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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A field of gold and orange nasturtiums with irises. Photos Cynthia Brian

"When the primal forces of nature tell you to do something, the prudent thing is not to quibble over details." ~?From the movie, "Field of Dreams"

Is there anyone who doesn't marvel over the sight of a fabulous field of flowers? As a plantaholic, I swoon each spring when the promise of a kaleidoscope of flora bursts from the ground. Alas, this year my swooning turned into sweating.

With the 12 atmospheric rivers and continued rain through May, the ground is also bursting with unwanted weeds of every sort - bindweed, choke weed, thistle, dayflowers, vetch, black medic, wild cutleaf geranium, dock, fleabane, spurge, ragweed, cudweed, euphorbia, poisonous hemlock, unidentifiable thugs, and a plethora of grasses blown in from the hills.

Yes, I know. A weed is just a plant growing where it is not wanted. Yet many of these unwelcome invaders are pernicious, poisonous, prickly, and painful. For the past two months, I have spent every free moment living

the advice from the film and doing the prudent thing caused by the primal forces of nature: digging and pulling up the roots of these assailants. I practice the no-dig method to maintain my fields and borders. The less the soil is turned, the few weeds sprout, or so the research indicates. Last spring, I added innumerable yards of nutrient-rich soil and covered it with equal amounts of mulch. In the fall, I scattered seeds of nasturtium, nigella, seafoam statice (also known as sea lavender in the *Limonium* species), and calendula, as well as rhizomes of various bearded iris and corms of common cornflag. Climbing roses adorn the fence. Everything sprouted as anticipated, but the winds and the birds brought these uninvited visitors who happily took up residence in the lush environment.

When the broadleaf wild cutleaf geranium is small, it is quite beautiful with tiny pink flowers and bright lime green leaves. It is also very fragrant. As this cranesbill matures with its red stems it spreads two or more feet wrapping around neighboring flower stems, making weeding more difficult. The leaf structure mingles with the nigella often resulting in more love-in-the-mist being eradicated than is wanted. Bindweed, with flowers that mimic morning glory, twines to the top of any plant, adding to the difficulty of clearing it from the orchard. Many of the grasses that self-seeded from the surrounding hillsides would be interesting in a container as a stand-alone display, but infiltrated into the centers of my flowers hinder the graceful arches of color.

Allergy season is ferocious this year. My eyes are consistently red and irritated and despite taking an antihistamine, I sneeze while weeding. According to a 2021 study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of America*, an academic journal, between 1990 and 2018, the North American pollen season lengthened 20 days with 20% more pollen. Warming temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and rising atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are cited as causing increased pollen production. Trees, grass, and weeds are causing this sniffing, stuffiness, coughing, congestion and itching. Hopefully, these seasonal allergies will be alleviated by late June.

As I write this, I'm taking a break from my weeding work. Tomorrow I'll be back wearing my coveralls, hat, sunglasses, apron, boots, and gloves for another round of freeing my fields of dreams from the primal forces of nature. Slowly and joyfully, I am witnessing the glistening glory of my efforts.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.

Cynthia Brian's June Digging Deep Gardening Tips

**CLEAN** patio furniture with a thorough scrubbing of lounge chairs and cushions.

**MAINTAIN** your weeding schedule. Be vigilant pulling weeds as soon as they appear as they zap nutrients and water from plants. Make certain to get the roots.

**ECHO** colors when you plant. Even if you plant different plants of form and texture, to capture the exuberance and energy of flow, plant swaths of the same color in opposing areas.

**PRUNE** lilacs after blooming to encourage more blooms next year. Lilacs can be pruned by 1/3 for optimal flowering.

**LIFT** your mood by designing a refuge area amongst your favorite plants with a bench or chair where you can relax, recharge, and feel protected. Throughout my landscape, I have created areas to sit, rest, and appreciate the natural beauty.

**PLANT** pumpkins now for a Halloween harvest. This is also a perfect opportunity to get your corn, eggplant, beets, and cucumbers started.

**SUCCESSION** plant your greens every three weeks including lettuce and arugula as well as root vegetables like carrots, radishes, and turnips.

**SOW** seeds of basil, cilantro, chives, and parsley for a summer season of savory spices.

**CHECK** your drip irrigation systems as well as any sprinkler heads.

**WATER** only once or twice a week, early in the morning when the plants will absorb the most or later

in the evening.

PROPAGATE azaleas, carnations, fuchsias, and hydrangeas by taking cuttings and planting in rich soil.

DEADHEAD spent rose petals weekly to encourage continuous blossoms. Roses are spectacular this year. Keep them healthy and blooming.

MULCH your entire garden with at least three inches of material to help retain moisture, keep the soil cooler, and prevent drought related problems throughout the upcoming hot months.

BRIGHTEN patios, porches, and balconies with containers of colorful Bowles mauve (wallflower), petunias, or sweet William flowers.

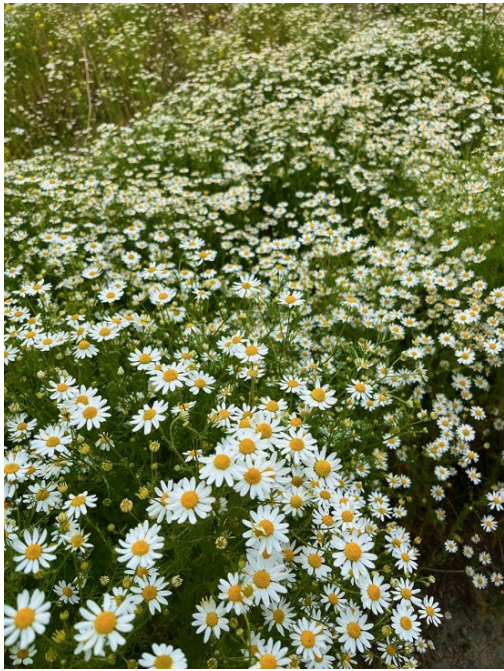
PS: Don't forget the Be the Star You Are!r Shoe Drive. Shoes may be dropped off through June 30 at <https://5aspace.com/>, 455 Moraga Rd. #F, Moraga or [www.TeamHoogs.com](http://www.TeamHoogs.com), 629 Moraga Road (next to 7/11), Moraga. For more information, visit <https://www.bethestaryouare.org/shoedrive>



This field in the apple orchard is planted with seafoam statice, nigella, calendula, and climbing roses. Photos Cynthia Brian



This field has not been weeded and is overgrown with vetch, euphorbia, thistle, grasses, and more, covering the flowers below. Photos Cynthia Brian



This field of chamomile smells as beautiful as it looks. Photos Cynthia Brian



Graceful and dainty blue nigella, love-in-the-mist, re-seeds, and is long-lasting in cut arrangements. Photos Cynthia Brian



Roses are spectacular this year. David Austin rose with salsify, Jerusalem star.



A favorite maroon and mauve bearded iris.



Bowles mauve wallflower is excellent in a border or a container.



Sweet williams, petunias



Working in the weeds, Cynthia Brian is suffering from seasonal allergies. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia Brian 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](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Her newest children's picture book, No Barnyard Bullies, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) <http://www.GoddessGardener.com>

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