

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

The Garden Melting Pot



Eucalyptus is endemic to Australia and should not be planted in our region because of fire danger.

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Do we want to only plant natives instead of non-natives? My answer is a firm no! I have always advocated for “planting the world” as there are so many species that thrive in our locale with origins from around the globe. Many revered non-natives have acclimated to our soil, weather, and stressors providing food and refuge for insects, wildlife, and birds while living in harmony with native species. Would you want to live without tulips, daffodils, Asian lilies, camellias, azaleas, peonies, Birds of Paradise, tulip magnolia trees, or Calla lilies? What about the numerous houseplants that we use to beautify our indoor facilities? If you love orchids, bromeliads, anthuriums, philodendrons, crotons, or Schefflera, you’ll agree that tropicals and non-natives are just as critical as natives to ecological cohesion.

There are trees, shrubs, grasses, and numerous bloomers that are natives. There are over twenty species of oaks and two species of redwoods that are native to California.

Here is a short list of my favorite natives that prosper in my landscape.

- California poppy
- California fuchsia
- California milkweed
- Blue-eyed grass
- Morning glory
- Western yarrow



Photos Cynthia Brian
California poppies are the state flower and propagate by seed.

- Ceanothus
- Agave
- Prickly Pear
- Oak
- Redwood

Balance the diversity and aesthetic appeal to create a magnificent garden melting pot filled with both natives and non-natives. Plan to plant species that have adapted to our local climate, avoid any invasive varieties, refrain from using insecticides and pesticides, and maintain your garden as needed. Remember that even “natives” will need pruning and maintenance. When you incorporate a harmonious atmosphere of many different types of plants from around the globe, pollinators and other creatures will be supported.

My family immigrated from southern Italy and the Italian canton of Switzerland, bringing with them their favorite seeds from “the old country”. The descendants of those heirloom seeds are beloved plants shining in my garden today. Because I was born in California, I often refer to myself as a California native. Yet, just like the plants in my garden, I am just part of the marvelous melting pot of cultures from around the globe.

Embrace a more diverse and resilient ecosystem by planting a salad of natives and non-natives in your garden. Appreciate the differences. When the flowers bloom, the whole world appears!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy St. Patrick’s Day!