



Fond du lac County Master Gardeners  
July - August Newsletter  
2009



1. Meeting Reminder
2. Bringing it All Back Home
3. My Two Cents Worth
4. Recipe
5. Why Bad Things Happen to Good Plants
6. Understanding Garden Catalogs

## Next Meeting:

8/11/09

Potluck 5 P.M. at Lyle Mercer's house.

### Directions:

The picnic at our house is N7971 Fairfield Drive and easy to find. From FdL take either Winnebago Drive east along the lake or 151 north at Johnson St. which is Hwy 23 to the east side of FdL. Turn left or north on the Hwy 151 ramp. The 4 lanes become a 2 lane hwy. Turn right at the stop lights which are located on Hwy 151 at Peebles. Follow WH up the hill and you can turn right on McCabe road continue up the hill and turn left on Fairfield Drive. We are the white ranch house on the right. If you miss McCabe Road you can turn right on Fairfield Drive just before St Peter or if you are coming from the east through St Peter you need to turn left on Fairfield Drive after you go through St Peter.



## Gardening Advice, Heronswood Nursery News, and the thoughts of George Ball

Contributed by Kathy Sabel

### Bringing It All Back Home

Once introduced, Americans invariably inquire what business you're in. While foreigners find the question a bit crass, it's second nature to us. The question reflects our work ethic on the one hand, and our democracy on the other: it's not who you are but what you do that defines you. We mean business.

When you're in seeds and plants, as I've been most of my life, your profession elicits a striking range of reactions. Ever a pragmatic breed, gardeners query me about heirloom seed varieties or boast about their bumper crop of Big Boy tomatoes. Teenagers and college kids will offer up a "That's cool," and amiably amble off. That's cool.

Wall Street high-fliers—investment bankers, brokers and hedge fund profiteers, elaborately upholstered all—tend to regard my business as impossibly outmoded and arcane. Seeds? Plants? Do I, perhaps, belong to the Flat Earth Society as well?

When I'm at a social function—rare—I invariably find myself chatting with a Wall

Street tribe member, replete in tailored suit, collar pin, rep tie and initialed shirt cuffs. Jared, let's call him, since that's always his name, is a player. A pink-cheeked master of the universe fluent in junk bonds, zero-coupon bonds, REITs and interest rate swaps; he knows what business is all about. His world is one where funds appear from somewhere, go somewhere else, and he pockets the difference.

Seeds clearly have no place in Jared's business cosmology. Seeds aren't things, and they aren't even stylish, prestigious or luxury things. They make a humble showing in the land of high-end bling. Odd, since in some traditional cultures, they're used as money; in others, these botanical eggs are collected rather like jewels.

Yet, for some reason, a packet of seeds fails to telegraph status and wealth quite as well as a Porsche, a Greenwich estate, a Cartier necklace or a daughter at Brown. In the realm of comestibles, even the rarest of heirloom

vegetable seeds lack the impact of a vintage Chateau Talbot, truffle butter or Beluga caviar.

Jared hauls over his pal Nick, attired in the same tribal regalia, though with different initials on his cuff. "Nick, this is George. He's in seeds." They look me up and down, as if I were an exhibit in a natural history museum, their expressions a blend of amusement and disdain. I'm cool with that.

I look them over in turn. Wall Street wheeler-dealers are a curious mix of cockiness and terror. Their eyes dance around, as if always on the outlook for danger. They convey the wariness of fugitives, which they may be some day. I explain to them that seeds are God's microchips: miniature devices programmed with information and algorithms to generate life. This fuddles them for a moment. Are they missing the next big thing? Or am I playing the players? Again I look them over—more closely this time.

Wall Street players like Jared and Nick would be a worthy subject for anthropological study. Their wardrobes provide a scaffolding to their worlds of flux and risk. Each element in their costume is a kind of announcement. The collar, a different color from the body of the shirt, declares its collariness. The collar pin indicates, should there be doubt, that the collar is not likely to collapse into confusion. The suspenders—striped or patterned—provide visible assurance that the gentlemen's trousers are unlikely to abruptly fall about their knees.

The pocket square adorning the breast pocket—never to be used as a handkerchief—confirms the pocket is there, lest that detail pass you by. The oversized watch, with its dizzying dials and buttons, indicates the wearer is prepared to descend to the deepest depths of the ocean or sail about the galaxy, his watch accurate to the nanosecond. This highly evolved visual grammar lends an outward coherence, ironically, to a profession built on speculation and caprice, where, on any given day, the market can eat you alive.

Wall Street's big risk takers tend to be men, their fearlessness buoyed by testosterone.

Their restlessness, tensile nerves and daring are traits they share with male hunter-gatherers of pre-Agricultural times. In ancient times, the Wall Street adventurer's derring-do might have enabled Jared to kill a lion with which to feed the tribe, or, conversely, turned him into a delicious dinner for Mr. and Mrs. Lion and their brood. The fear of the ages runs in his veins, assuaged right now by a quick succession of gin martinis.

I spot a friend across the room, or pretend I do. "Fellows," I say momentarily, as I ready to take my leave. I look each in the eye, and say his name, "Jared. Nick." (Their monogrammed shirt cuffs prove useful here). "The future belongs to seeds." Their pink faces flush crimson; they whoop with laughter.

Jared and Nick were, and perhaps remain, first-string players in the New Economy, a playground fueled by easy credit, speculation and other peoples' money. Seeds rightly appeared to them as the barter of another era. And it's true, the seed business has changed little in the last 500 years. The major shift in the last century has been the transition of the home garden from a necessity—how you feed the family—to a hobby for some, a passion for others.

A few steps into the 21st century, the role of the home garden has once again changed. Standing in my garden, I can almost hear the stampede of new and rededicated American gardeners. Outfitted in jeans, baseball caps and wellingtons, clutching their trowels, Americans pioneer their new frontier—their backyard garden.

Converging on the home garden is an extraordinary array of trends in tastes, health awareness, lifestyle and demographics—a phenomenon I call a perfect storm of tipping points. The Old Economy is new again.

The major catalyst, is, of course, the economy's downward spiral. Americans are getting wise to the extraordinary savings they can reap, along with their tomatoes, peppers, green beans and squash. A home garden delivers reliable and extraordinary returns on

your investment, a hundred dollars in seeds producing a harvest that would cost you \$2,500 at your supermarket. A 25-to-1 return? Snap my striped suspenders!

In the last 10 years, Americans have grown exquisitely attuned to issues of nutrition and food safety. Their increasing insistence on food quality—optimally nutritious, fresh, flavorful and safe—is well-founded. The vegetables and fruit bought at the supermarket are picked prematurely, spend weeks in trucks and warehouses exposed to carbon monoxide and other contaminants, and frequently gassed to boost their colors. To purchase supermarket produce is to compromise on flavor, nutrition, texture and safety—while getting a swift kick in the budget.

The local food movement has built upon this kind of new awareness, and farmer's markets

### *My Two Cents Worth*

I guess if we want to really “crack down” on expenses and get real I should have called this, “A Penny for My Thoughts”. I just love this article. It is so pure in its message. It also reminds me of the “Nicks” and “Jareds”, that I have met over the years as well as some “Nicoles” and “Janes” that I have known. I was of that group at one time. Graduating with an MBA and hell bent on setting the world on fire with my brilliance. All while not scuffing my designer shoes or wrinkling my custom made suits. I was all about green as long as it had dollar signs with it. Life changes and I am sure there are those who will always find that other world.

I found true happiness, contentment and peace in my garden. However, it does not sate my desire for a Porsche. ;)

*Sex is good, but not as good as fresh, sweet corn,*  
Garrison Keillor

are sprouting across the country. But why go to the farmer's market when a few steps away is a garden bursting with fresh tomatoes, string beans and watermelons? It doesn't get more local—or fresher—than this.

And in this world of iPhones, PCs, Twitter, 200 cable channels and over the top home entertainment centers, the garden suddenly appears as something new and delightful: a multidimensional, interactive realm of flavor, nourishment, fragrance, pleasure, beauty, recreation, sanctuary and self-realization.

At first, we are smitten with our glittering new techno-toys, only to relearn that these clever machines cannot provide what we really want—a sense of connection and authenticity. Welcome to the garden: it doesn't get more real or connected than this.



## Berry Lemon Mousse Parfait

Berry Lemon Mousse Parfait is a quick and easy, no-cook dessert that is refreshing too. Lemon juice, and lemon and vanilla extracts brighten the sweetness of fresh berries to complete this perfect summer dessert.

Makes 8 servings.

Prep Time: 15 minutes

- 1-1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/2 cup sugar, divided
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Lemon Extract
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup sliced strawberries

1. Beat heavy cream, 5 tablespoons of the sugar, lemon juice and extracts in large chilled bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form.
2. Toss berries and remaining 3 tablespoons sugar in medium bowl. Layer mousse and berries in dessert dishes. Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.

***Laughter is brightest where food is best.***

Irish Proverb

## Why Bad Things Happen to Good Plants

With anticipation and hope, we spent hard-earned cash for a tree or shrub and took the time and energy to plant it. Now we looking at our dead or wilting specimen, wondering what went wrong. It's time for some detective work

**Location, location, location.** In our cold-winter climate, newly planted evergreen trees and shrubs need some protection from the frigid western winds and drying afternoon sun. Until their roots have grown wide and deep, these trees and shrubs can't take up enough water after the ground freezes to replenish the moisture lost to sun and wind. By spring, the foliage is brown and the stems may be dead or dying. Planting sensitive shrubs on the eastern or northern side of a building, wrapping them in burlap, or spraying with an anti-desiccant helps protect them.

**In too deep.** Planting depth is critical to plant success. Digging the planting hole too deep is



probably the most common — and most easily preventable — mistake we see. The root flare, which is the place where the stem or trunk meets the roots, must be planted at or evenly slightly above ground level. Roots need oxygen and they'll smother if planted too far below the surface. The root flare isn't always at the soil surface in the container or root ball in the nursery, so it's important to find it and adjust the hole depth before setting the plant in the ground.

**Smothered in mulch.** Mulch is great for retaining soil moisture and keeping weeds under control. But too much of a good thing can be bad for the plants it's meant to protect. Mulch should be pulled from the base of plants. In most cases, an inch or two of depth is sufficient. Thick mulch piled up around the trunk is the equivalent of planting too deep.



**Water assistance.** Newly planted trees and shrubs need lots of water during the first season because they usually have more leafy growth than their developing root systems can easily support. Even a small shrub may need a gallon of water a day to keep the soil moist around its roots. Larger trees can use 10 gallons or more daily. To make watering easier, consider using watering rings or soaker hoses, which ensure the kind of slow, even watering that new trees and shrubs need.

**Environmental stress.** Road salt, poorly drained soil, too much sun/shade, mechanical damage, and lack of hardiness also take a toll. In our USDA Zone 4 there are many plants that cannot survive our winter. Check on where the plant was started. If you see South Carolina or any other Southern state, be skeptical about its viability here on the frozen tundra.

Knowing a plant's needs and matching them with the resources you have available, is the best way to insure success.

## The Real Meaning of Plant Catalog Terminology:

***"A favorite of birds"*** means to avoid planting near cars, sidewalks, or clotheslines.

***"Grows more beautiful each year"*** means "Looks like road kill for the foreseeable future."

***"Zone 5 with protection"*** is a variation on the phrase "Russian roulette."

***"May require support"*** means your daughter's engineering degree will finally pay off.



***"Moisture-loving"*** plants are ideal for landscaping all your bogs and swamps.

***"Carefree"*** refers more to the plant's attitude than to your workload.

***"Vigorous"*** is code for "has a Napoleonic compulsion to take over the world."

***"Grandma's Favorite"*** -- until she discovered free-flowering, disease-resistant hybrid.

---

I will be out of town for most of the month of August. The next newsletter will be in September after the meeting. I want to welcome Darcia Keplin. She will be helping me with future newsletters.

