

## *Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener Cynthia Brian*

# Risky business



Photos Cynthia Brian

**Guavas are nearing harvest time.**

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## How to plan to succeed in planting

**PREPARE** your soil. Add aged manure and compost to improve absorption.

**GROUP** plants according to their watering needs. A succulent garden requires very little water. Astilbe and ferns require substantial H<sub>2</sub>O.

**CONSIDER** the best time to plant. You want your plants to establish a strong root system while the soil is still warm, yet the days are cooler, but before the winter freeze arrives.

**MULCH** with two or three inches to retain moisture, slow the growth of weeds, and prevent erosion. This can be shredded newspaper, bark, grass clippings, leaves, wood chips, stone, or pebbles.

**FERTILIZE** right before it rains so that the fertilizer absorbs into the roots and the soil.

Vegetarians seeking protein through plant-based items can choose to plant lentils,

beans, spinach, chickpeas, broccoli, white cabbage, spring greens, and figs. My tiny cherry pear tomatoes are flourishing amongst the Amaryllis Belladonna and the Jacobinia in a planter box outside my kitchen window. When nothing much is colorful in the garden except the roses, sage, and crape myrtles, it's marvelous to be able to pluck a few cherry tomatoes for a salad and three stalks of Amaryllis Belladonna for a flower arrangement from the same plot. I like using the multi-colored pistache berries in arrangements in the fall, but squirrels and turkeys are also claiming them as their favorite dinner.

Farming is not easy but becoming a backyard farmer will be rewarding and supply your family with enough produce to sustain you during good and bad times. Even a little self-sufficiency with your gardening endeavors will lower your risk of food shortages.



**As pistache berries turn pink they become a favorite food for squirrels.**

## *Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October*

**PLANT** clover in your lawn or as a cover crop as it grabs oxygen from the air and stores it in the soil. Birds pecking at your lawn are not eating it. They are dining on insects that could be harmful to your lawn. The birds are your friends indicating that your lawn has an invader.

**RESEED** lawns or install sod. If your soil is too acidic, add lime for balance. Grasses require a moderate pH between 5.8 and 7.2.

**MAKE** a bouquet of whatever is blooming in your garden. Russian sage and Japanese maple leaves add texture and color as do the green, blue, and rose-colored pistache berries.

**SAMPLE** your grapes and make sure they aren't smoke-tainted.

**DIG** and divide iris rhizomes in October. Make sure to keep a few inches of the leaves on the stems and bury the roots two inches deep, eighteen to twenty inches apart.

**EXPERIMENT** by planting a variety of lettuces to keep your salads fresh all season. You can even plant in a pot on a sunny windowsill and snip often. Clip the microgreens as they sprout for delicate, delicious delights.

**GROUP** vegetables and flowers together, especially in small spaces for maximum production.

**ADD** a splashing fountain to attract the birds, hummingbirds, and entertain you.

**CLEAR** creek beds, hillsides, and property of dead branches and debris as fire prevention.

**PRUNE** your berry bushes, including summer raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries by removing dead canes, thinning new canes, weeding around the plant, then mulching with wood chips to keep the weeds out and the nutrients in.

**JOIN** the Lafayette Garden Clubs Zoom presentation where I'll be speaking on Thursday, October 8th. For more information visit <https://www.lafayettegardenclub.com/calendar>

**WALK** in nature when you feel stressed to kick up your cognitive performance. A stroll through a park, a jog around the Lafayette Reservoir (wear or bring a mask), or a simple skip through your back yard will do wonders for your mental fatigue.

Happy gardening. Happy growing.