

Gardeners need to smell the roses, too

Gardeners are very hard on themselves. Every spring and summer I live to garden. When people ask what I do for fun, they give me a quizzical look and a shrug when I answer "play in the dirt." But that's what I do—part of each day and in most weather conditions.

Now, in my third decade as a serious gardener, while I'm out in the yard, I find I spend as much time thinking about who I am in relation to the garden as I do about the plants and their relation to the garden. One of the things I have discovered about myself, which I know to be true of other serious gardeners as well, is that we are all much too critical of our accomplishments.

To any outsider, my garden is a paradise of colorful borders, fruit trees, a large vegetable patch and fun surprises around every corner. It is a truly beautiful place to be and I'm incredibly lucky to live in such a wonderful environment. But, . . .

First thing every morning, I make my daily survey—in my pajamas—of conditions in all of the beds. It's then that I start making mental lists of things that need to be corrected, moved, cut back or dug out. When I scan my gardens, I see all the dead flowers and broken stems. I see where the bugs have eaten and where the fungus are creeping. I look at the soil and see weeds. I look up in the trees and see where the catbirds are stealing all the peaches. I look through the beauty, right to the chaos.

I'm not the only one.

I've visited many gardens, belonging to many wonderful, creative gardeners. In virtually every case, when I've given compliments, they make excuses and apologize for everything that's wrong with their gardens. When I point out beautiful roses, they point



Flotsam and Jetsam

By Donna Drago

out where the Japanese beetles have recently dined. When I marvel over color, they tell me that the bee balm clashes with the balloon flowers. When I say "you work so hard keeping up this place," they say "there's never enough time."

I admit to being too serious about my gardens. For example, I recently planted a red dahlia in my perennial border. After it started blooming, I realized it was too red, too short and not what I had in mind at all. I thought about that dahlia all the time. I stared at it until it made me upset. I even dreamt about it one night. It nagged at me until I finally pulled it out and replaced it with something more suitable for the spot.

My husband is just as bad. When I tell him that his veggie patch looks great, his accusing index finger comes out and points out what's wrong with the cucumbers, the peppers and the bok choy.

Now that I am aware that I, and most other gardeners, do not give ourselves enough credit, I am working hard to spend more time appreciating and less time criticizing my work.

One of the ways I do this is to step back a few feet, sit in a chair or on a bench, and look at the garden from a distance. Even at 10 feet, the weeds recede back into the soil and the spent blooms blend in with the lively, colorful ones. At 20 feet, the garden looks like it should be in a magazine. I

make myself sit for awhile several days a week and think about the combinations that are working. I get my camera out and record my successes so I remember from one year to the next what things I am getting right.

When I have visitors, I no longer make apologies for anything that does not look perfect. Heck, I'm not perfect, why would anyone expect the garden to be? Instead, I lead folks around and point out the branches loaded with plums, or the clusters of grapes climbing on the fence. I sweep my arm toward my colorful, perennial border and let it speak for itself. I encourage people to rub the herbs to enjoy the scent and I take them up near the Asiatic lilies, where the perfume makes them swoon. Me, too!

Gardens are about pain. Gardens are about pleasure. Both statements are true, so it's up to the gardener to decide which of the two they want to wallow in.

Follow up on mosquito repellents

Several weeks ago I wrote about my difficulties with frequent mosquito bites. I have continued my research on that front and discovered that taking vitamin B1—either orally or by patch—has a definite affect on how often I am bitten. A new product on the market is the Don't Bite Me patch, which contains B1 and aloe that supposedly repels mosquitoes and other biting insects for up to 36 hours. I tried the patch for a week and got no bites. I then tried taking a B-complex supplement every day for a week and also got no bites. Even though my trials have been limited, I'm encouraged by the results. For those of you who suffer each summer, I'd recommend trying either of these options to see how they work for you.

Mike Lyons entertains at East Ferry Sunday

Summer Music in Jamestown continues on Sunday, July 27, with the return of Mike Lyons and the Blue Moon Orchestra, a 17 piece "big band."

This group wowed audiences last summer and is back by popular demand. The concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the East Ferry Memorial Square.

After studying at Berklee College of Music, band leader Mike Lyons spent eight years as second trumpet and occasional singer with several jazz orchestras before finding his own voice for big band classics, and especially Sinatra-style vocal arrangements. Mike has put together a swinging band that has delighted audiences around the state.

Admission is free. Bring blankets or chairs to enjoy this great concert, which is sponsored by Baker's Pharmacy and Jamestown Parks and Recreation. In case of rain, the show will be at the Recreation Center, across the street.



Who says color doesn't call attention to an advertisement?

It just did.



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BIRTH

Lilly

A son, Jack Brennan Lilly, was born July 14, 2008 at South County Hospital to Jean (Monaghan) and Daniel E. Lilly, Jr. of Jamestown.

Grandparents are Jean B. Lilly and the late Daniel E. Lilly, Sr. of Jamestown and Mary Bradford of Rhinebeck, N.Y. Great-grandmother is Bridie Luffman, also of Rhinebeck, N.Y.

ENGAGEMENT

Quirk, Hawkins plan wedding

Sam and Cindy (Quirk) Leveille of Hope and John T. and Lisa Quirk Jr. of Oklahoma are happy to announce the engagement of their daughter, Heather Ann Quirk to Mark Hawkins, son of Mrs. Rosalind Hawkins and the late Frank Hawkins of North Kingstown.

The bride to be graduated from Rocky Hill School and a graduate of Tulane University. She is currently a buyer at R.I. Distributing.

The groom to be is an alumni of North Kingstown High School and holds a degree from the Community College of Rhode Island. He is a partner in Dry Bridge Sand and Stone and owner of Rolling Green Golf Course.

A February 2009 wedding is planned.

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