



**On Being a Farm Wife**  
(and other hazards)  
**Joyce Bupp**

Tiny purple blooms, each with a white dot in the center, are a Mother's Day reminder.

The flower clusters of purple verbena dangle gracefully at the ends of stems spilling out of a hanging basket. With blossoms of one of my mother's favorite colors, the verbena was a thoughtful gift from a family friend a year ago. The kind gesture paid honor to her life, which had peacefully ended a few months earlier.

When I remarked recently that the plant had happily wintered the year's brutal cold in our chilly greenhouse and was again covered with flowers, our friend observed that it meant mother is still around.

"Actually, mother's popping up all over the place," I replied, gesturing toward the yard where

an assortment of transplanted bulbs and perennials from her garden were coming to life. In fact, I've found several plants I'd forgotten moving in places I'd forgotten putting them.

Flowers and gardening were mother's pastime, keeping her active and working outside until literally her last day of life. It was a passion we shared, walking the yard on each visit during all but the worst weather to check what was blooming, budded, or poking up out of the ground. So it was personally important to preserve and perpetuate many of her beloved plants.

Towering over its perennial neighbors in the border edging one side of the lawn is a white dogwood tree. Mom dug the dogwood several years ago from the

wooded area of their property, a haven started by a prior owner who filled it with shade lovers like dogwoods, wild azalea, and rhododendrons. Just a two-foot sapling when we moved it, the dogwood is now a healthy eight-footer with spreading branches, covered appropriately this past week with blooms.

Another living legacy from mother are several thick clumps of peony foliage, their sturdy stems fattening round buds on the ends. She really enjoyed a long hedge of pink peonies which was the beauty of the neighborhood when it was in full blossom, and never failed to send visitors away with an armful of the fat, fragrant flowers when they were at their prettiest in late May.

An old-fashioned bleeding heart is dangling valentine-shaped, two-toned pink blooms in a semi-shaded bed viewed from a kitchen window. When I

took the bleeding heart plant to her on a Mother's Day several years ago, mom handed it back and asked me to plant it in my garden for her. Now it has a similar neighbor, not yet blooming, but hopefully a youngster of the pure-white version she also grew.

A clump of foliage in the same bed, pushing long stems with fat round buds at the top, caught me by surprise when I spied it a few days ago. After a little mental searching, I remembered digging the clump of alliums, or "flowering onions," which appear happy in their new location. It's probably appropriate that its neighboring columbine and astilbe, sweet violets in several different colors, the lilies-of-the-valley, the bleeding hearts have put down roots near the old bird bath also salvaged from mother's garden. Even one of her prized rhubarb stalks has settled in at a corner of one bed.

Mother taught me many things — household skills like cooking, canning and sewing, a love of reading and words, and the philosophy of making do with what was available and doing without if necessary. But, in our joint ma-

turity, it was flowers and gardening that we shared with the most fervor.

White and purple lilacs blooming in the yard, the iris we traded back and forth pushing out buds, daylilies spreading their sturdy selves, stalks of yucca and perennial geranium thriving on the bank of the goldfish pond, bring to mind the refrain of a popular country song. The lyrics note that what's important from a life is not what you take, but what you leave behind you, when you go.

Our Mother's Day flowers this year will be from the green legacy left behind by one whose teachings to her children to "bloom where you are planted" continue to grow on.

Not only is she popping up all over around here, but she's multiplying as well.

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