

GARDENERS LIVE LONGER

Gardening can add good years to your life. Out in the garden you get exercise and fresh air, that much is obvious.

What isn't so apparent is the relief you get from tension, fears and worries. Stresses fade away when you become absorbed in the familiar tasks of planting, preparing soil, cultivating and harvesting. Look at your garden as a healing place, not just as a food factory.

Look at the high-tension people who escape to their gardens whenever possible: doctors, pilots, police, mothers of small children, teachers. You don't have to get into your car and drive for hours to find sanctuary; it's right outside your door.

Spouses of tense people should encourage them to garden. No drug in the world is as safe or as effective for making a person mellow. Working out frustrations and resentment at the end of a hose sure beats popping pills (or hitting the bottle).

PERFECTION IN GARDENING - THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Competition is okay on the playing fields, but it rubs off in peculiar places.

For example, you may have met gardeners who were so competitive that they couldn't enjoy their garden completely. Maybe they were competing against themselves, but they were always in search of perfection.

A garden is a peculiar place to strive for perfection. You'll never get it, for the variables are too numerous to control.

The perfectionist gardener can't see a weed without stopping to pull it up. He or she can't complete a major garden task without darting off here and there to investigate this distraction or that. You rarely see them idle in their gardens, sitting down to savor what they've grown. They must always be moving toward the impossible dream, the perfect garden.

Settle for less, overlook imperfections, and you'll grow with your garden.

THE VIRTUE OF GARDENING IN MODERATION

Some people have come to hate gardening because they habitually bite off more than they can chew. The freshly-turned sod smells so good that they can't stop digging. They carve out a huge garden that is too much for their available time, and then sweat and fuss and work up a lather trying to manage this small farm. A little patch of garden would be more their style.

And others go at gardening as if it were a war. They attack the soil and rush at cultivating as if their life depended on it.

Work towards moderation in the size of your garden and the pace at which you labor. You are supposed to run the garden rather than let it run you.

Nobody likes to fail at gardening, and when you attempt too much you are setting the stage for failure. Moderation is the more productive, healthful approach, and it leads to a sweeter disposition.

MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN GO OUT IN THE NOONDAY SUN

Perhaps you remember the musical line, "Mad Dogs and Englishmen Go Out in the Noonday Sun."

To an extent, we have that problem with us today. More and more families are moving to the Sun Belt, and it takes a while to respect the heat and, in certain areas, the humidity.

You'll never see the natives gardening when the sun is high in the sky. They know you can get more done when you don't have to stop every few minutes to wipe your brow or to catch your breath. They are out in the garden right after sunup and just before nightfall.

Never underestimate the danger of gardening during the heat of the day. You'd be much better off taking a nap so you can build energy to garden later. Learn to wear a sun hat and take frequent breaks.

The one advantage to working in the hottest part of the day is that weeds die almost instantly when you hoe them. There's a moral in there somewhere, you can be sure.

GROW FLOWERS IN YOUR FOOD FACTORY

Some gardeners have to keep plants neatly categorized: vegetables in the food garden and flowers in the flower garden.

But why not grow a few flowers in your food factory? Makes it a cheerful place to work, rather than a sweatshop.

More and more you see home gardeners planting cutflowers here and there in food gardens. The seed mixtures especially blended to give you a variety of cutflowers are favorites. You can cut big bouquets for the house or to give away; you can even whack off entire branches off the flower plants without worrying about their temporarily unbalanced appearance. People can see your front yard flowers from the street but not in the food garden.

Plant bright low-growing flowers that won't cast shade on your vegetables, or locate the tall types at the back of the garden.

This season, after you've harvested your early vegetables, plant seeds of flowers in your food garden. Pamper your psyche as well as your tummy.

ADVENTURE IN GARDENING BUT DON'T INVITE FAILURE

Remember the first season you became confident enough to adventure with new gardening techniques and brand new varieties? Then, by experience, you've discovered there's a fine line between being adventurous and being foolhardy.

Foolhardy gardeners fall for sucker advertisements, or for seeds and plants that promise unbelievable advantages. Adventurous gardeners read ads and labels very carefully and ask questions of their local County Agricultural Agent. They seldom choose a flower or vegetable that doesn't grow well for them.

It's always a good idea to ask your local garden center to help you select the newest and best varieties. They see previews of the

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