

Healthy Farmer

May 2011

A publication by AgriWellness, Inc.

My Wife's Gardens

By Mike Rosmann and dedicated to husband and wife gardeners everywhere.

Like many farm couples, my wife plants the flower gardens and I take care of the vegetable gardens. Anyhow that's how she sees it. I can the tomatoes and salsa; I freeze the beans, beets, asparagus, and give away the excess fresh veggies to our adult children and my office staff. It's fun to be the first in the neighborhood in the spring to harvest fresh spinach because I mulched the August-planted spinach late last fall and it over-wintered fine. When I uncovered it in early March, it was already growing nicely; two weeks later we had our first garden produce. And it's fun when Shari and Carol, the AgriWellness staff, appreciatively praise my fresh tomatoes, peppers, beans and assorted surprises.



But this is about my wife's gardens. Yesterday, for the second time in as many hours, my phone rang at the AgriWellness office. "Hi, it's me again. Can you stop at The Garden Supply place and pick up six more bags of red cedar mulch? Get the same stuff that we bought yesterday. Can you pay for it? I didn't have my credit card when I called to see if they still had mulch. And, oh, pick up four more Japanese lilies, and get some rooting hormone."

How could I resist such a cheery voice? And, of course, I wasn't one to stand in the way of home improvement projects. So, two hours later I unloaded the mulch and various items next to her plots of tulips, daffodils, lilies, irises, gladioli, asters and assorted native prairie plants. As I finished the unloading chores, my wife pleasantly asked "Can you haul these branches for me? And can you bring me a couple buckets of water for the new plants? Would you make sure the lawn tractor starts okay, because we haven't used it yet this spring? And where is the spade? Is there any fertilizer left from last year?"

"How about if I change clothes first so I don't get my clean pants dirty," I intoned. But I cranked up the lawn tractor and hooked it to the cart, tossed in the spade and drove to where my wife was working in her gardens, before entering the house to change clothes.

While I was changing clothes I could hear Marilyn rev up the lawn tractor. The motor droned outside the bedroom window, and I was glad it seemed to be working okay. For the next hour I could hear the tractor surge as Marilyn was clipping dandelions instead of hauling the trash for which she had requested the tractor and garden cart. She trailed the cart the entire time. I went about watering her newly planted flowers and carried away the trash with my arms because the garden cart was unavailable.

Not wanting to interfere with progress, I said nothing until the tractor sputtered to a stop in the farthest corner of our yard. I went about hoeing my gardens and planting a few peppers and tomatoes in the rich soil. "Can you see what's wrong, the tractor won't run," Marilyn pronounced.

"Did you check the gas," I asked.

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“There was about a quarter tank when I started,” she responded. “It just won’t start now. Can you see what is wrong with it?”

I started to feel the blood collect in my neck and head. Certain words that husbands should keep to themselves were collecting on my tongue. I slammed my hoe to the ground and stalked to the lawn tractor and cart. I immediately raised the hood and saw the gas tank was bone dry. My blood pressure simmered as I galumphed to the shop to get the gas can.

Marilyn had gone into the house. When the tractor started again I drove it to the shed and parked it. As I collected my garden tools I saw the spade lying where Marilyn last used it. Not wanting it to rust, I shined it up and smeared a thin coating of petroleum jelly on the metal surfaces. I washed up and entered the kitchen.

“Don’t you think my gardens look good,” my wife joyfully professed. “Julie stopped by and said my gardens always look so nice.”

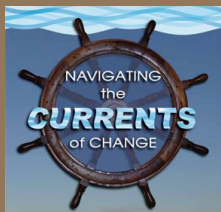
I started to say something, but instead I sat down and penned this tribute to “My Wife’s Gardens.”

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