

Farmer Joe's Dirt

Smith's Acres LLC Newsletter



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Tree-hugging, Jean-wearing, Veggie-Eating, Earth-lover, that's Jen McMahon

One of the things that has really got my red (albeit out of a bottle) head fuming is that I still see a widespread old-school belief that you **have** to use pesticides to solve gardening problems. This simply is not so!

First of all, **there are so many wonderful problem-free plants to grow.** I highly recommend not wasting time on growing things that have to be sprayed with toxic waste to survive. (A good example is hybrid tea roses)

Secondly, **there are a lot of non-toxic solutions to those annoying problems that pop up:** use boiling water to kill weeds in your walk ways instead of Roundup. Use 1 tbsp baking soda mixed with a gallon of water and a drop of dish soap to control powdery mildew on lilacs, phlox, beebalm and roses (or better yet, choose mildew resistant varieties like 'David' phlox, 'Knock Out' roses or 'Jacob Cline' beebalm). Dust your potato plants with flour and talcum powder to get rid of squash bugs. Use milky spore and a Bag a Bug to control Japanese beetles. I'm sure there's many more earth-friendly tricks– ask a farmer or gardener! And write us to share your favorite tips! Still stumped? Try one of our natural pest control products.

Thirdly, **ask yourself why plants should be expected to look perfect at all times!** I wish I could say I manage to look perfect at all times, but that's a laugh! If you squeeze more stuff in, you won't see things like "ugly knees" or floppy stems. And one more trick I learned a long time ago: make a fairly wide mulch covered edge to your beds– it will make your whole garden look tidy and well dressed (whether it really is or not).

I don't know if this has something to do with being forty, but I have started to realize that I can't do everything perfectly any more, and it's ok, because being outside is wonderful (when I'm not running for cover from pesticides being sprayed on windy days). It's not a big secret that we Americans are not a healthy lot, and our choices have a great impact on our health. We can all do our part by taking care of Mother Earth: do we really need plants that require dangerous products to survive? **Wouldn't it be easier to choose problem free plants (like moss instead of grass in shade?) instead, and sit back, relax, and let your garden truly be your oasis?** For me, the garden is my oasis, and my saving sanity sanctuary. I hope yours is too.

The Profundity of Fecundity! from new Veggie Girl Leslie Spinelli (who clearly is fond of vocabulary, plants, and people!)

"We wake, if we ever wake at all to mystery, rumors of death, beauty and violence..." Annie Dillard, one of my most adored authors, comes to us as a voice of our many plants at Smith's Acres. Not so much in the same way that the Lorax speaks to the Truffula trees, but more like an inner

spirit crying out.

Annuals, perennials, veggies, herbs, shrubs, succulents, tropicals all face the daily threat of casualty: "Will I be watered? Will I be fed? Will I be warm enough? Do I have enough sun (or shade)?" It's a wonder there is so much abundance in spite of the dangers plants face every day! I'm truly awed and amazed

by the thriving plant life at Smith's Acres!

As Albert Schweitzer put it so well, "If you study life deeply, its profundity will seize you suddenly with dizziness."

So let us all grow gardens of fecundity and go to them often to contemplate life's rich profundity.



Shady Containers by Teri Smith

My garden around the patio is fairly well established, so my collection of large pots are where I can let my imagination run wild. I started out using lots and lots of Impatiens. Boring! Everyone uses those. (OK – I admit, I do still tuck a few in for color). I have branched out into using perennials (Hostas and ferns in particular), but again, this can get kind of boring. So I started using houseplants and tropical plants. Foliage shape and texture is very important to me. I have Bananas, Alocasias, and Caladiums in several of my pots. That big, bold foliage combines well with the lacier Asparagus ferns. This year I used a couple of Diffenbachias, Fittonias, and a Zebra plant. Last year I had plenty of Spider plants in 4” pots, so I used those. I’m going to be sure that we plant some up next year – I miss that long leaf shape. We have lots of a pretty silvery Plectranthus, so several pots have those. I have no rhyme or reason as to the placement of particular plants, other than the “Golden Rule” of larger

to the back or center, and creeper around the edges.

I try to repeat plants, but not exact combos. I have only 2 sets of “Matching” pots that I do plant exactly alike. All the rest are “one of a kind” beauties. (25 or so) What I do start with the **structure** plants (banana, caladiums, the bold **statement** plants). I plant those in all the pots, then start arranging the others. I fell in LOVE with the Million Kisses begonias this year. I probably confiscated a dozen of the blush colored ones. They have some height, different leaf texture, drape over the edge or the pot, and beautiful flowers – what more could I ask for. I’m already thinking about trying the bright orange ones next year.

Although my patio is very shady, there are pockets of early morning sun that I try to take advantage of. I may be pressing my luck with sticking in some white heliotrope, but if it does flower, even a tiny bit, the aroma will make it



worth it. Angelonia has found its way into a few planters – those spikes of flowers add awesome structure to the pots. I tried petunias last year, but I’m not sure what did them in – lack of sun or the slugs, so I didn’t even bother. Streptocarpella and Browallias are my other two new additions this year. Both have lovely shades of blue to add, and very different texture. I am very pleased with this year’s containers. Now if I only do as I tell all of you, and tuck all those tags into an envelope and save them in my address book. Of course – I have so many containers; it may take one of those large brown envelopes to hold them all.

Not on the Menu Tonight, Deer

One of the most common questions we are asked is “What plants are deer resistant?”. This is a tricky question because there is no guarantee what plants the deer will leave alone in any given garden.

One great sun-loving perennial the deer don’t like is **Globe Thistle**. This prickly blue perennial is long blooming, drought tolerant, and great as a cut or dried flower.

For shade, try **Snakeroot**. This beautiful, tall, late blooming beauty has a stunning display of fragrant white spikes.

A few more to consider are: cypress, boxwood, yucca, juniper, oregano, Russian sage, black-eyed Susan, yarrow, butterfly weed, foxglove, poppy, and lantana.

-Vanessa Bunnell, new Veggie Girl with an enthusiasm for growing organic kids & plants



**PS Donna says “I swear by Deer Solution!”
20% off all Deer Solution products until 8/15/10**

Sit Back and Smell the Flowers! By Debbe Delaney

It seems that every magazine article, T.V. commercial, or gardener’s conversation contains hints on what soil to use or new “must-have” plant to cultivate. How about how to enjoy the fruits of your labor?

Enjoying your gardens is almost a lost art! It seems that I am too busy primping and cultivating my flora to allow any time for actually relaxing among the buds. True, I do quickly gaze at the extreme blue of my hydrangeas, but only as I run by to pluck that nasty glob of clover threatening to reproduce among its base.

However I am glad to say I have been introduced to Backyard Rehab! My good friend John recently introduced me to Sitting. It really is such a simple program. Instead of flying through my slamming back screen door with my clippers in hand after a long day at work, I actually sit on my patio. Yes...SIT! Do you know there are birds out there...that chirp? I had forgotten that I had planted a beautiful Solomon’s Seal, until I actually looked around!

It is wonderful and calms your soul and mind. Try it, and you might just succumb to the pleasure of actually smelling the roses...

Gotta go...just noticed some aphids on my hollyhocks...Well, backyard rehab is an ongoing process.

Things to do in the summer garden:

- Once a week, pull up weeds and add to compost pile.
- Not just for Jerry Garcia lovers, “deadhead” your perennial & annual flowers for more blooms
- Deeply water new plants, or during long hot & dry spells.
- Pick produce and herbs every day, then decide a fresh menu

- Pick a bouquet, don’t forget to use interesting foliage
- Think about things to divide and share with friends when it cools off in fall.

Slap a Smith’s Acres bumper sticker on your car! On “Wacky Wednesdays” (let’s face it: the Veggie Girls like to have fun!) we will be posting three license plates we’ve seen on our website (www.smithsacres.com)- the chosen plate number will win a \$10 gift certificate, but if you also have a S.A. sticker, you’ll win a \$25 gift certificate. Call the Veggie Girls at 860.691.0528 to claim prize!



Wondering what to do with those pretty squash blossoms you see at Smith’s Acres? We like them best stuffed with herbed ricotta cheese, lightly battered, and sautéed in butter. Mostly we like them best when Farmer Joe makes them for us Veggie Girls!

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Summer 2010

Buy 5 or more
perennials, get
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Smith's Acres LLC
Summer 2010

Buy 1 Beautiful
Hanging
Basket, get 2nd
at 1/2 price!

Of equal or lesser value
with this coupon valid
until July 30, 2010

Grab a copy of the CT
Garden & Landscape Trail which
features Garden Stars- great garden
plants for all seasons!

And don't forget! August is Truck Buck month.
All those Truck Bucks you earned this spring
can be redeemed for up to half off you purchases
(one exclusion is consignment items) We honor
previous year's bucks
as well!

Cheater, Cheater, Pumpkin Eater from Robin Perkins who enjoys funny gardening stories

Have you ever started a vegetable garden and it doesn't produce quite the way you planned? What the rain hasn't battered, or the nasty little slugs slimed, or the woodchucks (see below!) mowed

down, vegetable gardening certainly can be a battle. Well, here's a few tips from our customers:

If your neighbor planted a six-pack of tomatoes in their garden, you go and plant 6 Patio tomatoes. These are bigger, fuller, and most importantly ready to produce sooner. Your neighbor will wonder what kind of wonderful soil you have, or

what great fertilizer you're using, and will scurry off to the shop to buy the next best thing. Chances are, they see the two-gallon tomatoes we have, take those home to replace the little ones. **Hey, in gardening, we say there's nothing wrong with a little cheating!**



Caddyshack Déjà-Vu

by Jen McMahon

I wish it were even remotely funny, but we've had issues with the Woodchuck v. Vegetable Garden for a few years. Last year, Tim made me a terrific fence. And then it rained and rained. And rained. And nothing really grew. But there was no sign of Mr. Woodchuck. This year is a different deal. Clearly, we are deep in the middle of The Case of the \$65 tomato. By that, I mean EACH.

We were laughing our heads off one morning watching a Corgi-sized woodchuck looking longingly through the garden gate. We thought, oh, this one is way too large-breed to squeeze in. Then came the baby. This little garden ninja found a few weak links to go under the fence, and when he really needed to (i.e. when he saw an enraged Veggie Girl coming) he went **through** the 2"x3" fencing. Feeling like my head would explode, I decided this was war. I resorted to tactics which I quite frankly am not proud of, and still that little varmint was out there for days blowing raspberries at me. Teri gave me some Predator scent repellent- which funnily enough lists that it will repel armadillos. It's worth a shot- the whole box of capsules got placed around the perimeter. Tim and I also spent a lovely muggy and mosquito laden afternoon adding another \$80 worth of chicken wire over the fencing. Keep your fingers crossed- if we get any \$65 tomatoes, they will certainly taste VERY good!

Veggie Girl Vanessa (who funnily says that the digging of woodchucks "improves your soil") suggests these tips on how to deter a Woodchuck:

- Adopt a dog!
- Sprinkle cayenne pepper, black pepper, blood meal, or talcum powder around your plants.
- Find the entrance and exit holes to the burrow, and stuff them with rags soaked in peanut or olive oil. (Jen used something else entirely, but that's not publishable!)
- In the spring, use dry ice or stink bombs to chase them out of their burrows.
- Make a potion of Pureed Hot Pepper and Garlic with a hint of dish soap.

Predator Scent Repellent (for either deer or small critters- 20% off until 8/15/10)



Smith's Acres LLC

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(Route 156)**

Niantic, CT 06357

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If I only had Some Sun...

by Shady Lady Teri Smith

...my garden would look so much different, especially during the hotter summer months. I would have tons of Echinaceas and Shasta daisies and even those ever so slightly invasive Black-Eyed Susans. If it's daisy shaped, I love it! (This goes back to the bridal bouquet that I wanted, and never got) Waves of Nepeta, big swathes of lilies, plenty of room for Bee-balm, Salvia, and Yarrow. I'd have cut flower bouquets though out my house! And of course, I would have tucked Cosmos and Zinnias in every conceivable spot (more bouquets!).

Instead of Hydrangeas, I would have Butterfly bushes and Blue Mist shrubs. And I'd use those for cut flowers too. Of course, these big sunny gardens could

never fit in my little teeny, tiny yard. And I have shade, nothing but shade. Varying degrees of shade, from deep to dappled, but all shade. I push the envelope a little and try to tuck some sun-lovers in my patio containers which get a little sunshine. But in the garden, it's all Hostas, ferns, and Astilbes. They all have beautiful texture and look fabulous together. It's just not what I have in mind for those filled vases. I do use the Hydrangeas which make great long lasting cut flowers. They are great for wreaths too But no sun-loving colorful bouquets from my yard!

Of course, if I did have all that sun that I dream about, I would have to water MUCH more often than I do now. I have

soaker hoses everywhere, and when the Hydrangeas start to wilt, I know it's time to turn them on. I never (well, hardly ever) lose plants due to drought. I confess that Astilbes tend to suffer in my yard. I don't really have a lot of time to devote to watering, so I guess maybe I'm better off with the shady gardens that I do have.

