

## DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL



The columnist, Sioux Rogers, having a discussion with her Red Bourbon turkey, Bonnet. They are deciding who gets the first sip of good Applegate wine.

## The inedible garden

BY SIOUX ROGERS

Once upon a time when I first started growing daylilies, I read a little blurb from a daylily grower. I can't quote her exactly, but she mentioned that daylilies are not only edible, but they actually are good for you. She also said that the buds are crunchy and each color of daylily has a slightly different flavor. Well, she was right, but I felt very guilty munching my way through the garden. Why so? The daylily grower said, and this part I remember exactly, "We don't do this too often because we don't like to eat our friends." So there I was with a mouthful of daylily buds hanging from my face and nowhere to put them. Now I just nibble when I want to impress a visitor.

This year we have a brand new crop to make me feel guilty: turkeys! You heard me right—turkeys. We have raised chickens and ducks for both eggs and meat for many years, but never turkeys. Hubby and I thought this was not only a great Thanksgiving and freezer idea, but also a no-brainer, well almost.

I did my homework and finally concluded that we could indeed combine our grown hens along with the baby turkeys. Now, before PETA comes to strike me lopsided, we did separate the big chicken hens from the baby turkeys while they were too small to be in the same pen and might get squished. We have a big see-through pen inside the large henhouse so all the girls and boys can "talk" to each other but not stomp on the wee ones. This type of cohabitation works just fine. When the babies are the right size to mix with the big girls, the gate is opened and the little chicks can come and go as they wish. That was easy!

Here's the first glitch. We had placed an order for heirloom turkeys with some friends. We had ordered six turkeys, but when we received our order, we received only five turkeys, one being a white "turkey-turkey." Our kind friends insisted that we get what we paid for, so I collected one more baby Red Bourbon

from them. I brought "her" home with no expectations other than to put her with the other group of young turkeys.

OMG, she was so small in comparison to the other Red Bourbons we were already raising. Hubby and I knew she would be crushed in minutes if we put her in the same pen with the faster growing Red Bourbons. "Emergency Turkey Housing" (ETH) was put into immediate action. The little one was named and, of course, that is a major error. "Arizona," or AZ for short, was in turkey shock, and I thought she was going to die before her new housing was finished. She was so small I put her in my bra; well, I was in there, too, to keep her warm. The ETH husband was working as swiftly as he could. The guest room was turned over to Arizona along with a very large and high box, water, heating light, food and floor shavings. She was safe and sound and we had done the right thing. Tuesday, our sweet border collie, stood guard over her for hours. Arizona was splat flat out in her new condo. We were sure she would be dead by morning. Tuesday watched her for as long as we let her.

Next morning she was alive, but barely. I called a friend and was reassured that I was doing everything right—"just wait and watch." So hubby, Tuesday and I watched little Arizona while she was deciding to stay or leave. By the next morning, it was clear Arizona had decided to stick around.

Now I was really concerned. I have this dwarf baby turkey that might be isolated for months, grow up and still be a dwarf. Then, from being isolated for so long, she could end up a loony fruitcake. I would then have Arizona, the dwarf, mental, loony, fruitcake turkey. So I again called a friend. This time the advice was, "Arizona needs friends!" So off I ran and came back with five three-day-old Rhode Island Red chicks. Arizona was happy! I held AZ as often as I could; of course, that was a mistake, too, however fun. AZ and her girlfriends, one of which turns out to be a guy friend, stayed in the ETH condo,

which was a cardboard refrigerator box, until they outgrew it.

Hubby had to leave town and his parting words to me were, "Oh, Arizona and the girls need to go out to the big henhouse." Great! Good thing I have lots of friends, because this time I really needed the help of Bekins Moving and Storage. The move was successful, but not the end of the story.

Two days later, I was walking around the coop, just checking out the crew. OMG, one of our other Red Bourbon turkeys was dead on the floor, splat out flat. I picked her up, and she moved a little—not dead! Half of her scalp was missing and her head was very bloody. "Help," I call to a visiting garden friend. "I have a very injured, but not yet dead, young turkey." The two of us, now thinking we are turkey paramedics, ran with this fainting turkey to the house. Neither of us knew what to do, so we started gently washing her bloody head with soap and water and a liquid antiseptic. As luck would have it, the ETH condo had never been disassembled. Now the condo became our turkey hospital. After about two hours, her little scalp had dried enough for me to begin applying a comfrey salve. I was told that comfrey actually regenerates cells, so I ended up soothing her injured scalp every three hours around the clock. This little turkey girl became known as "Bonnet," named by some wonderful luncheon friends. I had the notion that Bonnet had to be held and socialized at least every two to three hours. After all, she had come from a flock and had been very social. So between hubby and me, Bonnet was talked to, sung to, rocked and cuddled every two to three hours.

After a few weeks of extensive socializing and globs of comfrey cream, Bonnet was returned happily to the flock.

I wish this were the end of the story—well, maybe it is. No more tragedies. Most of the "girls" turned out to be BOYS, like in Toms. All, that is, except Arizona and Bonnet. Arizona is still very small. Bonnet is so friendly she would just as soon sit on my lap in the evening and share a glass of wine with me. The BIG white freezer Tom, named "Kenmore," is so gentle he could be a mother.

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All of the heirloom turkeys whistle. Right—whistle. So hubby and I spend these nice warm summer evenings sitting on a bale of straw in the coop, either whistling or gobbling with the turkeys.

Does this so-called "garden story" have a purpose or an ending? Yep, here goes: If you come to our house this year for Thanksgiving, plan on eating tofu burgers. The end.

For the Love of Dirt  
Sioux Rogers • 541-846-7736  
mumearth@apbb.net



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