

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Photos Cynthia Brian

Garden goals for 2024



Aged chicken and rabbit manure are gold for the garden.



By composting you save the planet and your garden.



Hard prune roses now for a spring flourish of flowers.

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4. Keep on Learning

To educate means to draw forth. Take a class, read a book, join a garden club, attend a lecture, watch a documentary, or surf the internet. Whatever gives you pleasure in learning, go to a place of discovery and growth. Educate yourself.

5. Be a mentor

Many gardeners developed their passion for the earth (including myself) by following a parent, friend, or relative through the garden. Share your knowledge through example and offer your insights to neighbors and friends, and especially to inquisitive children.

6. Take a Stroll

Walk through your garden every day to witness the changes. You don't have to necessarily do anything more than enjoy the serenity. By actively seeing and listening to your garden, you'll be able to spot problems, find the perfect location for the new birdhouse, and receive the benefits of natural exercise.

7. Embrace Composting

Nothing will enhance your garden more than regularly adding organic matter to your soil. Composting is so simple once you get in the habit. I keep a five-gallon bucket inside my garage and right outside my kitchen. Add coffee grinds, eggshells, tea bags, shredded newsprint, wood ashes, vegetable scraps, and anything biodegradable. Lawn clippings, leaves, wood shavings, and weeds can all be mixed into a compost pile or bin. Don't include meat, dog and cat excrement, or diseased plants. If you have chickens or rabbits, their droppings are gold for the garden. Chicken manure needs to be aged for two to three years or it will burn your plants. Turn your compost pile every few months and when it smells earthy and crumbles like chocolate cake, spread it around your plants.

8. Make a list

When you make a weekly to-do list of what you need to do in your garden, you can do a little each day, and check off the tasks as you have the time. You'll feel exhilarated by accomplishing one or two small chores in an hour here and an hour there. No need to spend the entire weekend laboring in the yard. Instead, take time for a barbecue or sit under a tree with a good

book to relax and enjoy nature.

9. Mulch for Garden Health

By maintaining a three-inch covering of mulch, you'll reduce erosion, maintain ground temperature, suppress weeds, conserve water, and prevent disease. Leaves, pine needles, shredded bark, wood chips, and even gravel offer these benefits while beautifying and unifying the look of your landscape.

10. Take Pictures

Having the advanced cameras in our smartphones, it is easy to photograph our gardens. Take photos in every season for better record keeping as well as to document the years. It's amazing how quickly our gardens change and evolve. My library now holds over 40,000 photos from my garden!

11. Treasure Trees

In 2023, the U.S. Forest Service reported that 36.3 million trees died in California in 2022 from drought, insects, and disease. Care for the trees you already have and if you have the space, plant a tree that you've always wanted. Trees combat global warming, absorb CO2, provide oxygen, clean our air, cool our environments, conserve energy, prevent erosion, supply nourishment, offer play spaces, grant shade, and increase the value of our land.

12. Bee Friendly

Make your garden attractive to birds, bees, butterflies, and bats and you'll enjoy a healthy, happy landscape. Provide pollen-rich food, shelter, water, and landing places for beneficial visitors.

13. Forget Perfection

My motto has always been "failure is fertilizer." There are no mistakes in the garden. If you plant something and it doesn't grow, don't lament. Throw the plant on the compost pile and grow a new garden. Keep in mind that Mother Nature is always in charge. The birds, bees, wind, and wildlife will always be introducing something to your design that you did not plan. Strive for excellence but deep six the idea of 'perfection' or you'll be deeply disappointed.

Gardening is good for you. Gardening boosts morale, lowers your grocery bill, and is a free fitness center. Sprout a new year's garden with hope, faith, and garden goals. A garden's best crop is happiness. Plant some today.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.