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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Golden leaves of a male Chinese pistache. Photos Cynthia Brian

"Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away; Lengthen night and shorten day! Every leaf speaks bliss to me, Fluttering from the autumn tree..." ~Emily Bront~

There is something so comforting and beautiful about watching the falling leaves of autumn. Winter is just three weeks away and the nights are colder, yet I'm not willing to abandon rolling in the leaves just yet. The sensory, aesthetic, and cultural factors of fall are reasons that I appreciate this season.

The vibrant colors on my deciduous trees range from golden yellow to rustic sienna to persimmon orange to deep crimson, creating a visually stunning and warm landscape. The changing foliage transforms the environment from natural to decorated as we enter the holidays. Within the next few days, the trees will have shed their autumn cloaks and I'll begin hanging boisterous balls of Christmas cheer on their naked branches.

But for now, the rustling sound of leaves underfoot, the scent of decaying foliage, and the crispness of the air evoke a pleasure that only this time of year can provide. Watching the leaves flutter to the ground reminds me of butterflies in search of nectar. Like many young people everywhere, raking leaves into a big pile and jumping into it, rolling around with carefree joy, is a fond memory of childhood. As an adult, I am filled with nostalgia for those simple traditions. Never too old to be silly, I make angel wings on a bed of fallen leaves. The power of nature unearths the awe, amazement, and wonder in such an enjoyable endeavor.

Our gardens are winding down for their long winter nap. Landscapes look lonely and lacking color, except for a few favorites. If you've been deadheading your roses, your bushes will continue to bloom and delight through January when it will be time for the heavy pruning. Persimmon and pomegranate fruit are delicious ornaments hanging on trees as they quickly ripen to embellish the forthcoming holiday table. Ripe Hachiya persimmon pulp can be used to make a delectable barbecue sauce that can be frozen for summer gatherings. Pomegranate seeds are high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and antioxidants. Add the seeds to salads. They are worth the effort involved.

In preparation for Christmas décor, I am drawn to adding pots of poinsettias to a variety of plantings. Poinsettias look festive anywhere and are readily available in stores. Try tucking samples into your succulent garden or combine them with cyclamen and impatiens.

Before winter arrives, savor the fluttering fall finale, allowing the leaves to speak bliss.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

CHANGE out your current houseplants with colorful seasonal plants including cyclamen, paperwhites, and poinsettia.

ADD color spots of primroses to your front yard.

BUY deciduous trees that boast autumn hues now before they are barren. This is the best time of year to determine what showcase trees you want in your yard.

RAKE the fallen leaves on your lawn to add to your compost pile.

PRUNE roses for the final burst of December blooms before the January pruning begins.

BE eco-friendly and wrap gifts in used newspaper with twine. You'll save money while saving the earth.

COVER frost-tender plants with burlap or cloth to protect them from freeze and wind damage.

REPURPOSE Christmas cards into gift tags.

PLANT cover crops to enrich the soil over winter. Good choices include fava beans, alfalfa, clover, and mustard.

PURCHASE a living tree for your Hannukah Bush or Christmas tree.

DECORATE an indoor plant for the holidays.

ALLOW winter's coat of bright berries, rosehips, moss, and boughs to be the inspiration for your decorating.

CARE for the birds by keeping feeders clean and filled. Make sure to provide a water source and shelter.

ROLL in the leaves. Tap into your inner child.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



Cyclamen and impatiens planted with pots of poinsettia. Photos Cynthia Brian



Red-vein Chinese lantern flowers look like holiday ornaments. Photos Cynthia Brian



Crimson cestrum shines for December. Photos Cynthia Brian



Primroses add needed color to the garden after the drizzle. Photos Cynthia Brian



Aeonium succulent flanked by poinsettia.



Begonias blooming in a bed.



A beautiful mixture of succulents with poinsettias.



Cynthia Brian channels her inner child by rolling in the leaves.  
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

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