

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener Cynthia Brian

Sheltering with Mother Nature

By Cynthia Brian



Eat apples right from the tree.

Photos Cynthia Brian

“Too blessed to be stressed!” ~ Bumper sticker

Are you feeling more in touch with Mother Earth as we near the beginning of eight months of stay-at-home mandates because of Covid-19? Or are you feeling antsy, stressed, and out-of-sorts? Retreating to our landscapes was initially a salve to the pain of the coronavirus, social unrest, and political nastiness as we encountered improved air quality, quieter skies, and increased bird activity. Then the California fires arrived bringing choking smoke, scorching heat, and black ash. An additional layer of frazzle to our daily lives multiplied because we were unable to spend time in our gardens or outdoors for any reason.

In normal times, I work in the garden daily. It is an extension of my home, a serene, yet wild place where I am most creative and 100% myself. Every morning I walk through my property, a mug of java in hand, giving thanks for the beauty, solitude, and bounty of my magical oasis. Getting my hands in the dirt soothes my soul. I lose track of time as I weed, prune, trim, fertilize, water, and bite into a crunchy apple straight off the tree. I come up with the best ideas for

my books, columns, radio shows and lectures. Before they float away with the wind, I race to write my thoughts down.

As a fire prevention strategy, I have been clearing the brush and understory plants from my creeks when the air permits. If you live near open space, hills or creeks, make sure to take time to remove dead trees, limbs and brush as we have at least another month of fire season. Leave a couple of small brush piles as habitat for owls. Owls dine on a smorgasbord of voles, mice, rats, and other rodents that wreak havoc in the garden. A family of owls can devour several thousand rodents during the nesting season with the young eating as many as four per night. Add a nesting box 15 feet off the ground to a branch of an older tree. When you invite owls into your landscape, you won't have to use harmful poisons, plus their hooting sound is calming.

Since sheltering in Mother Nature has been impossible these past two months, I find myself exhausted, jittery, tense, and concerned for the future of our country and our planet. For me, this means getting creative about the sensory experience that being outdoors provides and bringing those familiar feelings and scents indoors. If we can't be 'in' Mother Nature, let's shelter 'with' Mother Nature.

Here are some things you can do to relieve stress, feel energized, and rebalanced:

1. **TAP** into the sounds of nature on your favorite radio network. Listening to the trickling of a creek, the rushing of a river, or the pounding of ocean waves is relaxing.

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Pick beets and radishes as needed.