

## DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

## If the shoe fits

BY SIOUX ROGERS

Life these days...wow, what a wild ride. Sometimes, just to look around the corner, one needs to use a periscope. Yet, we all know, it has been worse. We still have the potential, and we hope for a better future. Breathe and take a blessed step forward every time you move. Many people I talk to are "lightening the load." That means getting rid of all the clutter in our house, closets, garages, and in our everyday life. How can we make sense of all the pervasive toxic junk in our possession, minds, political arena, and the world in general? If I even had a clue, I probably could fly too. For this day and moment, I am going to stick with what is closest to my heart: dirt, earthworms and rearranging my garden.

"So, what is wrong with the garden now?" lower management asked. I had quite a bit of explaining to do, after I had already, with a little help from my friends, moved bushes, thinned

else that directs your life style and may make this change too crazy and certainly not a worthwhile undertaking. Maybe you would prefer to just go to the local grocery store or the grower's mart to buy your herbs. So, if the shoe fits wear it, otherwise garden in your socks.

I feel a theme coming on...make your garden and your life fit you, as best you can. Do now, what you didn't do then. Remove the clutter, the toxins, and the long steps from here to there. Of all the things in ones life, your garden, despite the work, should make you happy most of the time. If you do not like to garden, then don't do it. If it is too big, figure out how to make it smaller. Don't plant what you don't eat. Last summer, with the help of a friend, we built three fantastic tepees for string beans. Yep they grew and they grew and then, grew a little more. We had purple, green, and red ones. Hmmm, reminds me of the song

by Malvina Reynolds, "Little Boxes." I must say, the chickens enjoyed every single bean. Can you imagine my doing all that work and fussing, and never eating one string bean? That is insanity, overworked. After the beans exploded to

giant woody pods, I just pulled up the entire plants, and the chickens had one more gourmet meal, based on my not thinking and planning ahead. I was certainly wearing shoes that did not fit. The pathos of this tale of woe is that I have done this before! Next planting time, so she says, will be different. The tepees will be used for cucumbers, those we eat by the bushel. Several of my gardener friends consider string beans the highlight of their summer garden. Hurrah for them. At least they know what they like and it works for them. So, the ideas here are: don't plant what you don't like to eat and don't plant what you may never get around to eating.

Tailor your garden for your lifestyle. The only limiting factors are your mind and your imagination. If you have an abundance of sun, then don't try and

plant all the leafy greens in that space. They will burn too easily. Instead plant those wonderful tomatoes and melons, potatoes and cucumbers, etc., they like the sun. You can always trade with your "shady" neighbors, their leafy greens for your sunshine melons.

Don't ever be afraid to re-do or move or throw away (better yet give away or trade) a "mistake." There are actually no mistakes in a garden. Your plant may just be in the wrong neighborhood, so move it. I have a rose, "Sally Holmes," to be precise. I have moved her three times. She has never complained. Guess she is very well adjusted. My three hebes, that were all planted in one container, grew way too big. I pulled them out of the pots and replanted them in the garden. They thrived and grew even more, becoming too crowded once again. Several weeks ago, when I thought they were dormant, they were once more moved. Happy as little canaries, one of them decided to start blooming! I thought they were all asleep. Last year I removed ALL my dahlias from "dahlia hill" because I hated looking at all those dahlia stakes. On "the hill," I planted squash instead; the sun exposure was perfect for the sprawling squash vines. I personally am a shaker and mover in my own garden. Well, I used to be. My new vision is to find "comfortable shoes" that fit my needs for much longer than a season. But, for better or worse, a garden is a living, giving and growing entity. It is not static and often takes on a life of its own. Changes that need to be made, by you the caretaker and the garden, the giver, should make you both comfortable and happy.

One's garden should be in balance with one's personal needs, and one's ability to care for what you plant. If you have a front lawn and you never step on it except to give it a hair cut, rethink this sorry state. Does it have good sun exposure? Consider planting it with corn, cucumbers, any squash, artichokes, bean vines, and edible fruit trees provided you can keep the deer out.

Edible landscaping has always



out rubble and re-arranged the former "yellow" garden. The herb garden was too far from the house, I explained. Voila! A solution was pronounced; it seemed perfect! The grass, invasive "flowers," and everything else outside my kitchen door were removed. A rather big deal, that needed some planning ahead. But now I have a fabulous "herb kitchen garden" right where I need it, feet away from the kitchen. Is this a great or even a good idea? Well, for me it was, for you maybe not. I am not aware of your lifestyle or what you like to do, let alone whether you might run out to your garden to pluck an herb. I don't know where the sun rises and sets in relationship to your house. Is the best place for a kitchen garden one and the same with where your dogs like to nap, run or do their dog "thing?" I don't know everything

been my passion. I have recently seen this done in many residential areas. This is a modern day version of (for those who can remember) the "Victory Garden." I have a dear friend who lives in a residential area in Los Angeles. Her property is small but I remember her saying to me, over thirty-five years ago "I never plant anything I cannot eat." To this day, she has fig trees, a date tree and, ye gads, who knows what else growing from her front door to the sidewalk. Good for her!

No one wants to come home and crash over a giant zucchini, which added twenty pounds of weight while you were slaving at your desk job. I doubt if you care to walk up to your front door and be enmeshed in a gourmet salad about to eat you, instead of the reverse.

Where does all this end up? You don't need to be just another "pretty face." Your yard, front and back, can be functional, edible and lovely. Good design can happen; it just takes forethought, a bit of planning and the desire for good aesthetics.

*"If the shoe doesn't fit, change your feet."*

Anonymous

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