

Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

“The most beautiful view is the one I share with you.” ~ Source unknown

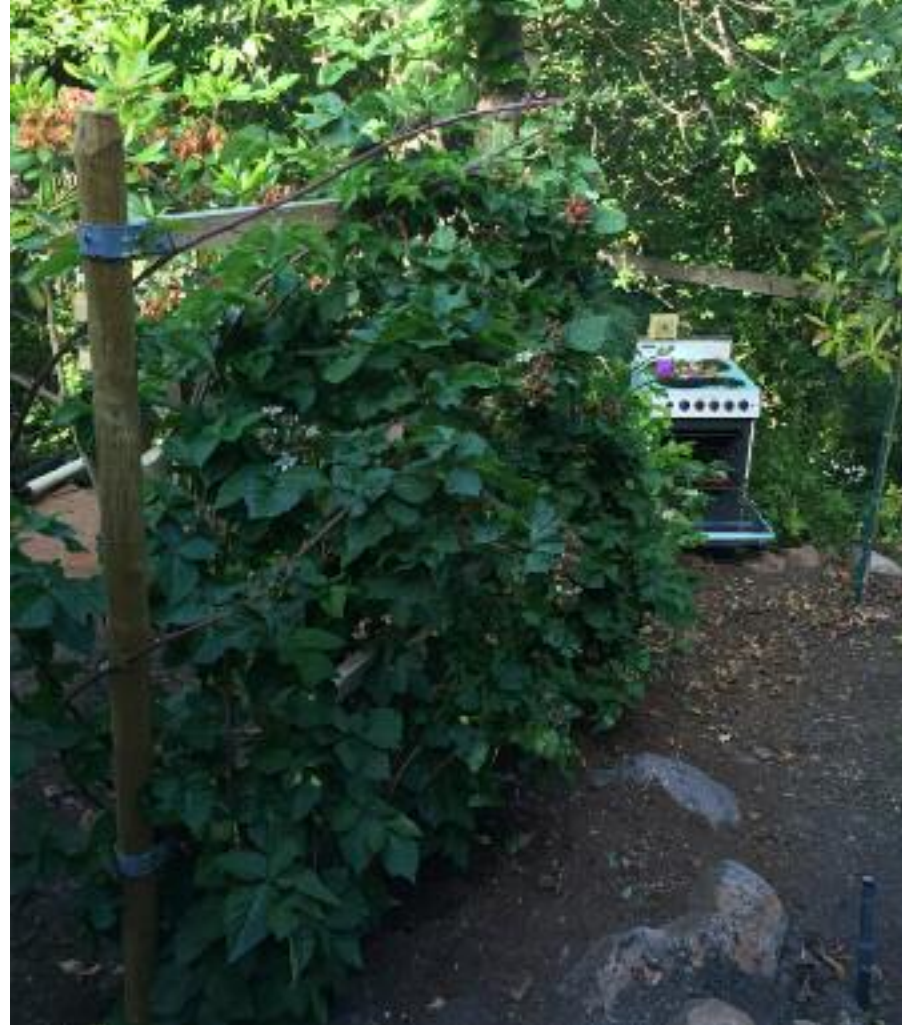


Baskets of geraniums grace an old bicycle.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Two decades ago, a San Francisco family made their way across the Bay Bridge in search of a quiet neighborhood, warm weather, and good schools within easy access of the freeway. At the top of a private drive in Lamorinda, Pam's instinct encouraged her to place a bid on the first house she saw – a stylish Cape Cod backed up to a hill of majestic oaks with plenty of privacy on three-fourths of an acre. When Bob saw the property, though it was overgrown with poison oak, blackberry bushes, and brush, he could visualize the garden of his dreams. Together they envisioned a landscape that would look like it had always existed in nature, albeit with a little help from a professional. The property was cleared of weeds and debris, deer fencing was erected, new topsoil was delivered, and the design was executed.

The family wanted a babbling brook that cascaded into a pond. Forty tons of boulders were trucked in from a Napa quarry and lifted by crane over the house since there was no access to the backyard. The stream springs from the top of the hill property, flowing over river rocks surrounded by ferns, hellebores, trailing gera-



A 1950s stove is a surprise at the end of the berry patch.

niums, grasses, and a plethora of lush specimens until it splashes into the pool where friendly koi gather and a turtle named Flash sleeps beneath the water lilies.

Off the master bedroom, they planted a formal rose garden in the French chateau style, bordered by a clipped boxwood hedge. They kept the original brick patio and outdoor fireplace near the house while creating meandering paths that wind up and down the hill opening unto unexpected garden rooms. Three spectacular Japanese maples and three madrones anchor the design, offering year-round form, structure and color. Drifts of hydrangea, rhododendrons, azaleas, agapanthus, hostas, daisies, carnations and various ground covers fill the background. The gardener in the family, Bob, enjoys experimenting with a variety of specimens. He has created a berry patch with raspberries, blueberries, boysenberries and blackberries. Around another bend, he grows citrus, including a healthy kefir lime plus trees of apple, plum and fig. At the top of the hill, beans, tomatoes, horseradish, herbs, pumpkins, potatoes, asparagus and peppers thrive.

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