

THE MAD GARDENER

G. R. Holloway

Gentlemen gardeners, we must unite! No, not a garden club. They let PEOPLE in and next to weeds, PEOPLE are our biggest problem.

No one is more buffeted, preyed on or pitiful than the dedicated male gardener. He's at once an object of scorn, envy and outright laughter from his non-agrarian neighbors. Even the Do-It-Yourself Cult, from which he might expect a little sympathy, regards him as an outcast. Those dudes can pridefully point to a stereo installation or a pipe rack and expect compliments. The Gardener can point to his well-trained Mahonia and receive, at very best, a polite nod. If the nodder happens to know a lily from a lilac, he may then point to your Golden Vicary and say, "What's wrong with that? All the leaves are turning yellow."

He will then suggest you hire someone to do your yard work, that after all, it doesn't look good for someone in your position to grub in the dirt all the time. If you insist that you like it, he will smile tolerantly and

prescribe golf for working off your frustrations.

It's apparent that you have failed to observe two cardinal rules of Suburbia: (A) No lawn service (status symbol) and (B) you had the temerity to plant things that PEOPLE don't recognize. Your grounds look "different." You have no scrubby junipers and petunias like everybody else. You didn't even plant fuchsia-colored rhododendrons next to your brick red foundation.

Your neighbor sniffs the air meaningfully. "You aren't making compost are you?" Later, he'll mention that his cat threw up yesterday, then casually ask if you're using that spray he read about that made laboratory mice sick. He will expound authoritatively on chemicals while you assure him you use natural pest control and try to inform him how it works.

Of course, you're still trying to forget that episode with the \$50 worth of lady bugs. Your own wife, who is making an effort to convert but who still has certain PEOPLE tendencies-- your own little wife saw you in the yard covered with lady bugs (well, it was unfortunate they all swarmed up your arms when you opened the box) and she came running out with a household bug bomb and before you knew it, she--

If you do have a compost heap, you might counter

complaints by mentioning your neighbor's furtively burned rubbish and steaks he presides over in his sterile concrete surroundings. You could even mention the \$25 sack of bone meal his dog dragged out of your garage and ripped open in the street on a rainy day. Not to mention your tenderly tended Tamarix tree which his junior tried to climb and left slumped on the grass.

You have other neighbors, too-- the babbling brook who comes to gush over your patented Tea Roses, dull scissors in hand. You lose count of how many tablespoons of fish emulsion you've put in your tank as she tells you she simply must have that exact shade of petals to adorn her bridge tables. "And could you possibly spare some of that funny little curly fern?" she adds as as she shuffles her feet in a just-planted bed. She didn't invite you and your wife to her party, she explains, because she just knew you'd rather putter with your peatmoss.

Then there's the couple slunch-ways across the cul-de-sac. You always felt they weren't hostile until they brought little Lucy Lou over-- all covered with a rash. "The doctor thinks she's allergic to some kind of sap," they announce. "You're the only one around with all these weird vines." It never occurs to them the kid plays in the woods down the road as they eye your Euonymus Acuta suspiciously.

A crisis may be averted with the presentation of a drugstore bottle of poison ivy lotion. (Lucy Lou recovered and has not climbed my fence again.)

There is always at least one neighbor who "helps" in your efforts. Knowing choice mulch material is hard to get, he dumps his yard detritus beside your driveway-- everything from dandelions and crab grass to his dead parakeet. Later, he tells you, obviously expecting to be thanked, that he started to throw it away, then remembered you.

There is yet another PEOPLE-force to contend with-- insidious because it pretends to be on your side. It erodes your ego, your perspicacity, your purse. Seed Catalogues! Nursery Advertisements! Great corrupting volleys of them with their racy colors, their provocative photographs, suggestive remarks and demoralizing influences. Oh, those pages of irresistible beauty, those lush descriptions of hue, form, size and texture. And the quantity-- dear fellow fall-guys, the quantity! "Over a thousand blossoms from each spike." A direct quote, mind you.

You've already taken an oath not to buy another twig from those voracious vendors. But the pictures are grandly entertaining even if they have been retouched.

Is that you writing a check? Yes, you know Pyracantha doesn't thrive in your climate but this is guaranteed! So

was the other stuff. Remember those desiccated clumps of Scabiosa hybrids? It only cost \$7.25 to ship them back--plus 3 follow-up letters and a long distance phone call to get your money refunded. But you showed 'em didn't you? That company knows not to fool around with a real Gardener again!

Oh, this place has that new Lythrum you've been reading about. Grows in sun or shade-- Is that you reaching for the second page of order blanks?

One of your PEOPLE neighbors comes in for coffee, catching your dreamy look as you slip the obscene material under your newspaper. "Another nursery catalogue?" he quips brightly. This is the guy who spent spring and summer shouting: "You've got red clay feet!" Or "How's the earthworm kid?" Or "Watch that green thumb! Watch that mildew!"

Same to you, fellah. Same to you.

TRACKING DOWN THE HORSE CONNECTION

Glenna Holloway

My old humpbacked scrapbook contains a picture of my grandfather with his foot propped on a fat cylindrical object to which his horse is tied. For years I wanted one of those objects. I'd never seen the real thing until something similar caught my eye propping open a shop door in Bar Harbor, Maine. The shopkeeper didn't know what it was, didn't want to sell it because it was good at what it was doing, and unless I was interested in his regular wares-- carved African nose rings-- that was that.

My lack of a lexicon of terminology compounded the problem. My mother called the item "A sort of portable hitching post." She was on the cusp of a vanishing era. The family owned a car but her father loved his rig and his old red gelding. He took her for buggy rides on Sundays and they stopped beside fields of Tennessee primroses and hunted for arrowheads after securing the horse to the above. By then, hitching rails had disappeared. But even before, people must have wanted to park where there wasn't even a tree. Ergo, the take-along hitch was invented.

My great uncle irreverently called it a nag iron. His oldest brother had one from his U. S. Cavalry days which he appropriated to anchor his fishing boat. That one probably lurked rustily in some backwater bass pond.

In Wisconsin, I learned to call it a halter stone and in Illinois, a tether weight. My vocabulary was increasing if my collection was not. "Used to come in different sizes and shapes," one old timer said fondly. "Weighed anywhere from 15 to 50 pounds depending on what kind of horse you had. One for a team could go to 60."

My vacations took on the aspects of a Maltese Falcon hunt. If many prizes were left after the war-time scrap drives, they were likely cankered to crumbs or masquerading as something else. My treasure had not acquired enough haute to merit the attention of antique dealers at the time, so I took my search to the grass-roots.

My first find was traumatic. Pursuing a lukewarm lead on an unimproved road near Plainfield, Illinois, I finally found the mail box with the name I'd been given. After much supplemental hand fluttering, a few "you know"s and a spate of similes, the woman at the fence nodded and opened the gate. She had me drive down the parallel bald stripes through the weeds that led to a listing barn. Daylight refused to follow us inside and the floor was strewn with

hay among other things. The drama began with my anguished yowl. I lifted my foot gracelessly, clutching my ankle.

"Looks like you found it," the woman cackled. In that moment I learned the meaning of "exquisite" pain, a bit of semantics I always thought was affectation. For certain, the immovable object with which my major toes collided was a tether weight, not unlike my great grandfather's. In raised numerals, it proudly announced its weight at 35 pounds. Instead of a large ring at the top it had a bar across a deep depression. "We used it to keep a warped floorboard down," the woman was saying. "Didn't know if it was still around."

My left foot still emanated shock waves as I dragged it back to my car. My right arm terminated in a weighty iron appendage and my purse was \$25 lighter. It was not until my toes settled into a dull ache back on the highway that I realized I should have done a little bargaining. She had undoubtedly fallen over it a few times herself. Still, it would have been hard to project "I don't really care about this thing but I might take it off your hands" with a dust-swathed car, wind-wrecked hair, sweaty upper lip and hose sprouting little runs. Next time my cool would be polished. After all, this was my first completed mission. I now owned an honest to Zeus horsekeeper. That's what she

called it, a horsekeeper.

A downstate museum had a couple of proper cast iron hitching weights displayed with a phaeton and a kindling wagon. They were gorgeous. The plastic horse was fastened by a strap from the headstall, not by the bridle as my ~~great~~^e grandfather had casually done in the photo. Like everyone else, the curator didn't know of any books on the subject but he presented me with a photocopy of a Readers Digest essay about horse anchors by H. Allen Smith.

Humorist Smith wrote about his search, not for the stay weights themselves but for the colloquialisms they were dubbed with. He compiled a list--all new to me. I adored ground-frog, dead man and hard hobble.

From then on, I armed myself with his article when I went looking. The written word always gives one a wrinkle of respectability which I sorely needed. There's something pitiable and a little flaky about a five foot female rummaging around in barns and storage areas for something most folks never heard of-- and she isn't sure what to call it.

My second hitching iron (complete with instructions that it was called a head brake) was an outright gift from someone who was impressed that I, too, read H. Allen Smith. I pressed on to my next lead in positive euphoria.

There was indeed a head brake at the end of my latest directions-- although a worse misnomer there never was. In a cow stall, my quarry was serving as part of a device for keeping a feisty heifer from offending the milker (a fellow, not a machine) with her tail. Obviously, the item was held in low regard. Aha! I shouted inside my head. A chance to drive a real bargain. I offered \$5. Congratulating myself that the wisdom of my choice of collectibles was becoming apparent, that it was worthy of my talents and suited to my purse, I smiled benevolently. Dimly I recognized that it also satisfied a latent snob spot present in all collectors: It was not something everyone else had tons of, and it held primal appeal to the basic hoarder instinct. I was on the ground floor in a position to corner the market while my luck was hot. Aha! continued to ricochet in my brain until I noticed that the owner had not replied.

"Tryin' t'think what I'd replace it with," he said at last. "Miss Grindle likes to dust m'face."

"But surely you can find something that would work as well so you can make a few bucks. What about a big rock?" I said sweetly.

"Oh--not really worth it t'look for one just so-- tie it up just right so it won't slip lose when she takes a notion t'swish me. Guess I'm just as attached to it as she is," he

chortled, raising his brows to question whether I grasped his cleverness. "It's called a curb block, y'know."

By the time I was up to \$18 my voice had a distinct whine. Rule #1--Never let the seller know you can't live without what he's got--was once again in disarray. I could feel my eyes glittering with desire and determination. As I paid the \$27.50, I vowed to heed the old Chinese proverb: Wear very dark glasses when gazing at goods you wish to purchase.

It was still early and it was only 30 miles to Lockport. I'd long had a visceral feeling that area held something for me. The Chicago Historical Society had been less successful than H. Allen Smith on name calling but they had some thoughts on places where residue of past lifestyles might still be extant. An awful lot of horse anchors became boat anchors and that area was both horsy and boaty. Someone should have a nostalgia boutique called Equine-Marine.

Actually, it was a junk yard. All the crass and rumpled moltings of civilization, all that unwallled daylight set my teeth on edge. If I'd found antique shops depressing with recycled dust and drear, this was worse. "Um, would you have anything that would make a good door stop?"

I followed the motion of a lanky arm through the bristling debris. The man rounded a turn and pointed to a

pair of horse anchors. It happened so fast it was hard to stop the gasp. He wanted \$3 apiece. Dizzily I fumbled in my wallet. Such moments beg to be shared. In my expansiveness I blurted, "Do you know what they are?"

"Looks like iron to me," he said.

"Yes, but they were designed for hethering torses," I gushed. "I mean--"

"Whatever turns you on, lady," he shrugged. He would have been called an impudent young whelp in the heyday of my collectibles. He didn't even offer to put them in my car, just walked off stuffing my money in his shirt. I wonder if he even worked there.

A few antique dealers know about tether weights now. One cutesy hotshot recently called them horse pots. "Why pots?" I said indignantly. "They didn't hold anything."

"Sure they did," he said. "They held the horses."

H. Allen would have tched.

THE MAD GARDENER

Glenn Holloway

Gardeners, this is the Garden State. We must rally and unite! No, not a garden club. They let people in, and people are our biggest problem next to bugs.

No species is more endangered or preyed upon than the genuine Gardener. We could become extinct even as we fertilize. We are objects of scorn, envy, and outright laughter from our (usually out-of-shape) neighbors. Even the Do-It-Yourself Cult, which should offer a little empathy, regards us as pariahs. The Do-It-Yourselfer can pridefully point to a stereo installation or a pipe rack and expect compliments. The Gardener can point to a well-behaved Golden Vicary and receive, at best, a polite nod. If the nodder happens to know a water lily from a geranium, he may say, "What's wrong with it? The leaves are all turning yellow." It matters not if you explain that the leaves are supposed to be yellow. This people-type friend has seen what he hoped to see: A failure. Even as you speak, he's advising nitrogen feedings. He will then suggest that you hire a yard man, that after

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prescribe golf as a means for working off your frustrations.

It becomes apparent that you have failed to observe two cardinal codes of Suburbia: (A) No yard man or lawn service (status symbol) and (B) you had the temerity to plant things that people do not recognize. Your grounds look "different". You have no wax leaf ligustrum, boxwood or petunias like everybody else. You didn't even plant fuchsia colored azaleas next to your brick red foundation. Zounds!

Your neighbor sniffs the air meaningfully. With a little half smile, half frown, he says, "You aren't making a compost heap are you?" Later he will mention that his cat threw up yesterday, then casually ask if you're using that spray he read about that made a lot of folks sick. He will quote with authority from the latest book on chemicals while you are trying to inform him about natural pest control. Of course, you're still trying to forget that disaster with the \$50 worth of lady bugs you had shipped in. Your own spouse, who is making an effort to convert, but still has certain people tendencies-- your own spouse saw you in the yard covered with lady bugs (well, it was unfortunate that they all swarmed up your arms when you opened the box) and she came running out with a regular household bug bomb, and before you knew it...

You could simply proclaim yourself an organic Gardener who shuns poisons. But then your neighbor's brows will fly up, and you're right back to the mulch-harbors-snakes-and-spiders, as well as the rotting vegetation bit. He will discuss it all with a twitching nose and the implication of warning from the entire

block, three fourths of which is not acquainted with him.

Depending on whether you have a compost heap or not, you may bring up his furtively burned rubbish and/or steaks this back yard hero presides over in his sterile concrete and scrawny pine surroundings. You could even mention the \$25 sack of bone meal his dog dragged out of your garage and into the street on a very rainy day, there to rip, shake, toss and romp the precious contents all the way to the corner. And there's your tenderly tended Tamarix tree which his junior tried to climb and left in a broken slump.

You have other neighbors, too. There is the babbling brook who comes to gush over your patented tea roses, dull scissors in hand. You lose count of how many tablespoons of plant food you've put in your spray tank as she tells you why she simply must have that exact shade of petals to adorn her dinner and bridge party tables. "Could you possibly spare some of those pointy buds? And some of that funny little curly fern?" She will also add as she shuffles her feet in your sprouting seed bed, that she didn't invite you and your wife to her party because she knew you'd rather putter with your plants.

Then there is the couple slunch-ways across the street. You always felt they were not hostile. One day they brought little Lucy Lou over all covered with a red rash. "The doctor thinks she's allergic to leaves or some sort of sap. You're the only one around with all these weird vines and things..." It never occurs to them that the kid plays in the woods behind them as they eye your Euonymus Acuta and Silver Lace vine. A crisis

may be averted with the presentation of a drugstore bottle of lotion for poison ivy. In my case, Lucy Lou recovered and has not climbed my fence again.

There is always at least one neighbor who "helps" in your efforts. Knowing that mulch material is hard to get, he dumps all his yard detritus beside your driveway. This terrestrial flotsam is composed of everything from his weed seeds, diseased limbs, insect-ridden foliage, paper, spilled garbage, to his dead parakeet and an occasional beer can. Your yard may have just had a manicure, but sunrise discloses a pile of surprises. Later he tells you, obviously expecting to be thanked, how he started to throw it away, then remembered you.

There is yet another insidious people-force to contend with. It erodes your pride, your perspicacity, your purse. Seed Catalogues! Nursery Advertisements! Great corrupting volleys of them with their racy colors, their provocative photographs, suggestive remarks, and all their demoralizing influences. Oh, those pages of irresistible beauty, those drool-invoking descriptions of hue, form, size and texture. And the quantity-- dear fellow fall-guys, the quantity! "Over a thousand blossoms from each spike." A direct quote, mind you.

You've already taken an oath not to order another twig from these voracious vendors. But the pictures are grandly entertaining even though you know they've been retouched or painted. Hey, they've got that new lythrum-- "thrives in any soil-- wet or dry places-- sun or shade--"

Is that you writing a check? Yes, you know that the tri-col-

ored althea bush bore all one offish color, and the green glad-
ioli looked green only if you squinted at an oblique angle just
at sundown-- but this is guaranteed! So were the others. But it
wasn't worth the time and trouble to return them. Remember those
desiccated little clumps of strings that were your scabiosa
plants? It only cost you \$2.60 in postage plus two letters and
a long distance call to get your money back on them. But you
showed 'em, didn't you? They know not to fool around with a
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you've been reading about. Is that you reaching for the second
page of order blanks?

One of your people-neighbors comes in for coffee and catches
your dreamy look as you slip the obscene material under your
newspaper. "Another nursery catalogue?" he quips brightly. This
is the guy who spent last spring and summer shouting: "You've
got red clay feet!" Or "How's the earthworm kid? Are you digging
for oil? Watch that green thumb! Watch that mildew!"

Same to you, fellah, same to you!

Mrs. Glenna Holloway
3811 Carole Dr.
Doraville, Ga.

Cal

THE MAD GARDENER

by Glenn Holloway

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They let People in, and People are ~~part of~~ ^{biggest} our problem.

No ^{genuine} one is more dauntless, preyed upon, and pitiful
than the Gardener. He is at once, an object of scorn,
envy, and outright laughter from his (usually obese)
neighbors. Even the Do-It-Yourself Cult, from which ~~one~~ ^{he}
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polite nod. If the nodder happens to know a water lily from
a geranium, he may then point to your Golden Vicary and ask,
"What's wrong with that? The leaves are all turning yellow."
It matters not if you explain that the leaves are supposed
to be yellow, for even as you talk, he's advising nitrogen
feedings. Your People-type friend thinks he has seen what
he wanted to see: A failure. He will then suggest that you
get a yard man, that after all, it doesn't look well for
someone in your position to grub in the dirt. If you pro-

test that you like it, your friend may smile tolerantly and suggest golf as a means for working off your frustrations.

It becomes apparent that you have failed to observe two cardinal codes of Suburbia: (A) No yard man ^{or lawn service} (status symbol) and (B) you had the temerity to plant things that People do not recognize. Your grounds look "different". You have no wax leaf ligustrum, boxwood, or ^{petunias} ordinary holly like everybody else. You didn't plant fuchsia colored azaleas next to your brick-red foundation. Zounds!

Your neighbor ^{then} sniffs the air meaningfully. With a little half-smile, half-frown, he says, "You aren't making ~~a~~ compost ~~heap~~ are you?" Later he may mention that his cat threw up yesterday, then casually ask if you're using that new spray that he read about making a lot of people sick. He will quote with authority from the latest books on chemicals. You start to inform him about natural pest control, but you ^{re} ^{try} ^{want} ~~ve~~ tried hard to forget that disaster with the \$50 worth of lady bugs you had shipped in. Your own spouse, who is trying to convert, but still has certain People tendencies —your own spouse saw you in the yard, covered with lady bugs, (well, it was unfortunate that they all swarmed up your arm when you opened the ^{box} ~~box~~) and she came running out with a household bug bomb, and before you ~~could say~~ knew it...

You could simply proclaim yourself an ~~an~~ organic Gardener who shuns poisons. But then your neighbor's brows will ^{fly} ~~go~~ up, and you're right back to the mulch-harbors-snakes-and-spiders, as well as the rotting vegetation bit—which he will discuss with a twitching nose, and the implication of warning from the entire block, three fourths of which is not acquainted with him.

Depending on whether you have a compost heap or not, you may, in retaliation, mention the furtively burned rubbish, and/or steaks, which our back yard hero presides over in his sterile concrete and scrawny pine surroundings. Perhaps you may wish to recall the ~~\$15.00~~ \$5.00 sack of bone meal which his dog dragged into the street and ripped open—on a very rainy day, ~~naturally~~. You could even make a gentle reference to the tenderly tended Tamarix tree which his junior tried to climb and left in a broken heap.

You have other neighbors, of course. There is the babbling brook who comes to gush over your patented tea roses, dull scis-

sors in hand. You lose count of how many tablespoons of liquid plant food you have put in your spray tank as she tells you why she simply must have that exact shade of ^{petals} flowers to adorn her ^{dinner} ~~dinner~~ bridge ^{over} tables. Could you possibly spare some of those buds, and maybe some of that funny little curly fern? She will also add, as she shuffles her feet in your sprouting seed bed, that she didn't invite you ^{& your wife} to her party because she knew you'd rather putter with your plants.

^{Then} There is the couple in the house slunch-ways across the street; you always felt that they were not hostile. One day they brought little Lucy Lou over, all covered with red rash. "The doctor thinks she's allergic to leaves or some sort of sap—and you're the only one around with all these weird vines and things..." It never occurs to them that ~~all~~ the kids ^{the} play ⁱⁿ the woods at the end of the street as they suspiciously eye your Euonymus Acuta and your Silver Lace vine. A crisis may be averted with ^{the} a presentation of ^a ~~an unlabeled~~ bottle of drugstore ^{Calomine} ~~counter~~ lotion ~~for~~ poison ivy. (In my case, Lucy Lou recovered, and to my delight, has not climbed my fence again.)

There is always at least one neighbor who "helps" in your efforts. Knowing that mulch material is hard to get, he dumps all of his yard debris ^{detritus} beside your driveway. This terrestrial flotsam is composed of everything from his weed seeds, diseased limbs, insect-loaded foliage, paper, and ~~any~~ spilled garbage, to his dead parakeet, and now and then a beer can. Your yard may have just had a manicure, but sunrise discloses a big pile of surprises. Particularly if the wind blew. Later, he tells you, obviously expecting to be thanked, how he started to throw it away, then remembered you!

~~On top of which, the elements are always conspiring against you. They're on People's side. Wind shreds your blossoms, ice breaks your branches, sun burns your grass, freeze blackens your buds,~~

~~and muddy rain sogs your pansies. What's left, the varmints eat.~~

~~But~~ there is yet another insidious People-force to undermine you. It erodes your pride, your purse, your perspicacity. Seed Catalogues! Nursery Advertisements! Great corrupting volleys of them ~~in the spring and fall. They come~~ with their racy colors, their provocative photographs, their suggestive remarks, and all their demoralizing influences. Oh, those glorious pages of irresistible beauty, those drool-invoking descriptions of hue, form, size and texture. And the quantity— dear fellow fall-guys, the quantity! "Over a thousand blossoms from each spike." A direct quote, mind you. ~~And we're so helpless, so vulnerable. There we sit, huddled by the register, looking forlornly out at the gray yard, yearning for spring. We~~ ^{you}ve already taken the oath not to order another twig from these voracious venders—but the pictures are grandly entertaining even though ~~we~~ ^{you} know they've been retouched or painted. Hey, they've got that new Lythrum—"thrives in any soil...dry or wet places, sun or shade..."

Is that you writing a check? Yes, you know that the tri-colored althea bush bore all one ^{offish} color, and the green gladioli looked green only if you squinted at an oblique angle just at sundown—but this is guaranteed! ~~in~~ So were the others. But it wasn't worth the digging-up time and trouble to ~~call their hand~~ ^{return them}. Remember those desiccated little clumps of strings that were your Scabiosa plants? It only cost you ^{2.60} ~~200~~ cents ~~worth of return~~ ⁱⁿ postage and two letters ~~worth of time~~ to get your money back on them. But you showed 'em didn't you? They'll know not to fool around with a real Gardener again... Oh, they've also got that new hybrid lily you've been reading about. Is that you reaching for the second page of order blanks? ~~Poor fellow-fish. We never learn, do we?~~

One of your People-neighbors comes in ~~just now~~ for coffee, and catches your dreamy look, also catches you slipping the obscene thing under your newspaper. "Another catalogue?" he quips brightly. This is one of the guys who spent ^{last} spring and summer shouting: "You've got red clay feet!" Or "Are you digging for oil?" "How's the earthworm kid?" "Watch that ^{muddy} green thumb!" "Watch that mildew!"

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X16

$$\begin{array}{r} 22 \\ \times 17 \\ \hline 154 \\ 220 \\ \hline 374 \end{array}$$

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prescribe golf as a means for working off your frustrations.

It becomes apparent that you have failed to observe two cardinal codes of Suburbia: (A) No yard man or lawn service (status symbol) and (B) you had the temerity to plant things that people do not recognize. Your grounds look "different". You have no wax leaf ligustrum, boxwood or petunias like everybody else. You didn't even plant fuchsia colored azaleas next to your brick red foundation. Zounds!

Your neighbor sniffs the air meaningfully. With a little half smile, half frown, he says, "You aren't making a compost heap are you?" Later he will mention that his cat threw up yesterday, then casually ask if you're using that spray he read about that made a lot of folks sick. He will quote with authority from the latest book on chemicals while you are trying to inform him about natural pest control. Of course, you're still trying to forget that disaster with the \$50 worth of lady bugs you had shipped in. Your own spouse, who is making an effort to convert, but still has certain people tendencies--your own spouse saw you in the yard covered with lady bugs (well, it was unfortunate that they all swarmed up your arms when you opened the box) and she came running out with a regular household bug bomb, and before you knew it...

You could simply proclaim yourself an organic Gardener who shuns poisons. But then your neighbor's brows will fly up, and you're right back to the mulch-harbors-snakes-and-spiders, as well as the rotting vegetation bit. He will discuss it all with a twitching nose and the implication of warning from the entire

block, three fourths of which is not acquainted with him.

Depending on whether you have a compost heap or not, you may bring up his furtively burned rubbish and/or steaks this back yard hero presides over in his sterile concrete and scrawny pine surroundings. You could even mention the \$25 sack of bone meal his dog dragged out of your garage and into the street on a very rainy day, there to rip, shake, toss and romp the precious contents all the way to the corner. And there's your tenderly tended Pamarix tree which his junior tried to climb and left in a broken slump.

You have other neighbors, too. There is the babbling brook who comes to gush over your patented tea roses, dull scissors in hand. You lose count of how many tablespoons of plant food you've put in your spray tank as she tells you why she simply must have that exact shade of petals to adorn her dinner and bridge party tables. "Could you possibly spare some of those pointy buds? And some of that funny little curly fern?" She will also add as she shuffles her feet in your sprouting seed bed, that she didn't invite you and your wife to her party because she knew you'd rather putter with your plants.

Then there is the couple slunch-ways across the street. You always felt they were not hostile. One day they brought little Lucy Lou over all covered with a red rash. "The doctor thinks she's allergic to leaves or some sort of sap. You're the only one around with all these weird vines and things..." It never occurs to them that the kid plays in the woods behind them as they eye your Anonymus Acuta and Silver Lace vine. A crisis

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THE MAD GARDENER

by Glenn Holloway

You may interpret the word "mad" in the everyday vernacular as angry—or more correctly as insane. Either way you are correct, for here we have two distinct species of humans: People and Gardeners. The latter are the world's most inveterate gamblers, likewise the last and staunchest bastions of hope and faith. And so, Gardeners, we must unite! No, not a garden club. They let People in, and People are the biggest part of our problem.

The Gardener is at once an object of scorn, envy—and outright laughter from his (usually obese) People neighbors. Even the do-it-yourself cult from which he might expect a little empathy regards him an outcast. The do-it-yourselfer can point to a pipe rack or hi-fi installation and expect compliments. The Gardener can point to a perfect Mahonia and receive at best a polite nod. If the nodder happens to know a violet from a geranium, he may then point to your Golden Vicary and ask: "What's wrong with that? All the leaves are yellow."

It matters not if you explain that the leaves are supposed to be yellow, for even as you speak he is advising nitrogen feedings. Your people-type friend has seen what he was looking for—evidence

that you goofed. He will then suggest a yard man. After all, you've just got too much stuff to handle alone, and really, actually, it doesn't look right for someone in your position to perch precariously in treetops to prune—not to mention constant grubbing in the dirt. When you protest that you like it, he will smile tolerantly and suggest golf for working off your frustrations.

It becomes apparent that you have failed to observe two cardinal codes of suburbia: (a) No yard man, (status symbol) and (b) You had the temerity to plant things that People do not recognize. Your grounds look "different". You have no ordinary evergreens, maples, or barberry hedge like everybody else. You failed to plant fuschia-colored petunias next to your brick-red foundation. Zilch!

Then your friend sniffs the air meaningfully. With a strange little half-smile, half-frown, he says: "You aren't making a compost heap are you?" He may also mention that his cat threw up yesterday and casually ask if you're using that new spray he read about making a lot of folks sick. He will follow-up with authoritative quotes from the latest books on chemicals.

You start to inform him about natural pest control. But you're still trying hard to forget that disaster with the twenty bucks' worth of lady bugs you had shipped in. Your own spouse, who is trying to convert, but who still has certain People tendencies—your own spouse saw you in the yard all covered with lady bugs (well, it was unfortunate that they all swarmed up your arms when you opened them) and she came running out with a bug bomb, and before you knew it...

If you simply proclaim to your neighbor that you are an or-

ganic Gardener who shuns poisons, friend-neighbor's brows will go up, and you're right back to the rotting vegetation, and the mulch-harbors-snakes-and-spiders bit— all of which he will discuss with a twitching nose, and the implication of warning from the entire neighborhood block, three-fourths of which is not acquainted with him.

Depending on whether you have a compost heap or not, you may in retaliation mention the furtively burned rubbish and/or steaks which our backyard hero presides over in his sterile concrete and skinny pine surroundings. Or you may simply recall the \$5 sack of bone meal that his dog dragged off into the street and ripped open—on a very rainy day, of course. You could even make a gentle reference to the tenderly tended Tamarix tree which his junior tried to climb and left in a broken heap.

You have other neighbors, naturally. There is the babbling brook who comes to gush over your patented tea roses, dull scissors in hand. You lose count of how many tablespoons of liquid fertilizer you have put in your spray tank as she tells you why she must have flowers that exact shade to adorn her bridge tables. Could you possibly spare some of those buds, and maybe some of that funny little curly fern over there? She will also add as she shuffles her feet in your sprouting seed bed, that she didn't invite you to her party because she knew you would rather "putter with your plants than play bridge."

Then there is the couple slunch-ways across the street. You always felt they were not hostile. But one day they brought little Lucy Lou over all covered with a red rash. "The doctor

thinks she's allergic to some sort of vegetation, and you're the only one around with all these wierd bushes and things," they blurt out as they suspiciously eye your Clematis, euonymus, and Silver Lace vine. A crisis may be averted with the presentation of an unlabeled bottle of drugstore poison ivy lotion. If you're going to mess around with exotic flora, they expect you to have antidotes ready. (It does no good to mention the woods on the corner where all the kids play.)

There is always at least one neighbor who "helps" with your efforts. Upon hearing that mulch material is hard to get, he dumps all his yard debris beside your driveway. This terrestrial flotsam contains everything from his weed seeds, diseased limbs, buggy foliage, paper, spilled garbage—to his dead parakeet and a few beer cans. Your yard may have just had a manicure, but sunrise dicloses a big pile of People-type surprises. Particularly if the wind blew. Later, this friend tells you, obviously expecting to be thanked, how he started to throw it all away—then remembered you!

Needless to say, the elements are always conspiring against you. In addition to the People-maladies, freeze blackens your buds, ice breaks your branches, wind shreds your blossoms, muddy rain sogs your tender shoots, sun burns your grass. What's left the varmints eat. But there is still another insidious People-force at work, worse than all the rest—undermining you, eroding your pride, your perspicacity, your purse! Seed catalogues! The purveyors of those glorious Technicolor pages of irresistible goodies. Great volleys of them from fall through spring. They come with their racy reds and pinks, their provocative photo-

graphs, their suggestive comments, and all their corrupting, demoralizing influences. Oh, those drool-invoking descriptions of the hue, form, size, texture and quantity—oh, my dear fellow-fall guys, the quantity! "Over a thousand blossoms from one spike"—a direct quote, mind you. "The first year!" And you're so helpless, so vulnerable.

There you sit huddled by the heat, looking forlornly out at the dull gray yard. You've already taken an oath not to order another twig from those voracious vendors. But the pictures are grandly entertaining even though you know they've been retouched.

Hey, they've got that new lythrum—"thrives in any soil...dry or wet places, sun or shade..." Is that you writing a check? Yes, you know that the tri-colored althea bush was all one color. And the green gladioli looked green only if you squinted your eyes just at sundown and looked from an oblique angle. But this is guaranteed!

So were the others but it usually wasn't worth the time or trouble to call their hand. Remember those desiccated little clumps of strings that were your scabiosa plants? It only cost you 55 cents of return postage and two letter's worth of time to get your money back on them. But you showed 'em, didn't you? Those clowns won't fool around with a real Gardener again.

And look, they've also got that new hybrid lily you've been reading about. Is that you reaching for the second page of the order blanks, poor fellow fish?

One of your People neighbors comes in for coffee and catches your dreamy look, also catches you slipping the obscene matter under your newspaper. "Another catalogue?" he quips brightly,

loaded with maliciousness. This is one of the guys who spent spring and summer shouting: "You've got red clay feet!" Or "Are you digging for oil?" Or "How's the earthworm kid?" "Watch that green thumb!" "Watch that mildew!"

Same to you, fellah, same to you!

THE MAD GARDENER



Gardeners, we must unite! No, not a garden club. They let people in, and people are our biggest problem next to bugs.

No one is more preyed upon or pitiful than the genuine gardener. He is at once an object of scorn, envy, and outright laughter from his (usually out-of-shape) neighbors. Even the Do-It-Yourself Cult, from which he might expect a little empathy, regards him as a pariah. The Do-It-Yourselfer can pridefully point to a stereo installation or a pipe rack and expect compliments. The Gardener can point to a well-behaved Golden Vicary and receive, at best, a polite nod. If the nodder happens to know a water lily from a geranium, he may say, "What's wrong with it? The leaves are all turning yellow." It matters not if you explain that the leaves are supposed to be yellow. This people-type friend has seen what he hoped to see: A failure. And even as you speak, he's advising nitrogen feedings. He will then suggest that you hire a yard man, that after