

Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly

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Handyman Jim Hurley fixing a doorbell read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Spring succession



The edible Jerusalem star known as salsify tips its purple flower towards the sun.

By Cynthia Brian

"I'm grateful for the opportunity to live on this beautiful and astonishing Planet Earth. In the morning, I woke up with a sense of gratitude."
~ Earl Nightingale

In California, May reigns as one of the most colorful months of the year. Mother Nature has fully awakened from lingering winter doldrums to burst into bloom. The ra-



Photos Cynthia Brian

The elegant foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, is toxic to humans.

diant combination of lush green lawns against cheerful vignettes of glowing, flowing flowers, trees and shrubs is mesmerizing. Beauty, fragrance, and food beckon from every direction.

With appreciation, I awake each morning and fall asleep each night to the lullabies from a multitude of songbirds. Pollinators are busy buzzing from nectar plants to other food sources signaling a healthy garden en-

vironment. The succession of blossoms changes daily from spring bulbs to robust roses; bright bearded iris to sprouted seeds scattered last fall.

May is the optimum time to plant annuals, vegetables, and herbs together in a potager garden. By combining a medley of edibles and florals, biological pest control is ignited providing plants to protect one another and be a shelter for beneficial insects. Nasturtium, calendula and marigolds are the colorful workhorses attracting hungry caterpillars and blackflies away from brassicas and beans. Garlic planted between roses, lettuce, potatoes, or even fruit trees will keep the aphids, Japanese beetles and ermine moths at bay. Parsley attracts pollinators and protectors of tomatoes. Mint deters ants and aphids but make sure to plant in a pot as mint can overtake an entire garden. Before planting, weed thoroughly, enrich the soil with compost or add new soil, and rotate crops to maintain vigor while producing greater yields.

Jerusalem star, also known as go-to-bed early, vegetable oyster, or salsify is considered an invasive weed in some areas, but this dandelion-related plant is a forgotten beloved Victorian-era edible that tastes like an oyster and grows like a carrot. Its yellow-flowering relative is named goatsbeard. The taproot grows to 12 inches into the ground. Harvest with care to not break the root. In the kitchen, salsify is versatile and delicious in soups, stews, bisques, casseroles, or grated like beets in a salad for a fresh seafood/artichoke flavor. The entire plant has been used medicinally.

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