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## Pride In The Garden, As Told In Three Parts



**the sassy gardener**  
BY LEANN LOCHER

### Part 1: A garden alive

There's a garden I visit several times a year, and have been doing so since it first began over 15 years ago. It's one of my favorite gardens to visit, so thoughtfully designed and planned, with plants blooming or providing interest throughout the year. I always discover something new, and note the changes, additions and growth. In particular is a Camperdown Elm, tiny when first planted but now large enough for me to enter its secret canopy and hide from the outside among its branches hanging down to the ground.

This last visit, I noticed something I hadn't before. In the brush, at the back, was a small rabbit. It could have been a bunny, but there it was. It hopped forward and to another area to nibble in. My friend and I stood mesmerized at the encounter. Yes, it's a country garden, but neither of us had seen a rabbit in a garden before. And then my eyes began to really open up to it all.

Above us, birds flitted from tree under-story to branch, chirping and announcing their arrival. Bees buzzed in the early rose blooms. As we turned a corner, glossy spotted blackbirds lit up a patch of grass, eagerly digging about in it for whatever golden bits they were catching there. This garden was alive—alive with plants, and growth, blooms and spring, insects and animals. I could feel how it alive it was, literally buzzing with life. And in that moment I knew the reason for this magic: There were no harmful pesticides or chemicals being used in this garden. Pes-



This coleus has obviously come out of the closet.

ticides that would kill the bugs the birds would be eating. Chemicals that would kill the weeds the rabbits were known to forage on. This garden was alive with life of flora and fauna, and it was this symbiotic relationship that was being allowed to flourish and thrive here. The aliveness was palpable.

The commitment to gardening chemical-free is not always visible. Some nonbelievers think it means you will have sickly plants or infestations and swarms of insects. I have yet to see that happen. What I saw in this favorite garden was a commitment to nature and beauty. It was also a commitment to creating a truly special garden, and decisions made that moved beyond the space itself, for the betterment of the earth—a pride of

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