tree-cornered leek including death camas or death lily. All parts of that plant are poisonous. The best safety method in differentiation is to only eat a plant that looks and smells like garlic or onion.

Another edible weed that I cultivate is mustard. Young mustard greens are delicious sauteed with onions, garlic, and olive oil or added to soups, salads, sandwiches and stews. The flavor is snappy and hot.

Roses are already in glorious bloom. Rose petals can be added to baths as well as salads if they have not been treated with chemicals. With Mother's Day around the corner, perhaps you'd like to present your mom with a gift of roses?

These young sprouts encourage us to embrace the spirit of youth as we march into May. A heartfelt shout out to every mom! You are our nurturers, teachers, and consolers. Happy Mother's Day!