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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Bearded iris, daffodils, and Bergenia frame a fountain that invites birds to bathe. Photo Cynthia Brian

"My garden is my most beautiful work of art" - Claude Monet

We've all heard the adage, "April showers bring May flowers!" We have the flowers this year, but April precipitation did not materialize. This year is lining up to be the third driest year in the history of California. And that means that we must be more diligent than ever to prepare our properties for a season of increased wildfires.

I have been weeding my property with every spare minute since February. It is essential to pull out weeds by the roots, else they return promptly. This is round three and the resulting garden is looking beautiful. I've been experimenting with mixing flowers of iridescent pinks with buttery yellows and pumpkin orange accented by sky blue and bold purple. The palette has taken on an Impressionistic essence of which Monet would be proud.

April and May have always been my favorite months because of the plethora of blooms, birds, and fragrances. The perfume of the jasmine permeates the morning air, the lilac scents the afternoon sunshine, while the wisteria and mock orange infuse the evening with glorious aromas. My two thornless Lady Banksia rose bushes with their profusion of creamy double-petaled flowers have commandeered 30 linear feet of a fence as well as twined to the tops of a plum and chestnut tree. The flowering cherry tree showcases puffy blossoms resembling pink snowballs. The mock orange tree's white blooms are candy for the bees. The cerise

flowers of the Western redbud tree offer a gorgeous contrast to the unfurling green leaves of the honey locust trees. Under a canopy of pines and surrounded by white calla lilies and lacy hemlock, a New Zealand hawthorn brightens the verdant scene with clouds of blush blooms. Bearded irises in a variety of colors are delicate and fragrant. Azaleas and camellias thrive in the shadow of the red woods. Freesias, tulips, daffodils, calendulas and anemones continue their carnival of blooms. Despite the lack of rain, the spring display is splendor in the grass.

In many parts of the country, people wait until after Mother's Day to start planting their vegetables but because of the warmth of this season, I advise that you get started soon. Getting children involved with planting vegetables and herbs will encourage them to eat what they plant. After researchers spent time with children in Central Texas who had gardens and gardening classes at their schools, they discovered that the nutrition of both parents and children improved.

Also, those who participated began enjoying more vegetables.

If you are planning a vegetable patch, buy pint or quart size containers of your favorite vegetables. Don't attempt to plant everything you see at the nursery. Only plant what you and your family love. For example, for my spring veggie garden, I've planted nine varieties of tomatoes as I'm a tomato snob. I only eat tomatoes in season and prefer only tomatoes that I, a friend, or a family member grows. Also planted are eggplant, zucchini, cucumbers and peppers. Already growing are a plethora of herbs including basil, oregano, fennel, sage, thyme, dill, cilantro as well as leafy greens of arugula, sorrel, lettuce, and sugar snap peas, artichokes, onions, chives, strawberries and broccoli.

Make sure that you rotate your crops from year to year so as not to deplete the soil. Most summer vegetables require a minimum of six hours of sunlight. Read and follow the instructions that come with your plant.

Another beautiful, long-flowering, and excellent fresh-cut for arrangements is the dahlia. Although they are supposed to be deer-resistant, the deer that graze around my property seem to find them delicious. I don't advise dahlias to be planted in areas where you have marauders. Dahlias produce large, colorful blooms and are a welcome addition to any garden. Here's how to get them started in your landscape:

1. Choose a well-drained area with plenty of sunlight.
2. Plant the tubers after the danger of frost have passed.
3. Dig a hole about a foot deep and amend with compost or potting soil.
4. Place the tuber flat and cover with the amended soil.
5. Make a patch of dahlias spaced 12-36 inches apart for maximum impact.
6. Water immediately.
7. After sprouting, pinch off the side buds to allow the central blowers to be larger.
8. Deadhead as flowers fade to maintain blooming.

Because of the arid times in which we are living, make sure to cut all tall wild grasses, trim limbs up

from the ground six to 10 feet to prevent fire laddering, and clear a safety zone around your home. Clean out gutters, remove debris, be cautious when barbecuing and careful around the fire pit. Keep gardens irrigated, watering early in the morning or early in the evening. Be diligent and responsible to help prevent a fire from igniting. Pray for rain yet be prepared for drought.

Mother's Day is approaching and a welcome gift for mom can always be found in the garden. Consider a bubbling fountain, birdhouse, or colorful annuals to plant. Make a simple arrangement using flowers from the garden accompanied by a garden book that will be treasured always. Whatever you do, let your mom know how much she means to you whether it is through a virtual visit or an in-person brunch, picnic or walk. Moms love the little remembrances and deserve accolades, at least once a year!

Spring is the time to savor the beauty surrounding you. If you've ever been to Giverny in France, you will know that Monet was not exaggerating about his garden being his most beautiful work of art. He was inspired by nature and you can be too. Be an artist and create your masterpiece in your garden.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Mother's Day!



A Western redbud is in full bloom. Photos Cynthia Brian



A pretty Mother's Day arrangement of white roses, purple mums, berries, and eucalyptus leaves. Photos Cynthia Brian



A thornless Lady Banksia rose climbs trees and cascades over fences. Photos Cynthia Brian



Under a canopy of pines, a New Zealand hawthorn shines amidst the calla lilies and hemlock. Photos Cynthia Brian



Cynthia Brian in the spring garden with yellow freesias and blue woodland hyacinths. Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your spring garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia 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 StarStyler Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com. Buy copies of her best-selling books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Receive a FREE inspirational music DVD. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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