

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Garden party hacks



Photos Cynthia Brian

Purple statice fills the back of a former solar light pelican

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Ornamental grasses are easy to care for and add a natural stream-like flow to a garden. Clumping bamboo is excellent as a rustling screen that blows in the breeze. Both offer a feeling of serenity and calmness to any space.

After you have planted, you'll want to top-dress with mulch to enhance the aesthetics, increase moisture retention, and minimize weed growth. You can buy wood chips in at least three different colors: red, black, and forest brown by the bag or you can order other varieties in bulk. Any flammable mulches such as chips, bark, straw, or pine needles must be distanced two feet from structures as per the fire ordinance. Gravel or rocks can be placed around the structure as a preventive measure.

Add steppingstones surrounded by small pebbles or pea gravel to enhance a dirt path. Gravel and rocks add texture, and the crunching sound is soothing. If your porch or deck needs refinishing and that project is not in your current plan or budget, buy inexpensive indoor/outdoor carpeting or rugs in natural tones to temporarily cover the flaws and make walking comfortable and splinter-free.



The former dirt path is improved with black pebbles, steppingstones, and lined with mulch.

When it comes to patio furniture, take an inventory of the condition of what you have. Can it last another summer with a bit of cleaning and updating? Do you need new pillows and pads, or can you just wash and refresh the ones you own? I recently worked on a project where the homeowners were going to discard their table and chairs because they were rusting. Their dilemma was that they didn't have the time nor the money to invest in new patio furniture before a scheduled garden get-together for a few vaccinated friends. My suggestion was to use a little elbow grease: scrub, sand, and spray-paint. It took only a couple of hours, and the result was that the set looked brand new. Painting is one of the greatest hacks offering immediate, inexpensive results.

Another hack that I employ regularly is adding cut seafoam statice to area pots or beds where a little pizzazz is needed. Bunches of straw-like statice will hold their purple color for weeks without additional water. Shaded areas with comfortable seating invite a cooling, quieting, and relaxing experience. Umbrellas add sophistication to a patio and two or three strips of vintage-looking LED Edison-bulb lighting to provide a warm inviting glow in the evening. Lay a row of tube lights on the ground be-



As a highlight to your vaccinated outdoor gathering, make charcuterie cones with a slice of orange and a sprig of rosemary.

hind hedges for ethereal illumination.

The smart choice when planning the party bites is to offer individually cupped appetizers to eliminate people double-dipping. Home-grown (or farmers' market) carrots, celery, and peppers cut into long slices standing on top of hummus in tiny tableware mount a pretty display as well as a nutritious one. Cones with charcuteries adorned with sprigs of rosemary, orange slices, and berries will entice any carnivore. For drinks, individual bottles or cans of favorite beverages will quench thirsty friends. Glasses can be marked with the names of the guests.

Finally, fresh, free-flowing flower arrangements picked from a profusion of blooms from your garden will be a conversation starter. The ones I created for the event were a mixture of calendula, Jupiter's beard, Mexican sage, mixed with mock orange which added a heady perfume to the outdoor occasion. After the festivities, the bouquets became fragrant favorites indoors.

I was reared in the garden and am proud of being a nature lady. By using these simple hacks, you are ready to host your outdoor garden party with your vaccinated friends. Give it your best shot!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.