

Taking Pride in the Outside

Dirty Dan beds a summer plot

There are so many reasons why I love summer, like the fact that at the moment I am sitting on my back porch in shorts, and the fake sound of rain that the sprinkler makes while soaking in my freshly planted yard, or the smell of some neighbor's barbecue. It is also nice to relax and enjoy the beginnings of a new garden. For the past five months, I have been thinking about my back yard, tapping into my inspiration, crafting a mind-blowing concept and hoping I can pull off the image I have in my head. Now, with the first of the plants in the ground and my new beds laid out, I can ponder this new space some more. So far, I like the plants I'm working with and am loving my new garden more than I thought I would.

The first thing I put in the ground was Azara microphylla. Then I put in another and another and then finally one more, just for good measure. If one is good, four must be better, or so I was thinking at the moment. For me, the Azara holds a very near and dear place in my heart. When I left



Get Dirty with Dan
BY DAN YOUNG

out somewhere around 20 to 25 feet tall and about half as wide.

Another plant I saw recently in someone's garden was *Dryopteris erythrosora*, the autumn fern. I have to admit I have never planted a fern in my garden before, but for some reason the coppery tones of its fronds really got me excited. (You, my kind

readers, can take that last statement and run with it however you would like.) I started thinking how I could work that plant into the mix. Its midsize stature made it easy to work into the middle of beds. I planted it in partial shade with *Carex testacea* and *Anemanthele lessoniana*, both grasses with the same sort of rusty orange colors. It seems like every time I find a new plant, I go way overboard with it. I have my fingers crossed that in a year, I don't find myself living in the middle of some fern-drenched forest floor. I suppose that wouldn't be the end of the world, right?

I think the most important thing about this garden or any garden is that it's making me happy. If you don't love it, why have it? Though plants, rocks and gravel compose the garden itself, most of my gardening enjoyment is derived from the process. I love waking up early, making my tea and not leaving my yard until the sun is starting to go down. I take quite a bit of pride in the work that I have done, just like I take pride in who I am—the gay man with muddy knees and dirty fingernails.

Have a great Pride Weekend, but I want all of you back in your gardens next week.

The garden club I mentioned last month met for the first time June 4. I had a really good time meeting the people who came and touring the garden of our host. For more information on joining the group, e-mail Roger Mosser at rogermosser@comcast.net. 

To reach DIRTY DAN, who will answer any and all of your gardening questions, simply e-mail dirtydthegardener@yahoo.com.



Dirty Dan is excited by the copper tones of autumn fern.

my last house, I could hardly even look out the window at the one in my old garden in fear I might shed a tear over a plant. So it was an obvious choice for the new garden. Azara microphylla is a fast-growing, small evergreen tree that has three major draws. They are hardy in Zone 7, surviving just fine here in Portland with only a bit of leaf burn and twig die back in cold winter snaps. My favorite thing about them is the way their tawny trunks and branches snake upward and then weep only slightly. A. microphylla can grow 4 to 5 feet a season during its first few years in the ground. Then it slows when it reaches 15 feet or so to top

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