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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



An angel sitting on a plow's disk oversees the Naked ladies, roses, salvia, and *Plecostachys serpyllifolia*, aka "Little licorice." Photo Cynthia Brian

"When you realize how perfect everything is you will tilt your head back and laugh at the sky." ~ Buddha

There is only one certainty in the garden: it is never finished. Gardens evolve, change, mutate, and metamorphose. A landscape that was once very ordered and manicured quickly turns into a tangled jungle without ongoing maintenance. With TLC, one can control the chaos to create a masterpiece.

The longer I garden, the more I enjoy the whimsical. What appears at first glance to be an imperfect arrangement is often the most excellent of combinations. Mixing the hydrangeas with the nasturtiums and heucheras adds an element of awe and wonder. Discovering a vintage stone angel sitting on top of a plow's disk praying over the naked ladies, roses, salvia, dried nigella, and the silvery *plecostachys serpyllifolia* invites one to pinch a stem to smell the licorice plant. Wandering in a meadow filled with daisies, coneflowers, and perennial sweet peas rejuvenates the spirit.

Yes, I have embraced the controlled chaos of nature. Several years ago as an experiment, I planted wisteria, grapes, and pink bower vine on a pergola on my deck to see which of these three specimens would dominate. To my amazement, instead of choking one another, they have tangled together creating year-round interest. The wisteria blooms in spring and maintains green leaves until winter when it drops its leaves. The grapevines leaf out in spring, bear edible fruit in fall, change leaf color when the weather turns cold, then showcase bare bark for the winter months. My pink bower vine is perennially green displaying pretty rose-colored petals with a deep cherry center from early summer to winter. What was deemed to be a mishmash of plants resulted in a happily married and visually pleasing grouping.

On my hillside, a mangle of chartreuse euphorbia intermingles with striped pink morning glory. The chaos is palpable yet stimulating. My friend Michael Curtis's garden is an exemplary model of perfection in controlled landscape chaos. Around every corner, one is greeted with a capricious element. Stroll along Surprise Avenue, be on the lookout for a locomotive in the ivy, and giggle at the numerous street signs lining the paths.

Creativity and enchantment reign when you invite the unexpected into your garden planning. Once you have controlled your chaos, you will look up and laugh at the sky.

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Gardening Guide for August

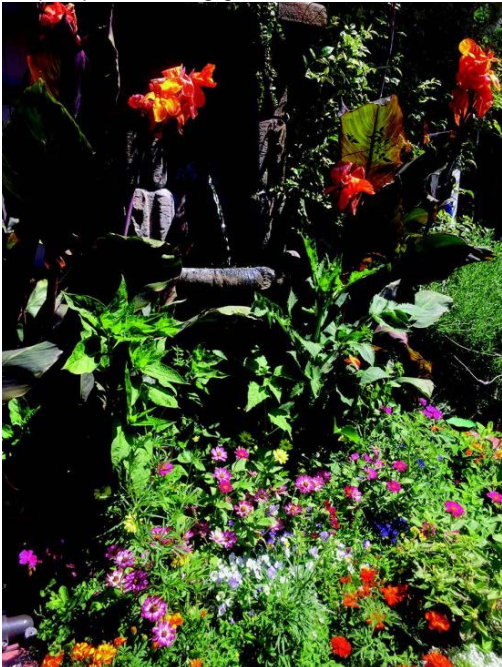
- WATER, water, water. August is one of the warmest months and it's necessary to keep an eye on your containers and yard. If you see drooping leaves, it's time to sprinkle. In the hot weather, you may have to water daily.
- ADD pea gravel, decomposed granite or spaced stepping stones planted with creeping thyme in the gaps for a permeable path with a Mediterranean appearance.
- STORE herbs by drying them, hanging the stems upside down. For instant soup flavorings, chop finely, add the herbs to an ice tray with a small amount of water, and freeze.
- DIG out dandelions from your garden and lawn. As long as you have not used insecticides or pesticides, you can add them to salads or stir fry.
- ESTABLISH a wildlife habitat in your yard by providing food, water, shelter, and sustainability for the wandering and flying critters.
- SPICE your supper with floral edibles of nasturtium, calendula, violas, roses, citrus blossoms, dianthus, pansies, chamomile and blooming herbs. Eat the daisies, but not the toxic flowers of tomato, potato, pepper or eggplant plants.
- PLANT seeds of beans, carrots, radishes and beets for a second crop to harvest in the fall.
- FLUSH birdbaths and fountains regularly to maintain fresh drinking water for our feathered friends as well as repel mosquito larvae from hatching.
- PINCH zinnias and chrysanthemums to encourage bushier blooms.
- WASH your car on your lawn. Your car will get clean and your lawn will benefit from the extra soak.
- WATCH out for errant sparks from fire pits, barbecues, candles and tiki torches. It's fire season.
- DRIVE CAREFULLY. School is in session. Ask your children what vegetables they want to eat as snacks, then make sure those treats are planted in your garden.
- SEND your college kids off to school with a potted plant. It will bring the outdoors in and provide oxygen to the brain.
- EMBRACE the controlled chaos of your garden and enjoy the perfection of imperfection.
- LAUGH at the sky.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.

Happy August!



Striped pink morning glories amidst a hillside of euphorbia.



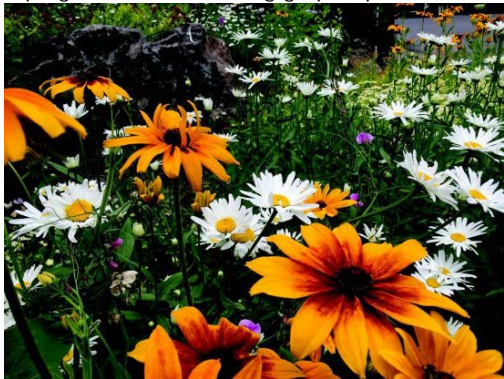
Bright orange cannas flank a fountain under-planted in a riot of colorful annuals.



A symphony of plants



A pergola with intertwining grapes, pink bower vine, and wisteria.



A meadow of coneflowers, daisies, and perennial sweet peas.



A summer evening finds Cynthia Brian on the balcony surrounded by oaks. 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 Are!r 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Buy a copy of her new books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Hire Cynthia for projects, consults, and lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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