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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Pink geraniums are simple, yet classic, just like Barbie. Photos Cynthia Brian

"My parents told me I'd point to a bed of flowers and say 'Pink. Pretty' before I could say any other words!" ~ Joni Mitchell

Pink, and all the shades and hues associated with this color, has always been a favorite of mine, not only in my wardrobe but in my home and garden designs. Who else has a passion for pink?

As a young girl, I had only one beloved Barbie. I sold her to my youngest sister for 5 cents when I thought I was too "grown-up" to play with dolls. Yet, like many females since the first Barbie debuted in 1959, I have always been fascinated by this glamorous, independent, and highly talented career woman. Several years ago, I was flown to a studio in Los Angeles to play the role of Barbie in a short film project. How fun it was morphing into the various iterations of this iconic figure! One of the memorable professions I created for that shoot was "Barbie, Landscape Architect." Channeling the public's summer obsession with everything Barbie, I

decided to focus on the flowers that I am certain Barbie would feature in her paradise.

**Barbie Blooms:**

For indoor décor, there is no doubt that Barbie would surround herself with orchids, mostly in shades of pink and mauve. Orchids evoke the exotic while adding a touch of sophistication to a home.

Barbie would have an affinity for roses and her garden would be filled with reblooming, highly fragrant, disease-resistant roses. Roses are regal and are available in numerous colors, but she would plant a variety of blush and deep pink specimens, probably favoring old roses.

The romantic charm of peonies with their ruffled showy flowers on small shrubs with shiny green foliage would be part of Barbie's landscape. Peonies are beloved for their variety of shapes and their gorgeous rich colors, ranging from the palest pink to the deepest cerise. Barbie and her friends could enjoy the flowers indoors in long-lasting cut arrangements.

Because hydrangeas boast huge heads of dramatic blossoms that can also be dried, Barbie would find hydrangeas especially appealing. In acidic soil, pink blooms change to blue, reflecting Barbie's preferred colors. Hydrangeas are hardy and disease-resistant, and most can be grown in full sun or shade.

Since Barbie enjoys traveling and summer fun, the vibrant and tropical flowers of hibiscus would also be on her list of must-have plants. Many varieties have huge dinner-plate-size flowers that are attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies. We know that Barbie cares about the planet (why else would she have had over 200 careers?) so bringing birds, bees, and other beneficial insects to her garden would be imperative. Barbie is ecologically friendly. Plus having pollinators in the garden increases the health and integrity of the landscape, making it more enchanting.

The simplicity and classicism of geraniums and pelargoniums would interest Barbie. She could easily propagate them by snipping off a stem, allowing the stem to harden off, then planting it elsewhere to grow additional geraniums. In beds and borders, geraniums shine and continue blooming from spring to early winter. They are also lovely in window boxes, which would be a fun project for Barbie to create.

My favorite pink summer blooms are the Naked Ladies, Amaryllis Belladonnas and I know that Barbie would find these sassy stunners to be as unique and fascinating as she is. Naked Ladies have trumpet-shaped flowers and shoot skyward on 20- to 24-inch bare stalks, erupting from the ground in the height of the heat when no one is watching. These "magic lilies" or "resurrection lilies" as they are often called, are graceful and classy, yet they do not belong to the genus *Lilium*. Their long legs with their fascinating faces are reminiscent of Barbie's stature!

Barbie would love lilies of all kinds and want to plant as many bulbs as possible. Lilies are captivating with their large, fragrant blooms and diverse array of colors, shapes, and sizes. They are easy maintenance and enjoy cultural significance linking them to gods and goddesses. Barbie would be a Goddess Gardener and have multiple dazzling bouquets cut from her garden to complement her elegant events. Sword lilies, also known as gladiolus, are available in an array of pigments, except true blue, and the pink varieties are especially fascinating. Propagated by corms, gladiolus is an economical way to bring a riot of color to the August landscape.

As delicate border choices or planted in masses in shady areas, I would advise Barbie to plant rows of pink begonias. Begonias are also marvelous in hanging baskets with their intricate foliage adding drama to any patio or porch. Begonias are not divas and require minimal deadheading or maintenance yet provide a blast of beauty. Tuberous or wax, double or single, large or tiny blooms, begonias are vibrant and spectacular, just like Barbie.

When it comes to a favorite tree with fluffy pink puffs, I imagine that Barbie's preferred summer sensation would be the Persian silk tree with its fabulous fern-like leaves. It is a messy tree dropping its seed pods in the fall so it needs to be planted in an area where tidiness is not required. Growing on my hillside where it gets very little water and has not been invasive, my Persian silk tree with its pretty pom

pom blooms reminds me of exotic lands far, far away. Having been an airline pilot and an astronaut, Barbie loves to travel the world and beyond. As a suitable souvenir-rooted memento, the Persian silk tree checks all the boxes for her adventures abroad.

What wouldn't Barbie want in her oasis? Although colorful, pretty, and long-blooming, Barbie most likely would shy away from the hardy ornamental oleander because of its toxicity. Barbie babysits often and has had over 40 pets, so she wouldn't want children or critters sampling this shrub. Traditionally used as a hedge or border, especially along freeways, oleander is one of the most poisonous plants. The entire plant can be deadly to humans and animals. The milky sap causes skin irritations. It is dangerous in fire-prone areas because burning oleander can cause smoke intoxication. Protective clothing is essential when working with oleander and it should never be disposed of in the compost pile.

Like me, Barbie would prepare now for fall by listing the bulbs she wants to buy for her spring garden. With their bright hues and graceful shapes, tulips would top her list, and naturally, she'd have a plethora of shades of pink.

It's been fun embracing my inner Barbie as I walk around my garden enjoying my personal passion for pink. Of course, I also adore blue, purple, and all the colors of the rainbow. As Claude Monet scribbled, "I feel the landscape. I can be bold and include every tone of blue and pink: it's enchanting, it's delicious."

Barbie, the movie, is a billion-dollar box office smash. My Barbie would make a laudable landscape architect. Her gardens would be as unique and unconventional as she is showcasing her diverse interests, imagination, and creativity. Delicious, enchanting, and pink!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Barbie Summer!



For a tropical feel, Barbie grows pink hibiscus. Photos Cynthia Brian



For borders and mass plantings, begonias rule. Photos Cynthia Brian



Deep pink hydrangeas are gorgeous growing or dried. Photos Cynthia Brian



The tubular trumpets of gladiolus shine in the garden. Photos Cynthia Brian



Cynthia Brian channels Barbie in her bright pink rose garden. For more gardening advice for all seasons, check out Growing with the Goddess Gardener at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/books>. 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, Family Forever, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available for PRE-ORDERS now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com <http://www.GoddessGardener.com>

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