

Cynthia Brian's December Gardening Guide

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DISCOVER a living conifer at your favorite nursery that can remain in a container for a few years of Christmas decorating.

RAKE fallen leaves to add to the compost pile. Leave a layer of leaves on the ground, however, too many leaves remaining in the garden encourage disease and block the sunshine.

APPLY dormant spray to deciduous fruit trees and roses to smother insects and eggs.

REMOVE dead or dying branches from trees, bushes and shrubs.

APPLY a layer of mulch (about three inches) to your landscape to keep the heat in and prevent soil erosion.

CONTROL peach blight and peach curl by spraying trees on a windless day with sulfur mixed with dormant oil. Two other applications will be necessary in January and February.

WRAP frost tender plants such as bougainvillea, banana, and bird of paradise in burlap to prevent damage.

GATHER an array of fresh vegetables as you design your holiday menus.

GIVE the gift of my new book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," 12 months of inspiration and gardening tips to sustain your inner gardener with a full year of kindness and happiness in nature. www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store

CONTINUE planting spring blooming bulbs through the end of January. You'll enjoy a long lasting parade of flowers throughout the spring.

HANG a spray of magnolia leaves sprayed gold and silver on your front door or mailbox.

ADD merry pink berries to garlands of redwood branches to decorate a mantel or staircase.

FILL a bowl with grapes for nibbling.

SLICE orange Fuyu persimmons or seeds of bright red pomegranates into a salad for a delicious and nutritious treat drizzled with olive oil and homemade vinaigrette.

TIE a gossamer ribbon around a cyclamen, geranium, orchid, or rose to give as a festive hostess gift.

USE the bark of eucalyptus or a lichen covered branch in your holiday décor.

RAIN kindness and gentleness on everyone you encounter.

VISIT with Santa at SA Rent-A-Space from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 2. Be the Star You Are!® volunteers will be present to help kids write letters to Santa. Free event with refreshments and a photo with Santa, 455 Moraga Rd. #F, Moraga. www.bethestaryouare.org/events

REST, relax, and enjoy this season of holly jolly!

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!

Cynthia Brian



Spider plant with colorful geraniums.



Deck the halls with a simple composition of roses and orchids on a table centered by a candle.



Get the jump on holiday cooking with fresh garden vegetables.



As winter nears a bright pink hibiscus offers tropical delight.



Growing tightly together, these colorful mums are happy bedmates.