

# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

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Conserving water with drip irrigation ... read on Page OH8

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian Coming Alive!

By Cynthia Brian

Photos Cynthia Brian



A tree is filled with cerise-colored camellias.



Salvia-hot lips sage is stunning.



Blue muscari, also known as grape hyacinth, shines at night.

*"I went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown. For going out, I found, was really going in." ~ John Muir*

Walking around my property, I am in awe of how quickly my landscape has come to life. Within just a couple of weeks, the garden has awoken from its deep sleep blanketing the hillside with lush green grasses and fantastic flowers. The frogs are croaking, the birds are chirping, and the bees are buzzing. Despite the continuing rain, nature is waking up from its soggy slumber.

My garden is a living laboratory where I design borders to include a diverse mix of plants including bulbs, perennials, annuals, shrubs, trees, and vines. Originally my color palette was strictly pinks, purples, blues, and whites, but over the years I have acknowledged the beauty of all

color combinations. Daring forms and textures are welcome as I attempt to create a naturalistic style. Taking cues from Mother Nature, I encourage self-sowing specimens (thank you calendula and nigella) and I prefer my landscape to be full, a bit crowded, and wild. Rocks, stones, and gravel are incorporated into the scheme while vintage used bricks delineate the paths.

**If you'd like to create a garden that respects the natural world, here are a few tips that may help.**

1. Don't be afraid to mix and match. Shrubs and trees provide structure. Bulbs pop up as surprises, especially at this time of year. Perennials are the main attraction with annuals affording the colors you desire throughout the year.
2. Always plant in swaths or groups. Repeating the groups coalesces and unifies the look.

3. Invite specimens that you like to self-sow. Allow plants to grow as they would in nature without your assistance. Don't fret when stray flowers appear in an area where you didn't plan to have them grow. Whimsical is fun.

4. When it comes to coordinating colors, be open to the bold and beautiful. I never thought I'd like so much orange and yellow in my landscape, but the combination of daffodils, calendula, and poppies has changed my mind.

5. Strive for balance. A clipped hedge is wonderful surrounding a formal rose garden, or outlining a driveway, yet when a garden is too heavily manicured it appears almost fake. Allow for some spillers, fillers, and thrillers. Add elements of awe.

... continued on Page OH10