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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian - Read, Plant, Grow!

By Cynthia Brian



A spray of rosehips, perfect to make tea Photos
Cynthia Brian

leaf through garden books and plant catalogues in pursuit of new specimens. For inspiration, a quick read, and hearty laughter, pick up a copy of the book or CD of the New York Times best seller, *Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul*. You'll quickly beat the blahs through the warmth of trailblazing stories.

While away the hours curled by the fireplace sipping your cup of hot cocoa perusing the plethora of periodicals that will help you plan your spring and summer gardens. Some boast seeds and heirloom plants unavailable in local nurseries or garden centers, while others offer recipes for roasting your own vegetables over a campfire or stove.

For your reading pleasure and fodder for the fields, here is a sampling of my favorites:

Seed Savers Exchange: America's premier source for heirloom seeds since 1975. Bumper crops of peppers, tomatoes, ground cherries, potatoes, beans, beets, Brussels sprouts, and thousands of other vegetable and flowering varieties stored in a living seed vault. www.seedsavers.org.

- Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds: Putting the local gardener and farmer in control of the food supply with pure heirloom seeds and no gene-altering, this family run seed preservation business swims against the river of modern agri-business. www.rareseeds.com.

- John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds: Serving America's finest gardens since 1908, John Scheepers offers an ever-expanding collection superb quality non-genetically engineered flower, vegetable, and herb seeds from around the world. www.kitchengardenseeds.com.

- White Flower Farm: Presenting plant combinations and collections to produce pleasing results without exceptional levels of skill and effort, White Flower Farms' bulbs, flowers, supplies, and vegetables are accompanied by practical care instructions for your climate zone. www.whiteflowerfarm.com.

- Bluestone Perennials: Over five acres of greenhouses packed with perennials grasses shrubs, mums, and herbs all meticulously chosen for long life, stability, and enjoyment. www.bluestoneperennials.com.

- Proven Winners: Setting new standards in breeding, beauty, and performance with exceptional varieties and original breathtaking varieties since 1995, Proven Winners offers hanging baskets, cultural information, and growing tips. www.provenwinners.com.

- Jackson & Perkins: Founded in 1872, it is the world's foremost hybridizer of garden roses with new introductions each year. For 2010, Jackson & Perkins has released six glorious roses, three of which are exclusive, including Sedona Hybrid Tea Rose (Rose of the Year), Bubblicious Shrub Rose, Beach Blanket Groundcover Rose, Peppermint Splash Grandiflora, Sweet Intoxication, and Monkey Business Floribundas. www.jacksonandperkins.com.

Throughout America, seven million new gardens were planted last year. According to the 2009 Edible Gardening Trends Research Report conducted by my very own Garden Writers Association, over forty-one million households in the United States grew a vegetable garden. This represents 38% of the population. Obviously many more people are finding the joys of healthy eating by

growing edibles. In addition to these numbers, almost twenty million households grew herbs while nearly seventeen million grew fruits. When asked about planting gardens for 2010, 37% of households reported plans to increase the vegetable gardens to supplement their food supply. The most first time and experienced edible gardeners resided in the South with the least amount of gardeners living in the West.

With our mild climate, that statistic surprised me. I am now on mission. My goal for this year is to help you savor the benefits of eating what you personally grow as well as enjoy fresh bouquets from your garden. You'll be healthier, happier, and reap the rich bounty from generous Mother Nature. My motto for 2010 is "read, plant, grow."



Cynthia Brian's Happy New Year Pruning



Seed Catalogues

Cynthia's Digging Deep Gardening Guide for January

"A garden's best crop is happiness" Bob Rodale, organic gardening champion

- PRUNE your beds of roses, fruit trees, and crepe myrtles. Remove any diseased parts and do not compost.
- BREW a pot of rose hip tea brimming with vitamin C.
- SPRAY an application of dormant spray to kill overwintering insects on fruit trees.
- PROTECT frost tender plants by covering them with blankets, plastic, or tarps.
- CARE for the holiday potted plants. With heaters turned up indoors, plants need more water. Remove wrapping to allow for good drainage.
- MOVE live Christmas trees outdoors. Save for next year in a large container.
- EDUCATE yourself by taking a class, reading, or attending lectures. I'm speaking at a variety of venues so visit www.bethestaryouare.com or www.goddessgardener.com to attend.
- BUY bare root roses, vines, berries, and fruit trees at your local garden center. Soak in a bucket of water for twenty-four hours before planting.
- REFRAIN from picking and eating the multitude of mushrooms popping up in lawns and around trees unless you are certain they are edible. A majority of toadstools are poisonous and deadly. Be safe.
- SHARE rose canes with fellow gardeners. Cut the cane on an angle to about twelve inches and dip in a growth solution. Stick in a pot or directly in the ground. Water and wait.
- MULCH garden beds with three inches of organic matter to amend the soil while protecting against freeze.
- BRIGHTEN your landscape by planting primroses, snapdragon, stock, sweet peas, violas, cineraria and pansies which bring exciting color to the grey landscape. Add shimmer to home environment by planting in pots for the porch.
- NOURISH the birds! Our birds need human help in the winter. Provide plenty of seed.
- COLOR your world with pansies, cyclamen, azaleas, camellias, primroses, and stock.
- FEED the soil and it will feed you.
- HIBERNATE. Our gardens are sleeping and so should we. Take time for yourself this winter. Remember to rest, relax, rejuvenate, and replenish yourself.

Wishing you a very healthy, happy, organic 2010. Read, plant, grow! Happy gardening to you!

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