

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Weeds, weeds, and more weeds



Photo Cynthia Brian

The hillside is lush with weeds, poppies, calendulas, geraniums, and other plants.

By Cynthia Brian

“You may know the world is a magical place when Mother Nature creates her own jewelry.” ~ Maya Angelou

Spring is the most colorful season of the year with a cornucopia of bulbs, flowers, shrubs, and trees in bloom. It is also the time when Mother Nature shares the ornaments that most gardeners loathe ... weeds!

Although I am aware that a weed is just a plant growing where I don't want it, this year those plants are in profusion everywhere. My garden is bursting with blooms, blossoms and weeds. For the past month, I have spent hours on my knees pulling the roots of numerous unwanted characters to edit my beds to my definition of beauty. Three types of weeds in my landscape are the most egregious: black medic, Carolina geranium, and common grasses that have blown in

from the surrounding hills.

The best method to eradicate and control weeds organically involves several steps. First, it is essential to pull the weeds with the roots attached as they develop. The goal is to get rid of the weeds when they are sprouting and, definitely before they set and scatter seeds. Second, enrich the soil with compost. You will find more weeds will emerge because of the nutrient-rich soil.

Third, go back to step one and remove the second batch of weeds. Fourth, top-dress with three inches of organic mulch which can be bark, straw, cocoa chips, shredded leaves, or even grass clippings.

I am always experimenting with how best to accomplish a weed-free garden. Here are some things I discovered this year:

1. The most densely growing patches of weeds, especially Carolina geranium and hill grasses, were in areas where I had only amended with shredded leaves or had done nothing at all.
2. Where I added two inches of enriched soil without any top dressing, weeds grew lush and full but were easily pulled by hand.
3. In beds where I only added wood chips, a smattering of weeds emerged, mostly black medic.
4. In places where I had brought in new soil and topped it with wood chips, there were fewer weeds easily yanked by hand.
5. In areas where I did a two-step mulch of shredded newspaper and cardboard topped with bark, there were minimal to no weeds. My observations indicate that a two-step mulching procedure worked the best. It is more labor-intensive yet effective.

... continued on Page D16



A favorite of the April garden, wisteria springs into bloom.