

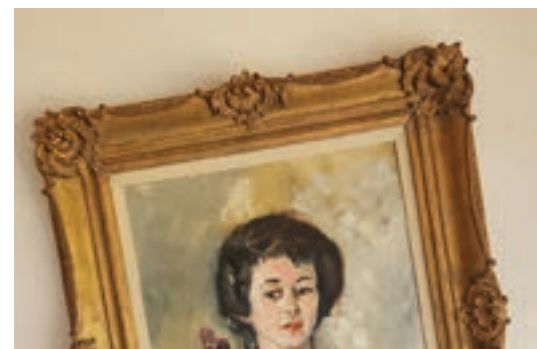
Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

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Tips on how to hang your artwork ... read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Start small



Field of bearded iris, nasturtium, and euphorbia with a plethora of weeds. Red anemone with forget-me-nots and ferns. Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

"Inch by inch, life is a cinch. By the yard, it's hard." ~ Popularized by Robert Schuller

Do you ever go to a restaurant extremely hungry and when you peruse the menu, you order more than you could ever eat? I am guilty of this trait whenever I visit a nursery or garden center. Before I go, I usually create a list of the four or five plants that I want and am ready to plant. But once there, all the magnificent flora intoxicates me with their beauty, and I end up buying more than I have time to put in the ground.

Not this year. I am exerting self-control and keeping it small. One of the reasons for limiting my purchases is that my garden is not sufficiently prepared for adding extras. Before I left on my European expedition, I thought I had

everything under control. I had followed my own advice of pruning, weeding, feeding, seeding, and mulching the landscape. The few weeds that remained resembled short ground-cover. But because of the rain and fog providing extra moisture, and the warm, sunny days whilst I was away, ideal conditions for abundant growth of both weeds and flowers were created. Upon my return, I was greeted by a gorgeous green jungle, albeit totally out-of-control blooms and blossoms as well as weeds as tall as I am.

The tender tiny mustard greens that I had been collecting for salads and stir-fry now towered six or seven feet. Grasses blown in from the hills mingled with the purple and yellow bearded iris, euphorbia, and nasturtiums. For the next few months, I will labor weeding, weeding, and weeding. Inch by inch.

Despite the weeds, the garden has erupted into a colorful canvas of fragrant flowers. Lilac, wisteria, jasmine, mock orange, rose, and freesia compete for the title of most glorious blooms with the most intoxicating perfume.

It is time to plant my vegetables and herbs, and this is where I am starting small. In two containers outside the kitchen door, I bought and planted two tomato plants, a red bell pepper, shallots, scallions, basil, dill and thyme. In my vegetable garden, I started another artichoke, eggplant, squash and lettuce. By purchasing four-inch pots and six-packs instead of gallons, I had the time, and the space, to get these in the soil immediately. In a vintage wheelbarrow, potatoes and onions are growing. Companion planting is a strategy that I implement to increase the success of my crops.

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