

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian **Spring succession**



Photos Cynthia Brian

Final call to fertilize lawns to maintain the lush green for summer.

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Be cautious of poisonous plants invading your vegetable garden. Poison hemlock is everywhere and is deadly if ingested. The pretty plant displays lacy and fernlike leaves with very delicate white flowers. A member of the carrot family, it is often mistaken for Queen Anne's lace, a less-lethal specimen. The best way to identify poison hemlock is to look at the stems which have red or purple spots or streaks. Its most poisonous alkaloid is coniine which causes complete respiratory collapse. Only mechanical or artificial ventilation can save someone who has ingested poison hemlock. Wear gloves and a mask to dig out the root. Don't weed whack it or burn it as small particles could be inhaled. Socrates drank hemlock tea as his preferred



The finished frame of succulents with a turkey feather adornment hangs on the house exterior.

method of dying.

The yellow blooms of the elderberry tree signal spring's arrival, and people need to be aware of the toxicity of this beautiful tree. The stems, seeds, leaves, bark, and roots are all poisonous to humans containing a cyanide-inducing glycoside. The blue-black berries are safe to eat only after boiling for at least 20 minutes. Elderberry jam and wine are popular and include major health benefits.

Foxglove, *Digitalis purpurea*, a spectacularly beautiful biennial plant, is extremely attractive to children and every part of it is lethal to humans. Compounds from this plant are used in heart medicines. Since they grow tall, five to seven feet tall, plant them at the back of a flower garden and keep them out of your kitchen garden.



A healthy potager planted with calendula, rose, parsley, tomatoes, peppers, marjoram, oregano, mint, borage, and garlic.

Besides getting my potager and vegetable garden installed, my latest fun spring project has been creating a living wall garden by using a decorative frame from Nature Hills Nursery that features a built-in watering tray and a reservoir for drainage. This instant wall planter is a step up from the DIY picture frame with chicken wire-filled moss that I designed several years ago. I added potting soil to the portrait garden, arranged a variety of succulents, attached a found turkey feather, watered, and hung it on the exterior of my house in the sunshine as a growing art piece.

Every day I am immersed in gratitude for the wonders of Mother Earth as I watch the procession and succession of nature's bounty. Walk gently through your garden to enjoy the miraculous magic of May.