

Cynthia Brian's mid-month garden guide

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CLEAN the dead leaves from bearded iris to prevent rot and insect hideouts.

CUT boughs of evergreens to mold into wreaths and garlands.

PLANT a cover crop to increase nitrogen and protect against winter erosion. Fava beans, clover, vetch and mustard are excellent choices. To find seeds, visit www.rareseeds.com or www.sowtrueseeds.com.

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. Buy directly from www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store and 25 percent is a donation to Be the Star You Are!® charity, plus you'll receive extra goodies and an autographed copy.

FEED the birds. Baby, it's cold outside and our birds need food and shelter. Make sure to clean your birdhouses and feeders regularly.

WATCH for rats and mice. As the cold weather begins, vermin seek a warm bed and easy-to-find food.

CHECK plants that you've brought inside for the winter for any insect infestation.

WATER your Christmas trees. If you purchased a cut tree, make sure it has plenty of water throughout the month as indoor heat will quickly dry out any conifer.

COVER frost tender plants with burlap, sheets, newspaper or straw. Be on the alert for swift temperature swings.

REMOVE the longer canes from wisteria.

PRUNE crape myrtles and fruit trees once all the leaves have dropped.

RAKE leaves as they fall and add to the compost pile. Allow a half inch to an inch of leaves to remain on the soil. Compost the rest.

PERUSE garden catalogues and read books about landscaping as you curl up with with cup of hot chocolate or licorice cinnamon tea.

PREVENT snails and slugs from devouring your plants by adding copper strips or bowls of stale beer to the perimeter of your garden.

PICK UP guavas that fall and use for jams or juices.

ADD a bowl of freshly picked Meyer lemons to your countertop as a useful culinary display.

FILL your Christmas tree or Hannukah bush with every family ornament that you've been saving for years! Nostalgia reigns supreme.

BUY a small living cypress tree to use as an inexpensive Christmas tree in lieu of a cut fir. Some stores have been selling three- to four-foot specimens for less than \$8.

VISIT an Asian market to buy the delicious exotic Dragon fruit.

SELECT colorful and easy-to-grow crotons or ginger plants to add a fantasy island fling to your festivities.

WATCH for snow plants to sprout in the Sierras.

MAKE a tax-deductible donation to help with hurricanes and California fires disaster relief at www.BetheStarYouAre.org. Every dollar counts. Be the Star You Are!® cares.

It is the season of giving and sharing. Have yourselves a very Merry Christmas.

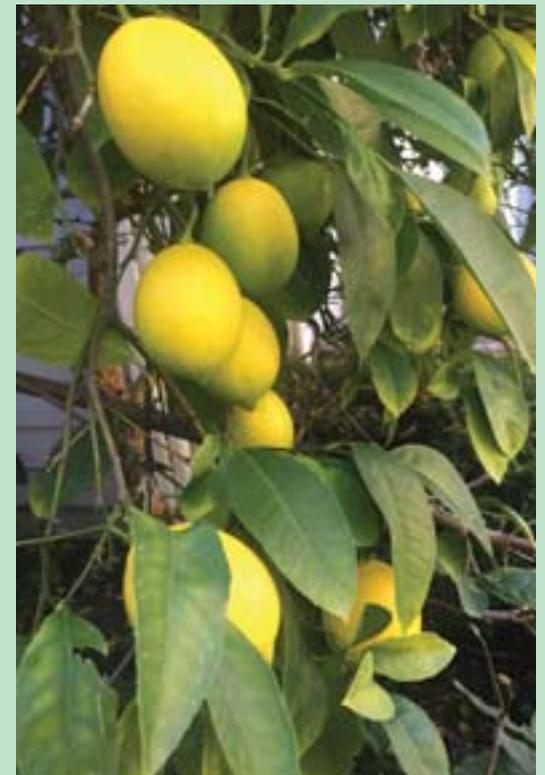
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!
Cynthia Brian



Crotons are easy to grow and make lovely houseplants.



Tropical ginger plants may need draping with burlap as they are frost tender.



Meyer lemons will ripen on the counter.