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## Gardening Guide

By Cynthia Brian



Sangria will be served on the pink patio with African daisies. Photos Cynthia Brian

"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter." - Rachel Carson

□ The intoxicating waft of sweet jasmine filled my nostrils as I opened my front door and stepped onto the porch. Droplets of rain still clung to the leaves of the Japanese maple while the bright orb of sunshine broke through the cumulus clouds encouraging the clematis to reveal their splendor.

□ May! Magnificent May!

□ Between the copious showers and the solar assistance, spring is alive and lush with the grandeur of flora. My entire garden is bursting with surprises of color, textures and forms. Plants are sprouting that I thought had long ago failed. The orchard trees are abundant with the tiny beginnings of the luscious fruit that will ripen in summer and fall. Scampering from branch to branch, squirrels entertain while stealing the bright orange loquats in their harried feeding frenzy. Birds, lizards,

frogs, spiders and other garden collaborators are active in their pursuit of the bounty of the month.

□ Yet, alas, weeds, weeds, everywhere. I spent every weekend in April in addition to hours daily before and after work pulling, composting, pulling, composting, pulling, and composting. The good news is that the soil is amenable, and although weeding is tedious and exhausting, I am able to pull most of these grasses and undesirables by hand. After all of my April preparations, including soil amending, I am finally ready for May planting. Seeds have been carefully sown for okra, beets, carrots, jalapenos, arugula, pole beans, bush beans, rattlesnake beans, peas, chard, corn, pumpkin, cucumber, a variety of lettuces, greens and kohlrabi. On Mother's Day I'll plant seedlings of tomatoes, eggplant, and squash. I am excited to tend to this living family of friends.

□ When I was a child, this was my most favorite time of the year (Christmas excepted) because we were able to dig in the dirt, plant our vegetable garden, and moreover, savor the succulent smells of the soil of spring. When my children were young, getting them involved in the outdoor projects was paramount. Invite your children to plant a garden with you. Kids love getting dirty. We were told that we had "clean dirt" because after a day in the garden our bodies and clothes were washed. (My Mom used to brush us off with a broom, too!) Children will be fascinated with worms, bugs, frogs and lizards. Gardening together forms family bonds with memories that will last forever, as you witness mine have. We were given our own plot of land to grow whatever we wanted and I did the same for my kids. My son's name remains on the gate where he began his "Veggie Garden." Suggest that your child grow a pizza garden filled with tomatoes, peppers, onions, basil, and oregano or maybe a butterfly and bee heaven where pollinators will gather. Think easy-to-grow plants such as lavender, sunflowers or poppies.

□ Make sure to spray yourself and your clothing with bug repellent. Ticks are ubiquitous this season hiding in the tall grass and shrubs just waiting to jump onto a heart-healthy human and start the blood sucking. Mosquito larvae are already hatching. With all of the rain, get ready for mosquito madness. Scour your property for the tiniest accumulation of water in a container and dump it out. Old tires are notorious breeders of mosquitoes as water gets trapped in the inner rims and the larvae multiply and hatch quickly.

□ Spring is healing. It's new birth. It's a refresher course on living. Step outside your front door. Inhale the fragrance. Observe the beauty. Then get into your garden for a day of play. Hurray for May!

□ Cynthia Brian's Goddess Gardener Tips for May

□ DIVIDE perennials, especially those that will bloom in autumn such as sedum and chrysanthemum. Dig up the clumps, pull apart and replant in other areas.

□ TRANSPLANT shrubs, trees and other plants that you want in other places in your garden. Make sure to get as much of the root ball as possible when digging, replant immediately. Water thoroughly.

□ PLANT okra, beans, watermelon, cucumbers, corn, amaranth, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, pumpkin and whatever you love to eat.

□ REMOVE the bulbs from the potted gifts of narcissus, tulip, hyacinth or Easter lilies that you received in April after the blooms and foliage die back and plant in your garden. You'll be thrilled next year when the blooms and the reminiscences of the giver rekindle joy in your heart.

□ ADD nitrogen and organic matter while building the quality of the soil with a cover crop leaving no bare soil. Radish, cowpea, sunflower, oats and flax will provide lovely cut flowers, and prevent erosion until you are ready to plant something else for the summer.

□ USE the best tools possible for your gardening chores to save time and labor. A strong and well made

hoe, spade, shovel, pick, pruning saw, pruning shears, hand trowel and rake are essentials that when maintained properly will last for many years. I recommend buying construction-grade tools instead of just garden tools.

PRE-ORDER my forthcoming garden book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," Book I in the Garden Shorts Series. Publishing was delayed in April but will be ready for May. All pre-orders will receive extra goodies such as heirloom seeds, bookmarks, and more. Email me for details, [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com). Twenty-five percent of the proceeds benefit the 501c3 Be the Star You Are! charity. <http://goddessgardener.com/books>

Win \$50,000 for your Garden: As a judge in America's Best Gardener Contest. I encourage you to enter to win \$50,000. Show the world that your thumb is the greenest by showing the world pictures of your garden today! [www.americasbestgardener.com](http://www.americasbestgardener.com)

PLAN to attend the Orinda Garden Club Tour on May 11 where five Orinda and Lafayette gardens will showcase their spectacular outdoor living settings. Get inspired for spring. [www.orindagc.org/tour2017](http://www.orindagc.org/tour2017).

PAY your water bill with your credit card and accumulate those airline and hotel miles. EBMUD only charges an additional \$1.99. Best deal!

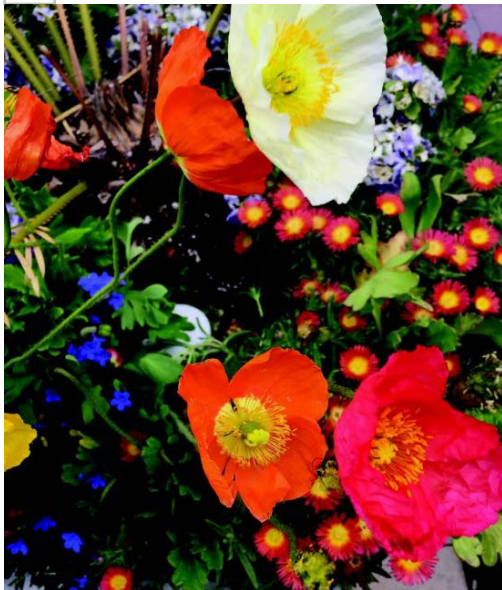
EMPTY all outdoor vessels of standing water. Even a teacup saucer will breed mosquitoes.

VISIT the Be the Star You Are! booth at the Moraga Faire on Saturday, May 13 between 11 a.m.-4 p.m. to get a bag of complimentary spring potpourri. Bring your gardening questions and I'll be there to answer them. [www.BetheStarYouAre.org/events](http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org/events)

INVITE your mother for a day of garden strolling. Visit the Botanical Gardens in San Francisco ([www.sfbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org)) or go on a hike on your favorite trail.

Looking forward to seeing you at the 11th Annual Moraga Faire. Let's talk about play in May. My sincerest wishes for a Happy Mother's Day to every Mom in our community. You are love and are loved.

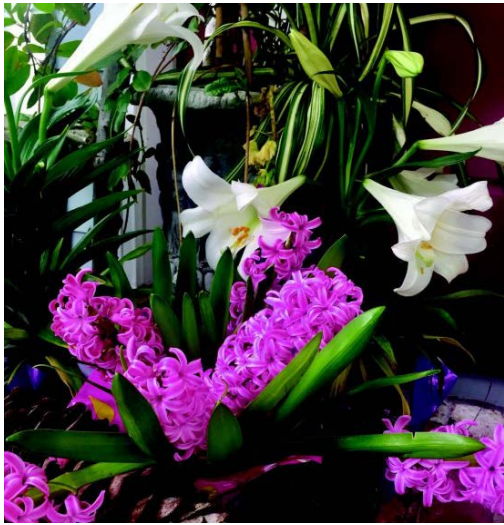
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Shirley poppies cascade over a container.



Tulips, pink osteospermum, and yellow daisies are happy companions.



After pots of bulbs die back, replant your Easter lilies and hyacinth bulbs.



Close up of the toxic and beautiful Belladonna Trumpet blossom.





Cynthia Brian hugs the clematis.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, 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 Are1(r) 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com) Available for hire for any project. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardener.com](http://www.GoddessGardener.com) 925-377-STAR

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