

Extraordinary Ordinary

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." Christopher Reeve
By Cynthia Brian



Pink Zinnia

Photos Cynthia Brian

In the late 1990s I wrote, produced, and hosted an award-winning TV series called *Live Your Dreams* which featured what I termed "extraordinary ordinary" people from all walks of life who were doing what they loved, not for the money, not for the glory, but for the sole reason that it fed their souls. The show was a hit with the multitudes who wanted to follow their hearts, although it never garnered the sponsorship revenue it deserved. Sex and violence were advertisement manna and that program sorely lacked those ingredients.

Walking through a variety of neighborhood gardens, I reminisced on my passion for the simplicity of that program as I witnessed so many exotic specimens dotting landscapes. Whatever happened to the plethora of popular plant players that filled the summertime yards of my youth? Petunias, zinnias, geraniums, four o'clocks, Mexican primrose, tomatillos? I

wondered if they were considered too ordinary and not sexy enough for the limelight? I decided to share my insights on these soulful, dreamy creations with you to reignite the flame of simplicity.

Relatively speaking, petunias are pest and disease free and are great in hanging baskets, containers, and beds. They come in a variety of colors and ruffles with the Grandiflora class boasting big blooms and the Multiflora showcasing compact numerous blossoms. They are annuals but deadheading spent blooms keeps the kaleidoscope coming until late fall.

Zinnias were a childhood favorite because they easily grew by seed, with both tall and short samples. We grew bi-colors, streaked, and speckled specimens. My mom taught us to pinch off the first flower buds

so that we'd get bushier plants. Since zinnias don't do well in alkaline soil, I toss my coffee grinds on them and they thrive in addition to adding fertilizer every four to six weeks. Zinnias are perfect starter seeds to interest kids in gardening.

Geraniums remind me of all window boxes filled with cascading color that I experienced in Germany. What I love most about this garden staple is how easy it is to grow from cuttings. All the varieties of geraniums and pelargonium's I treasure were clippings I traded with other gardeners. Propagating is so simple, many are scented, and all flower from spring to winter here in Lamorinda when I cut them back almost to ground level.

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Four O'Clocks