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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

By Cynthia Brian



What a lovely surprise to see Jade in bloom in the winter. Photos Cynthia Brian

numerous nominated films and TV series in the upcoming 21st Screen Actors Guild Awards to be simulcast live coast to coast on TNT and TBS at 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25. If I'm not gardening, movies on the big screen entertain and intrigue me, offering a winter respite from the travails of the yard. This is also my special time to analyze what I did right and wrong in the past year, peruse seed catalogues, dream about creative new outdoor spaces, set goals for the new year (maybe I'll study edible fungi), and cook with fruits and vegetables that I froze this past summer in anticipation of this downtime. Embark upon your sentimental journey to enjoy the slow pace of January.

RECYCLE your Christmas tree. Remove the ornaments, lights, and all the trimmings before putting by the curbside on your regular garbage day through mid-January. If your tree was taller than 10 feet, the disposal service requires that you cut it in half.

TUCK surprises into your containers or along walkways to invite guests to stop and start a conversation. I've slipped empty Angel star perfume bottles between orchid fronds (can't throw those lovely blue stars away) and also placed an iron sculpture of two fighters created by my husband in high school on top of a birdbath planted with succulents.

SOLVE the problem of a bare spot by purchasing an azalea, fuchsia, or cyclamen in bloom and placing the pot directly in the garden. When it has finished blooming, transplant wherever you wish.

PRUNE roses, vines, and fruit trees. Canes of roses can be shared with friends. Dip a healthy cane into a growing medium, plant in good soil or in a container.

TIME to order bare root roses. David Austin is introducing four new English roses to the United States for spring. My favorite is called The Lady Gardener. More information at <http://www.DavidAustinRoses.com>.

"Winter, a lingering season, is a time to gather golden moments, embark upon a sentimental journey, and enjoy every idle hour." -John Boswell

As an extreme gardener and sun worshipper, winter is most definitely my least favorite season. After the hoopla of the holidays and the extravagance of a New Year's celebration, January demands reflection, re-interpretation, and relaxation. With the glorious rain we experienced in December, the three creeks on my property are rushing, offering a meditative sound that soothes my soul. The hills are greening, daffodils are blooming, mushrooms are sprouting, and branches are bare. As tempted as you may be to gather wild mushrooms, refrain from doing so unless you are with an expert mycologist or the outcome could be dire. With the exception of pruning, spraying, and weeding, we have very little to do in our gardens this first month of the year. That suits me just fine as I am busy catching up and voting on the

MULTIPLY delight by bringing bouquets of pink bergenia and fragrant narcissi into your rooms. Jade is in bloom, yet there is not much other color in the landscape right now except these enthralling favorites.

WATCH the 21st Screen Actors Guild Awards simulcast live coast to coast on TNT and TBS at 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25. The award shows of the season have nothing to do with gardening, and that is the point.

FEED the birds! With winter in full throttle there is little food for our feathered friends. Make sure to keep feeders out of the rain.

SPRAY fruit trees, dogwoods, and cotoneaster this month with the first of the dormant sprays.

ADD sulfur or coffee grinds to acid loving plants including rhododendron, fuchsia, azalea, rose, daphne, and citrus to give an added boost of energy.

SAVE fireplace wood ashes to fertilize your alkaline loving plants and iris.

MULCH hillsides to prevent erosion, maintain warmth, and assist with water retention.

WEED whenever you notice the unwanted greens popping up to save yourself the trouble when the ground is dry. Weeds are easy to pull in the rainy weather and can be added to your compost heap.

SPRINKLE laundry detergent on mushrooms that grow in your lawn. Personally I love seeing mushrooms as they remind me of my favorite fairytales, but if they bother you, a dusting of laundry detergent exterminates them quickly and safely.

CARE for indoor plants by wiping large foliage with a damp cloth to remove the dust, use room temperature water on all pots, and be vigilante about watching for pests.

TAKE cuttings from fruit trees to graft in April. Wrap cuttings in wet newspaper, seal the wrapped twigs in plastic bags, and store in the freezer until you are ready.

FORCE bulbs of crocus, hyacinth, and lily of the valley.

INSPECT and repair all garden tools and equipment. Make sure to oil, sharpen, and store them securely.

PERUSE garden catalogues and magazines for ideas for a spring garden. Make a list of seeds you'll want to try this year.

REST, relax, rejuvenate, reinvent. Give yourself a respite from the cold, damp, and dreary to dream about a flourishing spring.

Have a safe, happy, and healthy New Year.



Organic baby lettuces will produce all winter long.



Rain drops on the Meyer lemons.



Mushrooms growing in the redwood mulch look delicious but are probably poisonous.



An iron sculpture tops a birdbath filled with succulents.

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