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## Tree Love Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



Palm trees have fascinating bark, don't block vistas, and recall paradise vacations. Photos Cynthia Brian

Asian pear, pear, Santa Rosa and wild plum, tangerine, Meyer and Eureka pomegranate, persimmon, apple, peach, cherry, walnut, chestnut, fig, tangelo, mulberry, apricot, and guava.

Branch out. Be an arborist poet. Plan your planting then embrace the summer of tree love!

Trees

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest

Against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,

With summer upon us, is there anything better than reading, dreaming, and swinging in a hammock under the canopy of a beautiful tree? We all have trees we adore—those that remind us of forts, childhood climbing adventures, romances in far away paradises, cooling shade on a blistering hot afternoon, or days of picking juicy, mouth-watering fruit.

Before you write a poem in your garden, you need to know before you grow. It's important to plant the right tree in the right place. Total height, root depth, spread, lifespan, disease control, power line and neighborhood compatibility, water and food needs, rapid or slow growth, maintenance needs are just a few of the considerations in planning the perfect tree for your environment.

Redwoods, pines, eucalyptus, oaks, elms, and large conifers are magnificent in the wild, on hillsides, in forests, along roadways, shopping centers, parks, creeks, and open spaces yet should be avoided or limited in developments. A single specimen may be appropriate, but before planting, study the growing habits of any tree and question the impact of your choices on your neighbor's happiness.

Evergreens and deciduous trees that boast beauty in every season with flowers, fruit, interesting bark, and colorful autumn foliage top my list of favorites. These trees don't block vistas. They rustle in the wind, allow sunshine through their fronds, and are complemented by a variety of undergrowth plantings.

If you are looking to plant a tree you'll enjoy in every season, check out these choices:

- Birch
- Crab Apple
- Crepe Myrtle
- Chestnut
- Dogwood
- Flowering Cherry
- Flowering Peach
- Japanese Maple
- Lilac
- Liquid Amber
- Magnolia
- Olive
- Palm
- Pistache
- Redbud
- Silk Tree
- Tulip Tree
- Weeping Willow

A home is not complete without fruit trees. Lamorinda

flourishers include pomegranate, persimmon, apple, peach,

And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;  
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.  
Joyce Kilmer (1888-1918)

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for June

"I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than of cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs."

Joseph Addison, essayist and poet (1672-1719)

When I arrived home to find my garden gate open and my cherry tree stripped of the bountiful almost-ripe Queen Anne's, I wasn't singing a tune. It wasn't the birds that had eaten the fruit, but a family of deer who had welcomed themselves into my back yard to dine on all my roses, fruit, and lilies. When I whined to my favorite city dwelling book editor, she emailed, "I always thought that if I ever had a garden, it would be dedicated to the dining delights of butterflies, birds, snails, rabbits, gophers, etc. Maybe a few favorite flowers guarded in glass enclosures for my visual diet." The butterflies, birds, and bunnies are welcome in my secret gardens, while the snails, gophers, etc. are invited to invade another planet. Even though I appreciate the manure the deer left behind, outside my backyard they are invited to feast. This year local intruders are in abundance so make sure to tighten the locks and be vigilant about protecting your summer harvest. The bird song is more melodious in a well-protected garden.

FENCE areas visited by marauding deer. Although fuzzy and poisonous plants tend to be deer resistant, nothing is deer proof except a fence!

(Yes, they bit off the floral spikes of my foxglove!)

- INSERT three to four, eight-foot bamboo poles straight into the ground then pull together and tie at the top to make a teepee for cucumbers, beans, melons, and other climbers.
- REPOT your crowded cymbidium orchids. Divide and share with friends and family.
- ADD a snake plant, broad sword fern, Peace lily, or rubber plant to your indoor living space for the maximum amount of natural air purifying.
- CELEBRATE the summer solstice on June 21 by including neighbors in a midweek cook out.
- REFRESH your wooden patio furniture with a splash of colorful paint or if it's teak, give it a good cleaning.
- SWING in a hammock while reading a good book.
- FREEZE cherries or blueberries to add to your iced tea.
- SURPRISE dad with a new garden tool. (Keep the receipt in case he wants to exchange it!) Happy Father's Day to all great dads!
- RESEARCH the growing habits of trees you like.
- STAKE your gladiolas before they topple.
- APPLY a final dose of high nitrogen fertilizer to everything: lawns, perennials, trees, and annuals before the heat begins.
- POUR your coffee grinds and tea leaves on acid loving plants like azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, and fuchsias.
- CUT out dead wood from privets, boxwoods, holly, and other hedges.
- PUT on your overalls to work in your vegetable garden. Take it from the farmer in me-the more seeds you sow, the more food you'll grow.
- THIN fruits when they are the size of a penny on your overly populated trees.
- THROW your graduates a garden party and serve homemade Meyer Lemonade.

Congratulations to all the Lamorinda teens who are graduating this June and kudos to the parents and teachers who have done such an amazing job of cultivating blossoming individuals. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with many of our community's youth through Be the Star You Are! charity, Express Yourself! radio show, Starstyle Coaching, and the Teen Scene column here in the Lamorinda Weekly. May the gardens of your life continue to fertilize and grow YOU.

Happy Gardening to You!  
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I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

ASK CYNTHIA: Reader Requests

Dear Cynthia:

Your column gives me great ideas and new ways to think about gardening. Thanks! I have a problem and hope you will shed some light. I read the story on the front page of the April 25th Lamorinda Weekly edition about

"Moraga's Johnny Redwood Seed" with trepidation. When we moved to our Orinda house we had beautiful sunset views until a neighbor below us planted redwoods. Our view is now gone, we have little sunshine, and our landscaping has died in the shade. We are very unhappy but they refuse to cut them down. What can we do? AJ

Hello Orinda AJ:

While I admire Kevin Bernie's love of trees in the April 25th article, I don't blame you for being discouraged. I agree with you that those trees must be topped or removed. Most CC & R's, design review boards, and city ordinances provide provisions for maintaining views. Check with your city offices about the local tree regulations. If they can't help you, unfortunately, you'll probably need a lawyer and not a gardening guide.

With that said, here's a tree lesson for locals.

At the time Moraga was known as Rancho Laguna de Los Palos Colorados (Ranch of the Lake of Redwoods), Lamorinda was not a developed area. As ancient and majestic as redwoods are, and despite the fact that they are sold in most garden centers, they are not viable choices to plant in neighborhoods, unless one doesn't care about being neighborly.

Redwoods are rapid growers, adding five to seven feet per year until they eventually reach a height of 300-375 feet with a girth of twenty to thirty feet. They will outlive us, our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and beyond.

Redwoods block vistas and sunshine. As evergreens, they provide year round shade, limiting what will grow underneath. About a third of their limbs drop yearly and the foliage will block drains and clog drainpipes. With shallow roots, they tend to suck nutrients out of the soil and if too near homes can destroy foundations, pathways, patios, and driveways. Being expensive to move, remove, or prune, redwoods were not intended for suburban yards.

Unless you live at the top of the hill with no one around and you plan on being in that location forever, think thrice before planting a redwood. In advance of digging that hole for that precious small tree that will quickly sprout to its reputation of being the tallest tree on earth, get the permission of those who live in front, behind, and next to you. They may have purchased their home for the amount of sunshine or pictorial views and paid a hefty price for that bonus. Your beloved redwoods will surely destroy everything, including the friendship, within a few short years. Landscapers tend to plant in multiples of three to five meaning that your trees have the potential to create a thirty story hedge over 150 feet wide. That is one giant fence.

With the abundance of beautiful trees available, visit redwoods where they thrive...in a redwood grove. A drive through the beautiful, yet dark dense redwood forests of Canyon provides plenty of warning of what will transpire when we plant the tallest living specimen on this planet in our lots.

I wish you and your redwood neighbors peace and good fortune.

Cynthia Brian

The Goddess Gardener

Cynthia will answer one or two questions per issue as space allows. Email your comments or questions to [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com)

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