

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

By Cynthia Brian

"I look upon the pleasure we take in a garden as one of the most innocent delights in human life." – Cicero



Cynthia's mother decorates so that Santa can find the ranch.

Photo Cynthia Brian

It is hard to believe that the holidays are already here. Wasn't it just yesterday that I was taking down Christmas decorations?

What would the holidays be without the high voltage displays of thousands of twinkling lights illuminating our landscapes? We drive around neighborhoods "ooing and aahing" at the inflatable snowmen waving to us, Santa's sleigh on the rooftops tethered to his blinking reindeer, and flickering candy canes hanging from tree branches. My mom's house is lit up like Disneyland to make sure that Santa can find his way to our ranch.

My last few columns have initiated numerous emails and comments. It appears that gardeners are very interested in hugelkultur as well as growing grass that is not water thirsty.

Regarding the hugels, from the state of Washington I received this very astute email:

"I just read your gardening guide and immediately thought about how the trees where we go camping do this naturally. Frequently, trees have started by growing from a stump

or downed tree trunk. Then, over time, everything mounds up at the base of the new tree. The spaces underneath provide habitat for a multitude of creatures, and the rotting logs, needles, and leaves are material for insects to do terra-forming. They combine the organic with rock that continually slides down from the mountains and into the streams and eventually becomes sand, to form rich soil.

Another thing all this debris on the ground does is to shade the soil, keeping it cooler and protected from evaporation. We use rocks in favor of bark or mulch in many places in our yard. I have thought for years about the practice in the Southwest of keeping all the undergrowth cleared out of forests to help with the wildfire problem – how it sterilizes the forest, taking away opportunities for habitat and soil protection.

We certainly had more than our share of wildfires in Washington State the last couple of years, and I will admit the forest is quite different in those regions. The trees, until you get up really far into the mountains, are very spaced out with no green undergrowth. They traditionally have very cold winters with a lot of snow that lingers, then long, very hot and dry summers.

The mounding practice is something we see nature doing all the time in the mountains near us." KC

KC hit the nail on the head! I was really thrilled to receive this correspondence because hugelkultur derived from exactly this natural forest procedure. In my own yard I have now built two hugels and am planning to continue to build them, especially on my hillsides to prevent erosion, maintain water, and allow plants to grow deeper roots.

On the subject of lawns, I have installed three different areas of Pearl's Premium grass: sun, shade, and sun-shade. It is still too early to report results to you but I do promise to keep you posted on how this miracle turf flourishes. Many of you are very interested in growing a low maintenance grass. With just one or two weeks left of optimum weather, buy new top soil and start sowing. The seed may be carried at your local garden centers or big box stores, but if not, go online to www.PearlsPremium.com. Don't forget to type in "Blue Moon" at check out to receive a 20 percent discount and free shipping.

The festival of lights is upon us as we hark the heralded angels and remember the reason for the season. Light a fire in your heart and shine brightly with love. Tidy your garden, then enjoy the merriment.

... continued on page D10



Refinancing? Purchasing?

Home Lending in Lamorinda over 25 years

Call Kat!

Kat Rider Loan Officer NMLS#202928

Cell: 925.787.1692

kat.rider@prospectmtg.com

1910 Olympic Blvd.#120 Walnut Creek



Equal Housing Lender. Prospect Mortgage is located at 15301 Ventura Blvd., Suite D300, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403, 800-464-2484. Prospect Mortgage, LLC, NMLS ID #3296, (www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org) is a Delaware limited liability company, licensed by the Department of Business Oversight under the California Residential Mortgage Lending Act. 1910 Olympic Blvd #120 Walnut Creek, CA 94596 Branch#301524



DAVID PIERCE

Helping Lamorinda Homeowners Since 1987

Direct: 925 254 5984

david.pierce@cbnorcal.com

www.DavidPierce.net

CalBRE #00964185



©2015 Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. All Rights Reserved. Coldwell Banker® is a registered trademark licensed to Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. An Equal Opportunity Company. Equal Housing Opportunity. Each Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Office is Owned by a Subsidiary of NRT LLC. Real estate agents affiliated with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage are independent contractor sales associates and are not employees of Coldwell Banker Real Estate LLC. Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage or NRT LLC. CalBRE License #01908304.