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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian



A water trough makes a rustic raised bed for all plants, not just edibles. Pictured: rosemary and variegated cordylines. Photos Cynthia Brian

Scientists have speculated the possible return of El Nino in 2015. Even if the storms do return, the forecast predicts only moderate precipitation for Northern California. Fortunately enough rainfall in April greened the golden hills, yet as we approach summer, we must be extra diligent in our conservation methods. The fire danger is enhanced because of our dry winter. In fact, the fire season of 2013 was still in progress as we entered the beginning of the 2014 fire season this month. As humans we have altered the climate and stressed our great globe. It's not too late to begin being better stewards. In my past two Digging Deep's, I've outlined how we can prepare our garden for the forthcoming drought. This is the third installment of the Drought Gardening Series with a list of plants that can thrive with little water.

If you missed Part 1 and 2, you can visit the Lamorinda Weekly website to read them online:

Part 1: Singing in the Rain (<https://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0801/Digging->

[Deep-Gardening-with-Cynthia-Brian-Singing-in-the-Rain.html](https://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0801/Digging-Deep-Gardening-with-Cynthia-Brian-Singing-in-the-Rain.html));

Part 2: Don't Doubt the Drought (<https://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0803/Digging-Deep-Gardening-with-Cynthia-Brian-Dont-Doubt-the-Drought.html>).

Drought Gardening Series - Part 3

Drought Tolerant Plants from Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Enriched, compost amended soil is the most important foundation element to growing any garden. Apply three inches of mulch to maximize water savings, maintain moisture, reduce run-off, and shield the soil from direct sunlight. Group plants with similar water needs together, stop fertilizing, eliminate weeds, deadhead before seed pods form, build wind barriers, create shade, and water appropriately, infrequently, yet deeply. Choose a sampling of these drought resistant, low maintenance specimens:

Annuals
Amaranthus
Cosmos
Cleome
Dusty Miller
Lupine
Marigolds
Poppy
Portulaca
Verbena

Perennials
Agastache
Bush Sage
Blanket flower
Cactus
Currant

Daylily
Echinacea
Fern
Geranium
Ginger
Helleborus
Ice Plant
Lamb's Ear
Lamium
Lavender
Russian Sage
Sedum
Succulents
Yarrow
Yucca

Shrubs
Abelia
Holly
Hibiscus
Hydrangea
Palm
Nandina
Oleander
Pomegranate
Viburnum

Herbs
Anise
Bay
Catmint
Catnip
Chives
Dill
Fennel
Feverfew
Lemongrass
Marjoram
Oregano
Parsley
Purslane
Rosemary
Sage
Spearmint
Savory
Stinging Nettle
Thyme
Wild Garlic

Vegetables
Armenian Cucumber
Artichoke
Bean
Beet
Corn

Chile
Eggplant
Garlic
Lettuce
Mustard
Onion
Pea
Peppers
Radish
Rhubarb
Spinach
Squash
Swiss Chard
Tomato
Turnip
Zucchini

Grasses
Blue Oatgrass
Fountain Grass
Japanese Bloodgrass
Leatherleaf Sedge
Maiden Grass
Pampas Grass
Reed Grass
Zebra Grass

This is not a complete list of plants that will grow with minimal moisture and maintenance. Talk to your nursery professional for more advice and local recommendations. Visit garden centers to see the specimens that will work best with your landscaping requirements. Remember that all plants need water. Natives, succulents, and cacti fare the best in dry conditions and may add beauty and texture to your existing garden with less care. Bulbs are always excellent choices providing perennial color, form, and fragrance. Consider xeriscaping as it conserves 50-75 percent of water utilizing creative landscaping techniques.

Until next time, remember that to build a better future we must nurture nature. We are blessed to live on planet Earth. Care for the land and all of God's creatures and we will reap the benefits. Never forget that love always wins when kindness prevails, plus gardens make us happy. Read a book in May - it's a garden in bloom. Stroll through the garden to actually smell the roses! They are glorious this year.

-Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

PLANT flowers in drifts of several colors to enable bees and butterflies to see them better.
CREATE a wide defensible space perimeter around your home to protect your family from fires.
CONTINUE succession planting of beets, carrots, turnips, radishes, and other root edibles for uninterrupted harvests all season.

COLD hardy peonies are popping up creating waves of color in the garden. Peonies make sophisticated floral arrangements.

PULL weeds that are zapping your water, especially teasel rosette. This roadside weed is a biennial and quite prickly to touch. Nonetheless, many people use the dried flower heads in arrangements because of their interesting shape and size (they can grow up to 2 meters tall). This widely adapted plant is native to Eurasia.

EAT the pea-like flowers of the fava bean plant as well as the leaves. Fava leaves are nutty tasting while the flowers have a mildly sweet flavor akin to spring peas.



Artichokes require minimal water yet provide a hearty, tasty crop year after year.



A variety of colors, sizes, and textures make these aloes, succulents, and grasses a gorgeous addition to a drought garden.



Fava bean blossoms and leaves are edible with a nutty flavor.



Jupiter's Beard is a perennial that brightens the landscape while it naturalizes.



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