

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

I am not a “gardener” any more

BY SIOUX ROGERS



Author taking a break beneath her tepee of string beans and giant Tuscan kale. To the side and in the background are last spring's asparagus.

A long time ago, when I was very young, my mother was called, “Mother.” Today, she would be called, “a domestic engineer.” The street sweepers and garbage collectors were just that, street sweepers and garbage collectors. Now, as if they have received an advanced degree at a university, they are “sanitation engineers.” I remember when the domestic engineer (my mother) or school English teacher would have “dinged” me for using the word “ain’t.” Now it is in the dictionary as acceptable English!

Well, there you go, no standing still. Everything changes. Clever people find new uses for old standbys. Did you know that if you do not want to gargle with Listerine you could dunk your feet in it, and cure your foot fungus? I thought a lawn mower was just for mowing your lawn. That is, until some very persistent and clever gentleman wanted to visit his brother. Alvin Straight, age 73, traveled on his tractor from Laurens, Iowa to Mt Zion, Wisconsin, a distance of 300 miles and of some considerable time at ten miles an hour to accomplish his goal. Many changes are good, many are open for review, and some are downright misleading.

Take the word “healthful,” for example. It is an adjective from the word “health,” and means “full of health, nutritious, beneficial, and wholesome.” These words have become as meaningless as saying, “Have a good day.” Furthermore, the label “healthful” that is plopped on many items of oral indulgence, we now know they are not even healthful, but may be harmful.

Just walking through your grocery store, take a moment to read some of the misuse of words. For example, Valley Creek Farms prints on the cereal box, “100% whole grains.” The list of ingredients states that their “whole grains” are “rolled oats” and “rolled wheat.” Rolled and whole are NOT synonymous! When did this change?

Words may have different meanings but printed/documented research can have an erroneous and slanted outcome depending on who funded the study.

How about the concept of “organic,” in reference to gardening? Per Webster’s, “Grown with fertilizer that consists only of plant and natural matter, with no chemical additives.”

While this dictionary’s definition is obviously correct, organic gardening had/has a much broader, philosophical and

humane definition.

“Everyone agrees on the basic definition of organic: food grown without the assistance of man-made chemicals. Four years ago, under pressure from critics fretting that the term “organic” was being misused, the U.S. Agriculture Dept. issued rules. To be certified as organic, companies must eschew most pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, synthetic fertilizers, bioengineering, and radiation. But for purists, the philosophy also requires farmers to treat their people and livestock with respect and, ideally, to sell small batches of what they produce locally so as to avoid burning fossil fuels to transport them. The USDA rules don’t fully address these concerns.” (*BusinessWeek*/October 16, 2006)

“Organic gardeners take their cues from nature. Instead of relying on the spray schedules promoted by pesticide manufacturers, organic gardeners observe what’s going on in their gardens and intervene to prevent pest problems. When you see white butterflies fluttering around your garden, for example, you know it’s time to protect your cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower, from cabbageworm. Instead of sprinkling on a pesticide, after the caterpillars hatch, you can cover the plants with a special fabric to prevent the butterflies from laying eggs in the first place. Organic growers view their gardens as living ecosystems, and work with nature to produce beautiful landscapes and healthy foods. No matter what plants you’re growing—vegetables, fruits, herbs, trees, flowers, grasses—the same basic techniques apply.” (*Media.wiley.com*)

As society becomes more aware of the toxins we ingest, the furor for organic everything has broached the domain of big business, not just agribusiness. Where is the bottom line, and for who? Do the big businesses, now carrying the organic flag, see anything unethical? Do they see any conflicts? “Absolutely not,” say critics such as Mark Kastel, director of the Organic Integrity Project at the Cornucopia Institute, an advocacy group promoting small family farms. “Organic consumers think they’re supporting a different kind of ethic,” says Kastel, who last spring released a high-profile report card labeling 11 producers as ethically challenged.

Today, as with so much of our life, words are either politically incorrect, or the word’s original meaning has been raped by BIG agribusiness, or the original meaning has been s-t-r-e-t-c-h-e-d. In our own little Applegate Valley, we are fortunate to have so many organic farmers, for just about everything. We can practice what was preached by the original philosophy of organic farming: “grow locally, buy locally and eat locally.”

Now that I have all that done and written out, I still am wondering what I am if I am not a gardener anymore. Guess I can be, (heck this is wide open) a clodhopper, farmerette, pedologist or just the happy reaper.

“We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” Proverb

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A big “Thank You”

To Donna and Matt Epstein:

The community and the food pantry volunteers would like to say “A big thank you for an amazing job well done.” My husband Claude and I are taking over the management of the Applegate Food Pantry and hope that we can come close to providing the caring and service that you created for this community. For 14 years, you helped feed this community and we hope we can continue to do the same. We also could not do this job without our dedicated volunteers: Lynn Hogan, Cynthia Cheney, Pam Kelly, Arthur Colton, Kristie Cowles, new volunteers Ellen and Rick Levine, as well as our new drivers Steve Weaver and Paul Tipton. And a special thank you to Craig Hamm of Ruch Country Store for his weekly donations and ongoing assistance to our food pantry. “It takes a village.”

Donna and Matt, enjoy your retirement...

To the Applegate Valley community:

You have been very generous with your contributions to the food pantry over the years. We hope that we can count on your continued support to help us provide food for families in need who live in our community. If you would like to make a contribution, please make your check out to *Applegate Access* and send it to: Applegate Food Pantry, PO Box 1682, Jacksonville OR 97530. Your contribution is tax deductible. If you want to donate food, you can leave non-perishable items at the Ruch Library, or bring any food to the food pantry on Thursdays between 3-3:30 pm (behind Ruch school) or contact me at 541-846-0380 to make other arrangements.

To Applegate Food Pantry clients:

Please note that the food pantry will change days and time soon (due to the closing of Ruch School on Mondays). Starting September 10, we will start distributing food on Thursdays at 3:30 pm.

Claude and Arlene Aron • 541- 846-0380

The Book Lady at the Applegate Food Pantry

Cynthia Cheney has been bringing books to children in the Applegate Valley for about five years. She works out of her van every Monday during the summer months from 11:00 to 1:00 at the Applegate Food Pantry on the grounds behind the Ruch School on Highway 238.

On the day that I visited the school, she was just setting up her tables



behind her van with a brightly colored display of reading books, educational workbooks, flash cards, pencils, and many other eye-catching learning tools for children of elementary school age. Cynthia loved to talk about the work she is doing and her philosophy to “feed their minds as well as their bodies.”

She told me how much books had meant to her as a child and she knows that reading can open up whole new pathways for children. Books can be the door to other types of learning as well as an escape from the real world during troubled times at home.

Cynthia is so strong in her belief, that every child needs an opportunity to own their books, that she travels up to Portland twice a year to stock up on books from a warehouse called, “Title Wave,” where the Multnomah County Libraries deposit books they are no longer stocking in their libraries. She looks for children’s books in good condition, purchases them with her own money and brings them down to the Applegate Food Pantry to give away to children who are interested in having them. She believes that it is important for a child to actually own their book, not just borrow it from a library and have to return it.

I asked Cynthia about the new workbooks and flashcards and the brightly colored pencils she has on display. “Oh I go to the dollar store and pick them up every now and then.” I realized that she pays for these items out of her own pocket.

“I love the book lady,” a little girl cried as she dashed toward the van and to Cynthia’s display table. Her mother told me that this is the reason that her daughter loves to join her on the Food Pantry trips every week. She always goes home with a book or two.

Donations to the Applegate Food Pantry are welcome. Checks can be made out to “Applegate Access” and mailed to: P.O. Box 1692 Jacksonville, Oregon 97530. They also accept clothing and books as well as food. These items can be brought to the Ruch Library. This fall and winter the Applegate Food Pantry will be held behind the Ruch School on Thursday afternoons at 3:30. Any perishable items can be donated at that location on Thursdays. For more details call Arlene Aron at 541-846-0380. If you have donations in the form of children’s books call Cynthia Cheney at 541-899-1114.

Joan Peterson • 541-846-6988