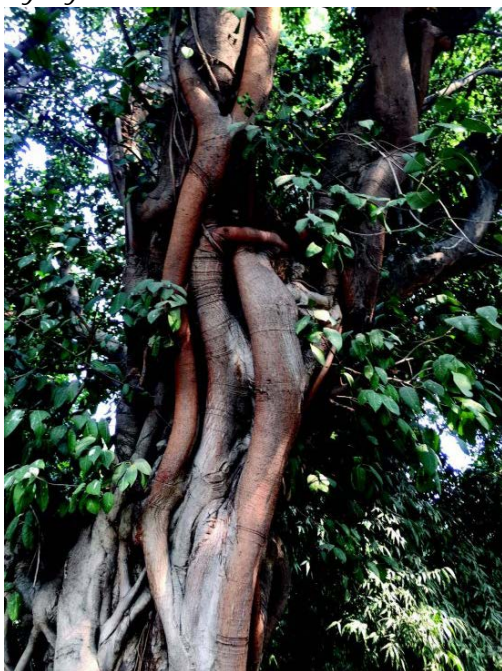


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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian



A gnarled ficus tree. Photos Cynthia Brian

"Sow a thought, reap a word. Sow a word, reap a deed. Sow a deed, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." – Charles Reade

Where I grew up there were no preschools or kindergartens, so until I started first grade, my days were spent mostly outside in the dirt, playing or helping my parents with farming and ranching chores. I attribute a great deal of my horticultural acumen to those early years when a child's brain is like a sponge, soaking up information that will be useful later in life. I didn't learn to read until age 7 when I entered first grade and once I was introduced to the magic of literacy, I was obsessed with books. Collecting soulful quotes and poems became a passion of mine and to this day I still have my handwritten notebook filled with my favorite scribbles.

The other day I decided to reread things that I've been saving for years and wasn't surprised to learn that I have always leaned towards positive, uplifting, life-changing and lofty adages, the majority of which are nature oriented. If you've been reading Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian for any of the last 11 years, you probably notice that I begin each column with a quote to anchor the theme of the article. I believe that quotes have the power to help us think clearly while reframing events that may be happening in our lives.

The source is unknown in the following poem. It is one of my very favorites and I believe you'll find it enlightening as well, especially as we begin a new year

and new leaf.

What You Sow, You Will Reap

If you plant honesty, you will reap trust.
 If you plant goodness, you will reap friends,
 If you plant humility, you will reap greatness.
 If you plant perseverance, you will reap victory,
 If you plant consideration, you will reap harmony,
 If you plant hard work, you will reap success.
 If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation.
 If you plant openness, you will reap intimacy.
 If you plant patience, you will reap improvements.
 If you plant faith, you will reap miracles.
 But.

If you plant dishonesty, you will reap distrust.
 If you plant selfishness, you will reap loneliness.
 If you plant pride, you will reap destruction.
 If you plant envy, you will reap trouble.
 If you plant laziness, you will reap stagnation.
 If you plant bitterness, you will reap isolation.
 If you plant greed, you will reap loss.
 If you plant gossip, you will reap enemies.
 If you plant worries, you will reap wrinkles.

As gardeners, we know we need to be careful what we plant now because it will determine what we will reap tomorrow.

No wonder that we like to be surrounded by trees and beautiful landscaping. If you want to live longer, plant a tree that you love. Science backs up what we innately know when we are near trees: we become less stressed, improve focus, increase our feelings of well-being, and radiate joy. January and February are the best times to buy bare-root trees and shrubs. Keep the roots wet until the hole is dug and the tree is planted. I'm often asked what is my favorite flower or tree, and of course, I have no definitive answer.

How could I choose a favorite child? Impossible.

January is not so much a month for planting but for planning. When it's cold and wet outside, sit by the fireplace with a cup of hot tea, garden catalogues, and a garden book (consider my book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" filled with 24 months of colorful photos, tips, tales, and tricks available at <http://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>). Peruse the pages, dog-ear the corners, and get out your yellow marker to circle flora that calls to you. Make a dream board of your favorite specimens and a list of names.

Make sure to include succulents as droughts will become the norm. When spring rolls around, visit your favorite nursery or garden center to see these plants in person and ask the garden professional plenty of questions. Your garden needs to be a reflection of you. What are you drawn to? Let your eyes, heart, and knowledge of your specific soil and microclimate make the decisions. Buy healthy seeds, plants and trees from reputable retailers. Remember you will reap what you sow!

Happy Gardening! Happy Growing!

Cynthia Brian's simple strategy for rainscaping

We can't control Mother Nature, but we can control how we garden. Preparing your garden to embrace storms and excess rainfall will control runoff and erosion damage. Add swales, dry creeks, rain chains, and plants to capture the rain. We need the rainwater to soak into our soil to recharge our groundwater. Storm water runoff is a pollutant. Add a fountain, pond, reflection pool, or other water feature that will save water while enhancing the beauty of your landscape.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Tips

DIAL 811 at least two working days before digging a hole for a tree, irrigation, systems, installing a fence or other structure to prevent hitting underground utility lines.

SCATTER snail and slug bait throughout your garden to protect your plants from getting munched.

FLOAT camellias in a bowl as a table arrangement.

PRUNE shrub roses back one third to two thirds; hybrid teas and floribunda two thirds to three fourths. Cut out the old woody stems of climbers and cut previous year's flowering shoots down to 3-4 inches. Let ramblers ramble!

SNIP and steep lemon verbena, rose petals, calendula, and mint in hot water for a light, fragrant winter tea that will warm you.

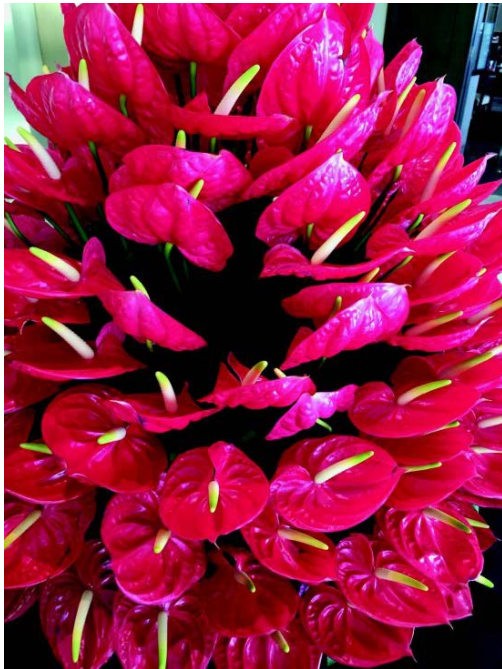
TRIM crape myrtle shrubs and trees. If you want your shrubs to remain small, prune the branches to about 18 inches.

ENLIVEN a dreary winter with exotic floral arrangements that include anthurium, Oriental lilies, or orchids.

FERTILIZE when it rains for maximum effectiveness.

PLAN for spring planting and make sure to include succulents and drought resistant plants.

SOAK your feet in a bowl with marigold and chrysanthemum petals to prevent winter chapping. You can add honey as an emollient.



Shiny red anthuriums are terrific as houseplants and arrangements.



A bouquet of pink oriental lilies add cheerfulness to any winter room.



Heavy prune crape myrtles that you wish to form into a bush or prune gently to shape your trees.



A foot bowl of marigold and chrysanthemum petals offers healing and soothing properties.



Camellias are in full bloom. Float them in a bowl or cut stems as flowers.



Plan to plant succulents in the spring.



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! Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at 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. Hire Cynthia for projects, consults, and lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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