

Published October 4th, 2017

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October

By Cynthia Brian



A pole of pink and purple petunias shines brightly against the blue skyline. Photos Cynthia Brian

"Delicious autumn!" - George Eliot

The harvest of grapes, pears, figs and apples is in full swing. My ribier grape vine has twined its way into my crabapple tree and I now have a "grape tree" with succulent bunches hanging from branches. If we can keep the squirrels, rats, raccoons, rabbits and birds away, we will be picking pumpkins, winter squash, walnuts, olives, persimmons and pomegranates soon. The season of delicious and nutritious has arrived.

Besides the delectable edibles on the trees, vines, and in the garden, I find myself falling for hanging baskets of spectacular beauty. From the vineyards of Temecula in Southern California to the coastline towns on the Oregon coast, everywhere I travel I've witnessed glorious displays of cascading flowers. Hanging from pergolas, lampposts, balconies, porches and patios, these bloom-filled tubs trump the fern and spider plant baskets of bygone days. The prolific blooms of petunias, fuchsias, impatiens and verbena extend the flowering season with a myriad of bright colors in purple, pink,

white, blue and yellow. As long as the flowers are deadheaded when they are spent, the masses of blooms will continue to be stunning show stoppers until the first frost. Contrasting colors, bright foliage and appealing textures highlight these artistic, fashionable forms.

Even edibles work well in hanging baskets. Peas, strawberries, cherry tomatoes, nasturtiums and any herbs are great contributors. You can even mix and match with vegetables, flowers and herbs. Butterflies and hummingbirds will be constant visitors. For a no-care container, fill it with succulents. Hanging baskets are especially perfect for brightening small areas.

Creating a hanging masterpiece is quite simple and you can enjoy the beauty from spring until winter.

Suggested Bold Statements for Planting

Verbena
Calibrachoa
Cascading petunia
Fuchsia
Impatiens
Lobelia
Cyclamen
Geranium
Ivy
Marigold
Asparagus fern
Sweet potato vine
Begonia
Vinca
Heliotrope
Schizanthus
Viola
Dianthus
Osteospermum
Coleus
Sweet alyssum
Bacopa
Snapdragon
New Guinea impatiens
How to Make a Hanging Basket

1. Any sturdy container that has a hole in the bottom can work including buckets, colanders, or old boots. Plastic planters are the least expensive, however they are also the least attractive. Once the plantings are mature, the container could be covered with greenery, but I prefer to use a wire basket. Line the wire basket with sphagnum moss, coco-fiber, burlap, or even discarded fabric and soak the liner overnight.

2. Add a lightweight potting soil to cover a few inches of the bottom. Don't use garden soil as it is too heavy. The goal is to have a lightweight soil that doesn't compact to promote proper drainage.

3. Plant the flowers, herbs or vegetables you wish and cover with soil.

4. Water thoroughly, making sure that the soil doesn't wash away.

5. Fill with more soil.

6. Water again.

7. Add a moss top layer to help with water retention.
 8. If you are using a wire basket, poke holes in various places and plant your specimens to exhibit a full, rounded globe.
 9. Anchor hooks securely to an area that receives ample sunlight. Keep in mind these baskets can become very heavy.
 10. Water daily, or check if the basket needs water by inserting a stick into the soil. If it comes out dry, you need to water. Never let the soil get soggy or the roots will drown and the plants will die.
 11. Feed monthly with a water-soluble fertilizer or use plant spikes or slow-release fertilizers.
- Hanging baskets add the "wow" to any landscape and provide instant curb appeal. When edibles are included, you'll be able to have a meal from a wheel. Fill, spill and thrill. This is a delicious autumn!
- Cynthia Brian's October Gardening Guide
- CLEAR brush, debris, wood and other flammables from around the perimeter of your house. Fire season is most dangerous in October as everything is so dry. For more information or assistance visit <http://www.fire.ca.gov/>.
- PREPARE soil for reseeding or sowing lawn or adding sod. Next issue I'll be discussing planting lawns in more detail.
- DEADHEAD annuals and perennials for continuous blooming until frost.
- CUT off spent rose blossoms to get another flush of blooms through Christmas.
- TAKE photos of your trees as they begin their autumn wardrobe change.
- PLANT garlic bulbs and cool season vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and Swiss chard.
- REFRIGERATE spring blooming bulbs including crocus, hyacinth and tulip. Mark paper bags and keep cold until planting time in mid-November through January.
- VISIT your favorite nursery to find trees for fall planting. This next month is a prime time for planting trees and shrubs.
- BEWARE of the danger of creosote poisoning if railroad ties were used in your landscape. The EPA has stated that humans should not use creosote treated railroad ties where frequent or prolonged bare skin contact can occur.
- EXPERIMENT with designing hanging baskets for your landscape.
- BE vigilant deterring skunks, rats and other rodents from your property. As the weather turns inclement, they will be looking for shelter.
- VISIT a petting zoo of rescued and adopted animals. Zeus, the camel, became my buddy.
- PLUNGE into a swimming pool, then share a glass of local vino with a friend.
- ENJOY an Indian summer of warm days and cool nights. Get outside for a bit of forest bathing to savor the deliciousness of fall.

Just hang around! We are so blessed to live with four glorious seasons.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Cascading pink petunias.



Japanese anemone x hybrida looks like black current.



A gorgeous combination of multi-colored fuchsias and white impatiens. Photos Cynthia Breian



Cynthia's Ribier grapes hanging from her crabapple "grape tree."



A stunning basket of purple and red petunias.



A basket of beautiful begonias.



Cynthia and her friend, Zeus the camel.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are1® 501 c3. Please make a donation to help with hurricane disaster relief at www.BetheStarYouAre.org.

Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com.

My new book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," will be available by mid month. HURRAY! Thanks for your patience.

Available for hire for any gardening project.

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