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## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



The bounty of vegetables and herbs are at their peak. Photos Cynthia Brian

upscale restaurants or taverns recently, you probably have witnessed the rebirth of mixology. Although local wines and craft beers are always in fashion, adventurous infused spirits with herbs, fruits, berries, flowers and leaves have become the new rock stars.

You can concoct your own personalized beverages and also add a flair for the gourmet to your barbecues with ingredients from your garden. Many herbs including basil, cilantro and fennel are bolting in the heat. Cut back the flowers and enjoy them in your cooking or cocktails. With the flowers shorn, even on thyme and oregano, you'll get a longer growing time. Cut up pieces of melon, cucumber, peaches, or other fruit to enhance your sparkling water. Sprigs of rosemary are great for skewers and barbecuing. Make sauces with unexpected mixtures. Putting flowers or fruit in ice trays makes tasty and pretty cubes for your drinks. Don't be shy. Be inventive. Be creative. Take a risk.

Because of the plentiful rain last winter and spring, the bounty in our orchards is overflowing. If you like to can or freeze fruit and vegetables for winter dinners, this is the season to do it. Apples, peaches, plums, pears, Asian pears and citrus are ripe and ready. Soon the grapes will ripen and winemaking begins for local vintners. All varieties of vegetables, from Brussels sprouts to corn and zucchini are in abundance. My freezer is already filled to the brim with this summer's harvest. Since I won't eat tomatoes that aren't homegrown, having freshly preserved tomatoes with sprays of basil for December spaghetti feeds is a flavor-filled luxury.

Cooking in summer is a plant-to-plate pleasure. My stone mortar and pestle sit on my kitchen counter awaiting the pounding of the "weeds." Not sure what to make for tonight's meal? Take a walk around your garden and pluck a few garnishes while tending the weeds. Who could ask for more?

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for September

LAST CHANCE TO ORDER any spring-blooming bulbs from catalogs. They will be planted toward the end of fall and some, including all varieties of tulips, will need six weeks of refrigeration.

VISIT the National Heirloom Exposition happening at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds Sept. 10-12. <http://www.TheHeirloomExpo.com>.

STAKE trees for the upcoming autumn winds.

CUT BACK Naked Ladies as their flowers begin to wither. If you let the flowers go to seed, you won't get blooms from your bulbs next season. If you want to divide the bulbs, after blooms are spent, this is the month to do it.

FEED acid-loving plants such as roses, azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons and fuchsias.

GARNISH your beverages and platters with herbs and fruits.

DIVIDE crowded perennials when they have finished flowering.

DEADHEAD your roses once or twice a week to encourage flowering through winter.

SKEWER meats, fish, vegetables, and fruits on rosemary twigs to barbecue.

GRILL halved nectarines or peaches drizzled with olive oil and honey.

DESIGNATE an area of your landscape to be whimsical. I am enamored with the vintage signs and placards that can reside in a playful garden.

HARVEST tomatoes, peppers, onions, lettuce, tangerines and herbs as needed to experience the freshest homestead flavors and nutrients. Never refrigerate tomatoes.

MARK your calendar for a visit to the Be the Star You Are!r nonprofit booth at the Moraga Pear and Wine Festival on Saturday, Sept. 28. Thanks to our sponsor, The Lamorinda Weekly. Details at <http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org/events>.

WATER lawns deeply as the weather gets hotter.

PICK a single dinner plate dahlia to add color to your kitchen.

FREEZE extra fruit for winter consumption, share with a friend or donate to a food bank.

CELEBRATE the 20th anniversary of local literacy nonprofit, Be the Star You Are!r 501c3 with a tax-

"Digging the garden, tending the weeds. Who could ask for more?" - John Lennon and Paul McCartney

Because I enjoy consuming copious amounts of greens, I have been called a rabbit. When I prepare meals, I use large quantities of herbs, leaves, and juices that emanate freshly harvested from my garden. Long ago my son deemed that I added "weeds" to my menus because basil, rosemary, sage, thyme, parsley, cilantro, oregano, fennel, mint, lovage, and, yes, the occasional weed, were ubiquitous. Years before the craze of flavored waters hit the market, I was promoting what I called "weed water," H2O infused with fruits, juices and herbs. I began writing a recipe book and even bought the domain name of "weedwater.com," which I later sold for a hefty profit to a producer of cannabis products.

All of which brings me to my topic of garden garnishes.

The quest for creating delicious and original cuisine and beverages is time-honored. If you have visited any

deductible donation that will help youth-at-risk. <https://www.BetheStarYouAre.org>

CONCOCT your own "weed water" with summer fruits including peaches, pears, tangerines, watermelon, cantaloupe, cucumber, blueberries, grapes and apples. Stir in your preferred herbs and citrus juice.

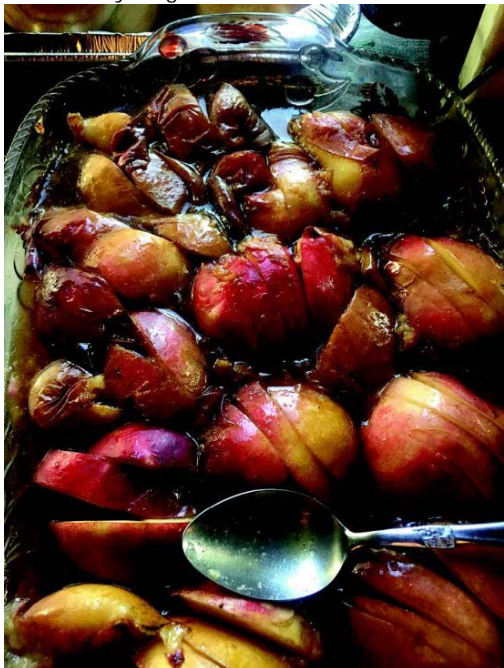
Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



A bee pollinates a black-eyed Susan coneflower.



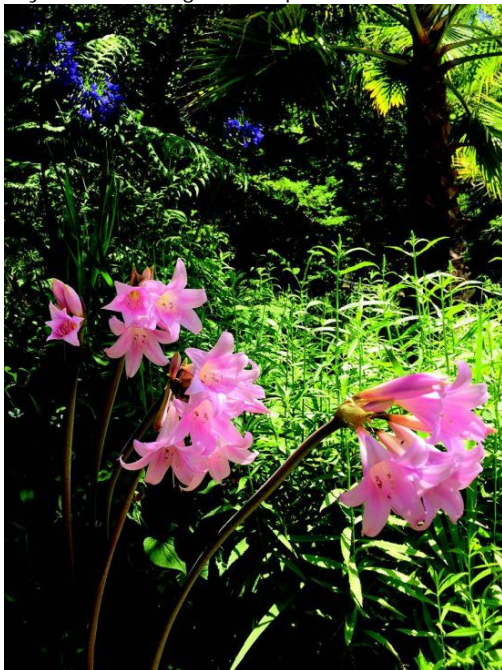
Is there anything better than a summer tomato salad with all ingredients fresh from the garden?



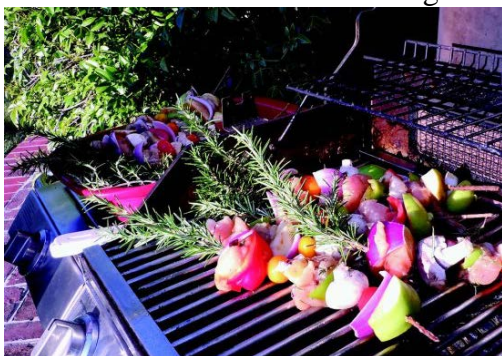
For a tantalizing treat, barbecue nectarines, slathered with honey and nutmeg.



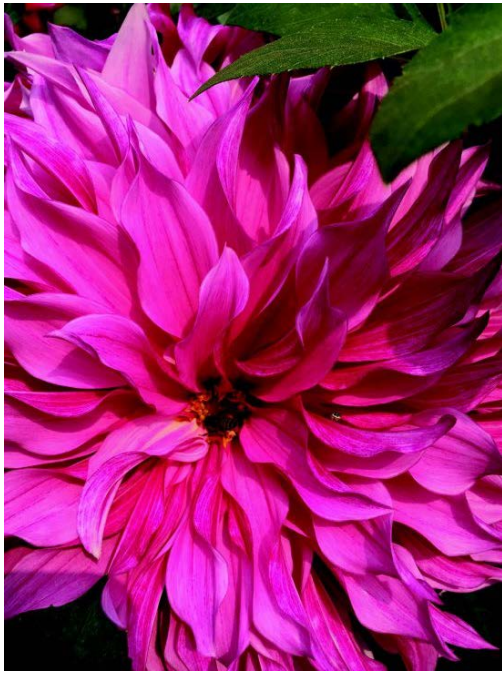
Thyme is flowering and the petals add flavor to menus.



The Naked Ladies are as stunning as always with dark blue agapanthus and palms.



Use rosemary as skewers for grilled kabobs. Apples and Asian pears add flavor to the meat.



A close-up of a glorious dinner plate pink dahlia. Cynthia Brian dallies in the dahlias.



Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!r 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Buy a copy of her new books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Hire Cynthia for projects, consults, and lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardener.com](http://www.GoddessGardener.com)

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