

Voices From the Crowd: Lessons of the Clueless Gardener

By Diana Peach

Besides all the other things I enjoy about Oregon, I love the green lushness and how everything grows with wild abandon. I grew up on the east coast where the landscape is tamer and cultivation an entirely different process, harder in some ways, easier in others.

For the clueless gardener, Vermont had its upside. I'd till my beds with a little cow manure, drop in the seeds, and walk away. It rained one or two days a week, so watering was rarely necessary. And once a month, I'd pluck out a scrawny smattering of weeds. Ta da! All done until fall's modest harvest.

So, this Vermonter moves to Oregon and plants a garden looking forward to a richer bounty. Spring arrives with raised beds weeded, the dark, composted soil warming for Memorial Day planting. The gravel paths between the beds are free of thistle and a fence is up for climbing vines. As I did in New England, I go about other activities until planting day comes.



Lesson One: The big day arrives, and loaded with trowel, seed packets, and starts, I head out to my tidy garden with visions of fresh spinach dancing in my head. Turning the corner, I stop short, my eyeballs ready to pop from their sockets. The scene is straight out of an old sci-fi flick, the one where the giant weeds

threaten to devour the neighborhood. "You've got to be kidding me!" I gawk. "I just weeded three weeks ago!"

Lesson Two: When I first moved to Vernonia it rained for 29 days straight. "Wow," I remarked to my water-logged husband. "I remember seeing houses for sale with sprinkler systems; I wonder why." That year the great spigot in the sky turned off on July 3rd. Two days later the soil was bone dry and my tomato plants were hacking on the dust as if I'd stuck them in the Serengeti sand dunes. My lettuce collapsed flat to the ground like a two-year-old having a tantrum. "You've got to be kidding me!" I gawked. "I have to water?"

There are other lessons too embarrassing to share, about colossal mole colonies, blackberry vines encasing an entire tree, and laying a patio without a weed barrier beneath. My Vernonia friends pat my befuddled head, and smile sympathetically at my utter cluelessness. "She'll learn in time," they whisper to each other as they knowingly nod...and I sure do hope they're right.

Run! Day Camp for Dogs *continued from page 10*

property with several different fenced areas that all open into one central area. "That way we can have everything open or we can separate dogs out based on if somebody has had surgery or we have an older dog," explains Ochs. "It gives us the ability to keep them all active and give them that stimulus and that outdoor time."

Run! has created a system of gates and fences for securing the property, including several gates which the transport vehicles pass through in order to keep all the dogs in place inside the fenced area.

Titus has been clearing more land on the property to add more fenced areas and workers have been limbing up trees to add more visibility and open areas.

Seeing all these dogs loose together, wrestling, digging, and chasing makes you wonder if they ever have any problems at Run! with dogs getting aggressive with each other. Don't they fight?

First of all, says Ochs, they don't allow dogs that have issues with other dogs. Dogs that get aggressive or fight are not allowed to return. Ochs notes that having the dogs away from their own property and on neutral ground helps alleviate issues between dogs. The employees at Run! are trained

to re-direct a dog's attention. "A lot of it is recognizing triggers," explains Ochs. While I was visiting, one dog got a hold of a work glove. Several dogs started chasing the first dog, wanting to play with the glove. The same thing happened later with a stick. "This thing suddenly becomes something that everyone wants and now there is an ownership issue," says Ochs. "The easiest way to handle it is to redirect their attention to something else that seems more exciting and then they're gone—they're over it."

At Run! dogs are obviously outside in the weather, rain or shine. Sometimes they find mud to play in or roll in something they shouldn't. Ochs says each dog gets a warm water rinse

before they are transported home.

Run! just started an exciting new pilot program with Intel at the end of May. Run! can now pick-up and return dogs to one of the Intel campuses in Hillsboro. If the pilot program is successful Run! could greatly expand their operation.

Ochs says partner Titus, who also runs a road building business, has played an active roll in making Run! successful. "He's here everyday, actively working," says Ochs. "He's been a big part of getting our relationship with Intel in place. And all his heavy equipment has been a huge help. He's made short work of some pretty major projects here." Titus noted that Run! buys most of their supplies locally, has also hired local workers for some of the many construction projects they have completed, and used local businesses and workers to modify their



transport vehicles.

Run! is a successful and growing local business. Next time you pass one of their vans on the road maybe you'll smile to yourself as you picture all those dogs getting ready for, or returning from, a day of playing in the woods.

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