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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A cover crop of mustard prepares the soil for sowing. Photos Cynthia Brian

"All through the long winter I dream of my garden. On the first warm day of Spring I dig my fingers deep into the soft earth. I can feel its energy, and my spirits soar."
 - Helen Hayes

My cell rang as I juggled to open the front door, arms filled with books. I pressed the speaker button and in the few seconds it took me to say "hello" my daughter's excited voice chimed, "Mom, I hear the frogs singing. It's springtime!"

As winter bids farewell, the male troubadours "de printemps," fill the early evening mist with their mating croaks to entice the females. Their call is joyous, raucous, and a welcome harbinger of new life. My garden has erupted in a cavalcade of color as one blossom after another unfurls its beauty. Cherries, chestnut, plum, crabapple, Asian pear, Western red bud and tulip magnolia are magnificent with their new wardrobes of rose, white, pink and purple. The feathery fronds of fennel glisten in the sunlight. The fragrance of freesia,

narcissi, and stock perfume the atmosphere. Periwinkle, also known as vinca, enhances garden beds with its tiny blue flowers. Even my roses are blooming earlier than normal. Hellebores, more commonly called Lenten roses, inject the earthy colors of browns and grays into the landscape. As their spring sepals emerge, vibrant hues of purple, green, blue, lavender, red and pink brighten shady gardens, eventually fading in color variation. It seems that all of nature has been holding its breath until the frogs returned cueing the melodic symphony of nature.

On the first 70-degree weather day, I was outside in my bikini and shorts digging in the dirt. Thickets of weeds sprouted after the recent rains. The good news is that they are easy to pull with the dampness of the soil. If you planted cover crops, it is time to turn them under. Once weeds are eradicated, rake the ground before scattering seeds. I'm a fan of California poppies, not only for their shimmering range of sherbet colors, but also because they tolerate extremes in weather, are resistant to deer munchies, and reseed easily. Even the recent hailstorm won't adversely affect poppies. As soon as you can work the ground, sow seeds directly into well-drained beds and plant in full sun. Even if the weather is cool, poppies can handle light frost, so sow now! If you haven't amended your soil with compost, you may need to fertilize. Keep the soil moist then thin seedlings to about six inches apart to allow for the plants to flourish.

Sow Spring Seeds

For a succession of blooms, scatter seeds from any of your favorite annuals. These plants are pollinator attractors, enjoy plentiful sunshine, and most are excellent as cut flowers.

Alyssum
 Aster
 Baby Blue Eyes
 Baby's Breath
 Bachelor Buttons
 Black Eyed Susan
 Bluebell
 Calendula
 Candytuft
 Cornflower
 Clarkia
 Coreopsis
 Cosmos
 Forget-Me-Not
 Gaillardia
 Hollyhock
 Lavatera
 Marigold
 Poppy
 Stock
 Strawflower
 Sunflower
 Zinnia

My preferred time to spread seeds is right before a shower. Keep an eye on the forthcoming weather and plan accordingly. The rain will give your seeds a deep drink and you won't have to water immediately.

Grab your hat, gloves, a spade, and packets of seeds to enjoy the renaissance of nature. Dig your fingers into the soft earth and watch your spirits soar. As the renowned horticulturist, author, artist, and garden designer wrote, "The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies." Be reborn this spring.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for March

PLANT rhubarb for a pretty perennial that will supply you with plenty of ruby red stalks for pies and tarts this summer. Cut off and discard all rhubarb leaves as they contain poisonous oxalic acid.

INVEST in roots of asparagus. Asparagus can take up to five years to produce spears but will continue to offer a bountiful harvest for 20 years. Experiment with Purple Passion (purple is the color of the year!) for a sweet, tender, and mild flavor.

PULL weeds as soon as you see them sprout while the ground is still moist.

CHOP down cover crops and hoe into the soil.

FERTILIZE lawns to give them a good boost of nitrogen and nutrients for the forthcoming season.

PICK established kale and other greens before they go to seed.

CHECK irrigation system for breaks or leaks.

BUILD raised beds for your vegetables and herbs. Your back will thank you throughout the year.

ADD fresh compost to all garden beds.

SEED or reseed lawns. I recommend Pearl's Premium for its durability, deep roots, and need for minimal water. <http://www.PearlsPremium.com>.

PRUNE privets into hedges and bushes unless you want tall trees.

LOOSEN compacted soil by turning amendments into the soil with a garden fork.

CLIP boxwoods and shape as needed.

HARVEST beets that were planted in fall.

BUY discounted tickets to the June 15 Oakland A's versus Los Angeles Angels Baseball Game with a portion of proceeds benefitting the 501 c3 charity, Be the Star You Are(r) <http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org>

START seeds of tomatoes indoors or a in a greenhouse.

CONTINUE to pick up all fallen camellia blossoms until there are none left on your bush or tree. My tree had thousands of blooms this year. My daily regimen includes collecting at least 100 or more spent blooms.

CHECK the weather forecasts to know when it's going to sprinkle or rain. It's best to sow and fertilize at this time.

SUPPORT eco-therapy and walk in the woods. Forest bathing or shinrin-yoku has been scientifically proven to improve our immune systems.

FOR more spring landscaping tips, buy "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Green hued Lenten Rose (hellebore). Hellebores are toxic. Wear gloves when handling.



A fan of fennel nestled above sage and French persil.



Harvest beets and eat the greens and the root vegetable.



Color combos of freesia and succulents.



Cynthia Brian loves hats in the garden.

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(r) 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Buy a copy of the new book, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Available for hire for projects and lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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