

Published July 20th, 2022

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Lambsear is soft and fuzzy just like a baby lamb.
Photo Cynthia Brian

"We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals." ~ Immanuel Kant

Our family has enjoyed an affinity for the animal kingdom for as long as I can remember. We loved creatures so much that we often named a pet for an animal of another species that they resembled. We've had dogs named Bear and Wolf, cats named Panther and Tiger, and even a horse named Spider, although he didn't look like an arachnid.

In the plant world, botanists and taxonomists who name plants also look to the realm of animals using zoographical Latin or Greek-based names for various genera and species. Sometimes a part of the plant will remind them of an animal, or sometimes it is the marketing department of a plant breeder that comes up with the fun, and often humorous name for a new cultivar.

I walked through my garden giggling at the numerous "animals" that are growing. Trees, flowers, wildflowers, and even weeds bear the names of creatures. If you are looking for an amusing gardening endeavor to do with children this fall, ask them if they would like to plant an animal garden. Discuss their favorite critters, then research specimens to fit the bill.

Edit your list grouping plants that will demand the same soil, watering, and sun/shade conditions together in one plot or pot. Mix annuals and perennials for an ongoing animal parade that will last throughout the year.

Engage in a creative craft project making nametags for each plant. (Popsicle sticks are traditional favorites) Because the weather is too hot and dry to plant in summer, it's advised to wait for the cooler days of autumn to start digging a new garden. However, if you want to plant a few species in containers now, let the animal party begin. Make sure to follow directions on the plant tags and water frequently as containers lose moisture quickly.

Here is a partial list of the excitement to come with animal plants:

- Lambquarter
- Cats Ear
- Chickweed
- Coyote Bush
- Buzzard Breath
- Duck Salad
- Cockle Bur
- Fleabane
- Henbit
- Goosefoot
- Turkey Mullein
- Horseweed
- Pigweed
- Prickly Oxtongue
- Goose Grass
- Foxtails
- Cattails
- Swinecress
- Birdseye Pearlwort
- Goosefoot
- Fat hen
- Dogwood
- Elephant Ears
- Catnip
- Deerweed
- Wolfsbane
- Dogbane
- Foxglove
- Henbane
- Horse Chestnut
- Leopard's Bane

Bee Balm
Monkey Grass
Donkey Tail
Butterfly Bush
Locust Tree
Cockscomb
Gopher Plant
Hen and Chicks
Pussywillow
Skunk Plant
Snake plant
Starfish Flower
Zebra plant
Lambs Ears
Bear's Breeches
Trout Lily
Pigsqueak (Bergenia)
Cardinal Flower
Deer fern
Deer tongue
Dragon lily
Snapdragon
Catchfly
Foxtrot
Horsetail
Lion's Tail
Lobster Claws
Mouse plant
Ox-eye daisy
Panda wild ginger
Pig butt
Rabbit's foot fern
Porcupine Agave
Tickseed
Toad lily
Wormwood
Cranesbill geranium
Lion's Ear
Turtlehead
Spider plant
Crabgrass
Scorpions tail
Flamingo flower
Kangaroo paw
Bunny Tails
Butterfly weed
Partridge Berry
Fish tail palm
Leopard's bane
Zebra grass
Spiderwort
Squirrel cup
Wake robin
Dinosaur tree
Hedgehog echinacea

Treat your animal plants with care.

Amuse yourself, your family, and your friends with your garden barnyard!

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Gardening Tips

- SPREAD a blanket on the lawn and look toward the heavens to see animal shapes in the clouds.
- DRY herbs by hanging bunches upside down in a dry place, like a garage or shed. Dry lavender, sage, thyme, rosemary, and oregano. Store the dried leaves in a jar.
- DOUSE weeds with a concoction of white vinegar and liquid dish soap. To a gallon of the vinegar, add a capful of dish soap, shake in a spray bottle, and use proactively.
- GATHER the seeds of fennel and cilantro after the flowers are spent. Dry the seeds on a cooking sheet. Cilantro seeds are called coriander. Both add flavor and texture to both sweet and savory recipes.
- PRESERVE flat-leaf parsley, basil, and chives by freezing them in ice cube trays. Put a spoonful of the chopped leaves in each cell, add water, and freeze. When you want a dash of fresh flavor, pop an ice cube.
- PLANT edamame and sweet potatoes, both warm-weather crops. The soil needs to be warmer than 60 degrees. Plan on harvesting edamame in 90-100 days when the pods are plump but still green for a heart healthy omega 3 boost. To make potassium-rich sweet potatoes sweeter, store at 90 degrees for two weeks after harvesting.
- DEADHEAD roses, annuals, and perennials as blooms fade to keep them coming through frost.
- GROW celery by rooting the base of your store-bought vegetable. Put the stub in a glass jar filled

with water in a sunny location, then transplant the root to a container or garden.

- HARVEST cucumbers and make an easy spicy summer snack as well as a soothing eye pack. Peel, slice, add red onions, rice vinegar, and marinate for one hour in the refrigerator. Save the peels to place on your eyes to eliminate puffiness after swimming.

- WATCH butterflies pollinate your flowers as they flutter from blossom to blossom on monarda, tithonia, sunflowers, zinnias, butterfly bush, cosmos, alyssum, marigolds, thyme, oregano, and marjoram.

- EXTEND your garden's production with a second season planting of beets, scallions, kohlrabi, chard, broccoli, lettuce, peas, and carrots to carry your fresh offerings into late fall.

- TOSS a salad comprised of edible herbs, tender leaves, and fruit from your garden including basil, sage, thyme, lovage, fennel, arugula, spinach, chives, chard, tarragon, kale, beet tops, lettuce, cilantro, parsley, sorrel, apples, and plums dressed with lemon juice and olive oil for a tasty jolt of mineral rich nutrition.

- SHARE your excess vegetable and fruit harvest with the neighborhood and take the extras to the local food bank for those in need to savor.



Foxgloves are digitalis and toxic to humans and pets. Photo Cynthia Brian



The fuzzy seed head of goats beard derives from the Greek word "Tragopogon". Photo Cynthia Brian



Acanthus is known as Bear's Breech. Photo Cynthia Brian



Pigsqueak is another name for Bergenia, which is also known as elephant ears. Photo Cynthia Brian



Locust is a tall tree with beautiful blooms.



Cynthia Brian in the garden.

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 books, including, Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, and Be the Star You Are! www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Receive a FREE inspirational music DVD and special savings. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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