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Some problems in gardening

by Ralph Miller

It has been with some reluctance that I have been forced to admit to myself that my wife is right, I leave something to be desired as a gardener. But she bolsters me somewhat by telling me I do grow excellent weeds.

In defense of my gardening (an 11 foot by 16 foot vegetable plot and two slightly larger flower borders), I have been saying that I got a rather late start this past Spring, for various reasons.

Weather was my first defense, and it is true that this Spring was contrary with rain and cool temperatures stretched out for rather longish periods. But I did turn all the beds over except where the perennials were growing. The onions, radishes, lettuce and tomatoes seemed to come on without difficulty, but as to the carrots, bush beans, summer squash and zucchini, some never made it. I blame it on the rabbits, but I couldn't swear to it in a court of law. There was circumstantial evidence with the summer squash and zucchini since the first plants seemed to be continuously nibbled away; however, the second batch planted apparently are going to mature and, hopefully, to produce something for the cook pot. It may be the clover which exists in big patches throughout the yard, that lured the rabbits away from the garden.

As for the rabbits, I'd like to see them in the cook pot too, but that doesn't seem to be in the cards. You have probably read recently about the trouble Elizabeth-town has been having with rabbits. It unquestionably must be a branch of the family from here. I have counted at least four young and three adults hanging around the yard. The young ones don't seem as smart as the adults who put a much greater distance between me and them when I

threaten them. The young just sit and wait until I am three or four feet away and then just hop a yard or two when I tell them to beat it, or else they find a convenient bush and keep circling on the opposite side from me. They seem reluctant to leave, so morning after morning, afternoon after afternoon, evening after evening, I am distracted from other tasks to take a few minutes exercise trying to evict rabbits. Whatever success I may think I have is questionable since, given a few minutes of free time, they are back in no time at all. Perhaps they never left! At any rate, I am now convinced that at most they wait outside the edge of the yard until they see me leave.

The rain, birds, or some unseen forces of nature must also have been at work in transforming my neatly designed flower beds into the jungle it is. I was prepared to have petunias scattered hither and yon (I haven't planted any for three years but they keep coming up); larkspur growing in every imaginable spot, and forget-me-nots rearing their pretty blue heads in different places, but I wasn't prepared for migrating marigolds, nasturtiums, lavender, pearl balsam, Peruvian four-o'clocks, and gloriosa daisies. Throw in about 5 varieties of Cruciferae (Mustard family), several Composite family members, and assorted members of the Pulse, Mint, Goosefoot, Amaranth and Buckwheat families, not to mention numerous grasses and sedges, and you can readily see confusion begin to grow. Especially when doubt begins to creep in as to whether something about to be uprooted is really a weed, or perhaps, a misplaced flower. This really is where my wife gets the idea I like to grow weeds.

Actually, in the right places weeds can look as if they were properly placed. Treacle, mustard, as a

medium sized, slender plant with alternating bluish-green, lance-shaped leaves, topped by small clusters of tiny, bright yellow flowers, is appealing and even added to the appearance of the white cleomes. However, it popped up everywhere.

This was just the opposite for another tall, handsome plant. When I first saw the dark green plant with alternate wing-tipped leaves growing in the bed designated for hollyhocks, it looked as if they had been deliberately planted there, making a neat and compact patch of plants just the right height set over against the giant anchusa and coreopsis. I was beginning to doubt myself but the small purple composite flower heads began to appear I knew I had been tricked again. All the books on botany said it was *Cirsium arvense* (Canada thistle), as I had surmised. When I read in Britton and Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada that it was "a noxious weed of fields and waste places", I knew I didn't have a garden anymore.



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BIRTHS

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen L. Mohr, (Mary Ann Hallgren) Box 103, Bainbridge, a daughter at General Hospital, July 4.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce W. Hardy Jr., (Bonnie Hess), Box 179 R. D. 1, Bainbridge, a daughter at Osteopathic Hospital, July 2.

Mr. and Mrs. Leon Good, (Elaine Wenger), R. D. 2 Mount Joy, a daughter at Lancaster General Hospital, June 29.

Mr. and Mrs. Walter Robinson, (Donna Fetterhoff), R. D. 1, Mount Joy, a son at General Hospital, June 29.

Mr. and Mrs. Vincent A. Cellucci (Mary Jo Shope), 17 S. Pine St., Marietta, a son at General Hospital. July 10.

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Oberholtzer, (Shirely Bender) 56 W. Main St., Mount Joy, twins - a son and a daughter, at St. Joseph's Hospital, Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth E. Betz, (Carl Peters), R. D. 2, Mount Joy, a son at General Hospital. July 11.

Rev. and Mrs. Dennis Kuhns, (Joyce Eberly), a daughter at Meadville General Hospital, July 7. Mrs. Kuhns is formerly of Mount Joy.

Mr. & Mrs. David Santiago, (Robyn Bright) R.D. #1 Marietta, a daughter at Columbia Hospital. July 12.

DID YOU HEAR....

Kitty Shank's screams could be heard all over Marietta when she went into her back kitchen and found she was being visited by a black rat snake almost 6 feet long.

Paul Raber came to her rescue and captured the critter. Paul says it is one of the largest specimens he has ever seen—and that it probably just wanted to get in out of the rain.

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