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Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian Growing Garden Resolutions



Walk in your garden every day and you'll enjoy the path. Azaleas are glorious in February.

are no dumb questions. Gardeners are flattered to share their knowledge.

3. Discover Something New

Whether it's planting an emerging specimen or experimenting with garden art, try something new. Go global and experience a specimen from another part of the planet. Grow the world.

4. Educate Yourself

To educate means to draw forth. Take a class, read a book, join a garden club, attend a lecture, watch a documentary, surf the Internet. Whatever gives you pleasure in learning, go to a place of discovery and growth.

5. Share Your Knowledge

Many gardeners developed their passion for the earth (including myself) by following a parent, friend, or relative through the garden. Be a mentor through example and offer your insights to neighbors and friends, and especially to inquisitive children.

6. Walk in Your Garden Daily

Stroll through your garden every day to witness the changes. You don't have to necessarily do anything more than enjoy the serenity. By actively seeing your garden, you'll be able to spot problems, find the perfect location for the new birdhouse, and receive nature's exercise benefits.

7. Embrace Composting

Nothing will enhance your garden more than regularly adding organic matter to your soil. Composting is so simple once you get in the habit. I keep a five gallon bucket inside my garage and right outside my kitchen. Add coffee grinds, egg shells, tea bags, shredded newsprint, wood ashes, vegetable scraps and anything biodegradable that you can add to your larger bin or pile. Lawn clippings, leaves, wood shavings, and weeds can all be mixed in. Don't include meat, dog and cat excrement, or diseased plants. If you have chickens or rabbits, their droppings are gold. Chicken manure needs to be aged for two to three years or it will burn your plants. Turn your compost pile every few months and when it smells earthy and crumbles like chocolate cake, spread it around your plants.

8. Short Work Spurts

Make a list of what you need to do in your garden on a weekly basis. Then throughout the week, check off the tasks as you have the time. There is no need to spend eight hours every Saturday or Sunday toiling (unless you want to). You'll feel exhilarated by accomplishing one or two small chores in an hour here and an hour there.

9. Mulch for Garden Health

By maintaining a 3-inch covering of mulch, you'll reduce erosion, maintain ground temperature, suppress weeds, conserve water, and prevent disease. Leaves, pine needles, shredded bark, wood chips, even gravel offer these benefits while beautifying and unifying the look of your landscape.

10. Photograph your Space

With our smartphones and digital cameras it is so easy to take pictures. Take photos in all the seasons for better record keeping as well as to document the years. It's amazing how quickly our gardens change and evolve.

11. Save a Tree

Seven million urban trees are destroyed every year. Americans are being asked to plant a tree or care for one

By February, most of the resolutions made on Jan. 1 have been waylaid. Our dreams of losing weight, becoming more organized, and being a better person might have already turned into nightmares. If we want to be triumphant in life, we need to make conscientious changes or else we are doomed to stagnation. February is the perfect month to create our year's gardening goals. If we do a little at a time, step by step, and commit to success, we will achieve our desires. There is a saying, "by the inch, it's a cinch." Choose one or two goals per month and make it happen. The only way to predict the future is to create it. To become a better gardener, we need to adopt new ideas and adapt our beliefs. Whatever your level of gardening expertise, you will benefit from several of these suggestions. Get going, get growing.

1. Keep a Garden Journal

Whether you write in a notebook or create a digital diary, keep track of what's happening in your landscape.

2. Ask Questions

Don't be afraid to go to your local nursery and be inquisitive. Talk to your grandmother, neighbor, or a total stranger if they have a garden or plants you admire. There

that you already have. Trees combat global warming, absorb CO2, provide oxygen, clean our air, cool our environments, conserve energy, prevent erosion, supply nourishment, offer play spaces, grant shade, and increase the value of our land.

12. Bee Friendly

Make your garden attractive to birds, bees, butterflies, and bats and you'll enjoy a healthy, happy landscape. Provide pollen rich food, shelter, water, and landing places for beneficial visitors.

13. Forget Perfection

My motto has always been "failure is fertilizer." There are no mistakes in the garden. If you plant something and it doesn't grow, don't lament. Throw the plant on the compost pile and grow a new garden. Keep in mind that Mother Nature is always in charge. The birds, bees, wind, and wildlife will always be introducing something to your design that you did not plan. Strive for excellence but deep six perfection or you'll be deeply disappointed.

Gardening is good for you. Gardening boosts morale, lowers your grocery bill, and is a free fitness center. A garden's best crop is happiness. Plant some today.

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- GIVE a living Valentine's gift such as a beautiful dendrobium orchid or fra grant gardenia.
- START the seeds of warm season crops indoors including tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and basil. You'll need to wait four to eight weeks before setting in the soil, depending on our weather patterns.
- PRUNE grapevines while they are dormant and canes are brittle. Pruning grapes is an art that keeps the vines producing and healthy. If you are crafty, save long, strong canes for projects, such as making wreaths.
- REMOVE all fallen camellia flowers from the ground to prevent disease.
- CUT multicolored bouquets of fragrant freesia to perfume your interiors.
- IDENTIFY nests that have fallen from trees or shrubs. What birds are romancing in your neighborhood?

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Cynthia is available as a speaker and consultant.



Pick purple freesias for February. Amethyst is the color of the month. Photos Cynthia Brian



What type of bird nest is this? It fell from a palm tree. Notice the palm bark entwined in its construction.



Peruse seed catalogues to be prepared for spring planting.



Cynthia Brian

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