

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Spring ahead!



Chinese fringe is a fun-frilled foundation shrub. Photos Cynthia Brian

By Cynthia Brian

“Spring drew on ... and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which freshening daily, suggested the thought that Hope traversed them at night, and left each morning brighter traces of her steps.” - from “Jane Eyre” by Charlotte Bronte

With the World Health Organization declaring the coronavirus a pandemic, daily living as well as travel is interrupted. While we need to be alert and prepared, we cannot panic. My method of staying healthy while diminishing anxiety during these very troubling times is to avoid crowds by going into my garden.

The vernal equinox is only three days away, yet we have been experiencing spring since the first days of February. The cows are munching on the green grass in the hills, the frogs are croaking their mating calls, and gardens are bursting with color. Other than the copious dancing daffodils, nothing spells spring more than abundant camellia blooms, the eye-catching Chinese fringe shrub, and the fragrance of both freesia and hyacinth. Garden chores performed in the fall is paying dividends now.

In the South, camellias are known as the “belles” of the plant world. There are over 30,000 cultivars with blooms in many shades of red, pink, purple and white. Some feature double petals, others look like roses or peonies. Most species prefer shade to semi-shade thriving in well-drained acidic soil. They are drought-tolerant and best of all, depending on the species, blooms can begin in the fall continuing through the beginning of summer. Float blooms in a shallow bowl for

a pretty centerpiece. Make sure to pick up fallen blossoms.

A fabulous foundation plant for any garden is the Chinese fringe flower, a fast-growing shrub that provides evergreen foliage and a strong structure to the garden. In spring, showy, frilly fringes of pink cover the plant. Prune the plant to keep it the size you desire knowing that it can grow to 20 feet. A great perk is that you can propagate with stem cuttings and even make a border or a wall of fringe. Did I mention the flowers boast a sweet aroma as well?

Freesias are bulbs that are grown for their beautiful scent as well as their gorgeous variety of colors. I happen to adore the upward-facing bells of the blue or purple freesia but the yellow, white, pink and red produce gorgeous presentations as well. These bulbs multiply and come up just as spring springs forward year after year. They are deer and rabbit resistant and very easy to grow. Cut a handful for a long-lasting indoor arrangement that provides beauty and perfume.

Hyacinths are dramatic with rich, deep blooms in many colors. Like freesia, they make excellent cut flowers, can be grown in containers, are deer resistant and bee magnets. Their heady scent exudes from both their flowers and their leaves. Plant them along pathways, stairs, and in the front part of your garden to savor their elegance and aromatic character. They, too, will surprise you each year, sprouting as the sunshine warms the earth to delight the senses.

Consider adding any of these favorite garden specimens to your environs for perennial spring enchantment.

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A single petal deep pink camellia with a yellow center.



Close up of a delicate and fragrant purple freesia.