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## Cynthia Brian's gardening guide for January

By Cynthia Brian



A pink striped azalea looks like a post-holiday candy cane. Photo Cynthia Brian

"First say to yourself what you would be, and, then do what you have to do." ~Epictetus

As the holidays melt to a warm memory, we find ourselves gearing up for a new beginning. The number one New Year's resolution made by the majority of people has to do with fitness. Do you yearn to lose weight? Fit into a smaller size? Get stronger? Exercise more? Be happier?

Good news. The garden gym awaits your arrival. Gardening tasks qualify for a moderate to intense exercise program. If you are the type of person who wears a device to track your steps and your heart rate, you are in for a healthy surprise when you start gardening.

For the most powerful, full-body workout, get out your shovel and start digging. Other gardening chores that will give you positive results include weeding, planting, hoeing, seeding, watering, pulling hoses, pushing lawnmowers, pruning, carrying buckets and even harvesting your crops. Raking and trimming can

burn 300 calories an hour. You'll tone your body and your mind.

I start each morning with a brisk walk around my property to inspect my plants, pull errant weeds and the occasional dandelions as well as check on my birdhouses, bird baths, bird feeders and fountains. As I breathe the clean morning air, this jaunt has become my daily meditation. Climbing the hill to the orchard gets my heart pumping and moving rocks that have tumbled in the night strengthens my arm muscles. After 30 minutes of invigoration, my mind is clear, my heart is open, my body feels nimble, and I'm ready to tackle the day.

Here are few safety tips for "exercising" in the garden:

1. Like any exercise, warm up before you go outside. Stretch.
2. Use a cushion when kneeling to plant, weed, or dig.
3. Bend at the knee when you need to lift something. This decreases stress on your neck, shoulders and back.
4. Keep your back straight as much as possible. Minimize lumbar strain by refraining from slouching.
5. Use lightweight tools that suit your body type.
6. Pull branches to your eye level or use an extender when pruning. Don't twist or try to reach too high.
7. Don't overload the wheelbarrow or the buckets. Make more trips.
8. Wear gloves, boots with treads, a hat, sunscreen, and clothes that you don't mind ruining. (Personally, I have three drawers of old ratty tatty garden clothes that I love because they are comfortable and disaster proof. When they are too worn out or too ripped, they become gardening rags!)
9. Employ a spotter whenever you climb on a ladder. Severe injuries and even death can occur when a ladder fails or falls.

Research has indicated that gardening helps with lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, prevents heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes. It also boosts your creativity, reduces stress, and fights depression. Gardening is a physical, mental and spiritual sport. When you garden, your entire body gets a work out from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head. All of your senses will be awakened as the sights, sounds, tastes, textures and scents are stimulated by the natural world. The added attraction is that you can harvest what you grow - flowers, herbs, vegetables, fruits, branches, even weeds.

You'll burn calories, work your muscles, and enhance your senses by working in your garden. If you don't want to join the green thumb tribe, go outside to hike in the beautiful hills. Trails abound throughout our area. Anytime you walk in nature (also known as forest bathing), you will be rewarded with a plethora of benefits that will keep you in good health and more satisfied with life.

Become a green, lean, gardening machine! Happy New Year!

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Although you still will enjoy plenty of downtime during winter, the Yuletide January garden requires a bit of attention as you clean out the old to prepare for the new.

- PRUNE your deciduous trees, including fruit trees while the weather is cold and the trees are dormant to maintain the tree's food supply.
- CUT budding branches of flowering quince. The buds will open when brought indoors providing plenty of red or pink flowers for your enjoyment.
- PERUSE spring seed and summer bulb catalogues to find ideas for ordering and next season planting.
- MULCH to keep the ground warm and erosion from emerging.
- PICK bouquets of narcissi. The strong perfume is especially welcome in bathrooms and dressing

rooms.

- BURN calories by getting physical in the garden. Do your own work.
  - MOW lawns at least every two weeks.
  - BLOOMS begin now on camellias, azaleas and orchids. Soon you'll find many colors to choose from at your local nursery.
  - MOVE your Christmas tree to the curb on pickup day for your area. Make sure to remove all ornaments, tinsel and lights. If you miss your day, you'll need to cut up your tree and put it in the green organic cart for a later pickup.
  - MAKE end of year tax-deductible donations at [www.BetheStarYouAre.org](http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org) as the 501 c3 charity continues work for Operation Disaster Relief.
  - ARRANGE pots of cyclamen on your front porch as a bright and cheery greeting.
  - CUT your final rose blossoms and prepare for heavy pruning of roses toward the end of the month.
- Tune in to my live radio broadcast on Wednesday, Jan. 24 from 4 to 5 p.m. when I'll be interviewing renowned rosarian Michael Marriott of David Austin Roses in England. He'll give us the tips we need to prune as well as how to plant bare root heirlooms. <http://www.voiceamerica.com/show/2206/be-the-star-you-are>
- ORDER roses from David Austin before Feb. 28 and get a 15 percent discount with this code: UPA at [www.DavidAustinRoses.com](http://www.DavidAustinRoses.com)
  - ENJOY the birds, especially the sea birds when you visit the coast.
  - GIVE my newest gift book to yourself or someone you love. "Growing with the Goddess Gardener, twelve months of inspiration and gardening tips to sustain your inner gardener with a full year of kindness and happiness in nature" is available with both black and white or color photo interiors. For best prices, buy directly from [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store) and 25 percent is a donation to Be the Star You Are!(r) charity PLUS you'll receive extra goodies and an autographed copy. Pick up at my office to eliminate shipping costs!
  - CONTROL runoff, clean the water, and enjoy colorful specimens by planting a rain garden. High Country Gardens offers two preplanned, ready to go kits. <http://www.highcountrygardens.com>
  - HARVEST Swiss chard for a quick, nutritious sauté.
  - PREPARE for a year of cheer, good will, and gardening news as we celebrate the Yuletide together.

Do what you need to do to be what you want to be!

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!



A robin's nest nestles in a bare tulip magnolia with a camellia beginning to bloom in the background.



Cyclamen red and white.



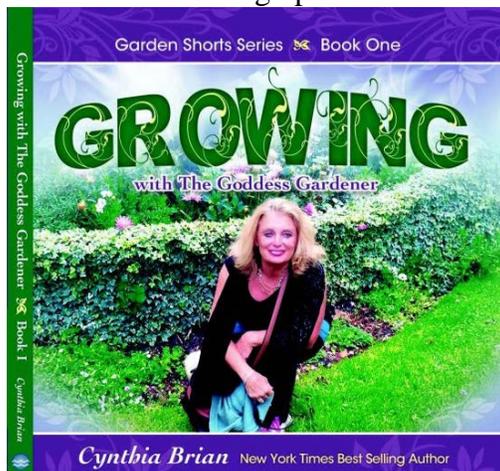
Narcissi add a sweet scent to the January atmosphere.



Harvest Swiss Chard for a winter sauté.



Orchids are showing up in stores in January.



Cynthia Brian's gift book, *Growing with the Goddess Gardener*. [www.CynthiaBrian.com](http://www.CynthiaBrian.com)  
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 Are1(r) 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). My new book, *Growing with the Goddess Gardener*, is available at [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store). Available for hire. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) [www.GoddessGardener.com](http://www.GoddessGardener.com)

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