

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Naturally Naked



The hillside and orchard are filled with stunning *Amaryllis belladonna*, Naked ladies.

... continued from Page OH1

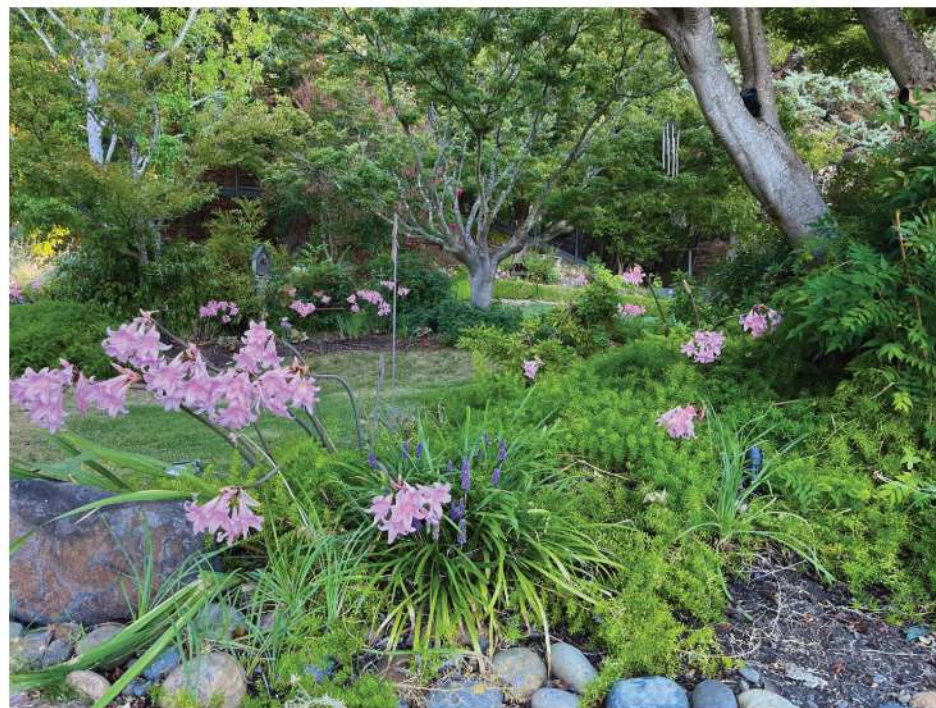
Their long throats stretch to face the sun, wherever it may be during the day.

Bloom Time: They generally bloom in late summer to early fall, making them a beautiful and unexpected addition to the garden at a time when many other plants are winding down. I have found that planting bulbs throughout the year allows various blooming times from August through October.

Growing Conditions: Naked ladies prefer well-drained soil and full sun to partial shade. They are hardy and tolerate various soil conditions, though they do best in dry soil, which works well in our drought-ridden area. Naked ladies do not like having their feet overly wet.

Planting: Naked ladies are grown from bulbs, which can be planted or transplanted at any time during the year with the optimal time being in late fall after all the flowers have faded. The bulbs can be placed about four to six inches deep with the top of their heads above ground. I suggest spacing them at least 18 inches apart to allow the bulb clusters to form. Wherever bulbs are planted, nothing else will grow on their “turtle tops”, which can easily reach two feet in diameter.

Care: Once established, Naked ladies require minimal care. They are drought-tolerant and don't require regular fertilization. In colder climates, mulch is suggested to be scattered around the base to protect the bulbs from freezing temperatures. The “minimal care” may be a bit of a misnomer when multitudes of Naked ladies are in the garden. The dried winter leaves must be pruned in spring and the dead stalks must be cut to the



Naked ladies are the stars of this shade garden. Photos Cynthia Brian

ground after blossoms fade. These tasks are easy to do, yet very time-consuming.

Toxicity: The plant is mildly toxic if ingested. Keep pets away from nibbling on plants. Instruct children never to taste or eat any plant without approval for its edible content. The toxicity is due to compounds called alkaloids present in the plant.

I adore my Naked ladies for filling my landscape with their distinctive, eye-catching blooms, and their ability to thrive and naturalize with minimal maintenance. Nature hides their beauty when only the bulb is visible. They then sprout as my naturally naked summer stunners.

My favorite showy summer tree is the crape myrtle. *Lagerstroemia*, native to Asia, provides year-round interest and is a popular choice in gregarious garden design. Here's why I recommend crape myrtles.

Long Blooming Period: Crape myrtles are renowned for their extended flowering season with a dense canopy of bright blooms. Depending on the variety and climate, they can bloom from late spring through fall. Their vibrant flowers come in a range of colors. I grow watermelon pink, purple, and lavender, with my preferred tree being watermelon pink. Other available colors are red and white.

Attractive Foliage: The leaves of crape myrtle trees are also visually appealing. They can display a range of colors throughout the seasons, including lush green in spring and summer, turning to brilliant red, burgundy, and orange in autumn.

... continued on Page 10