

DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

Garden of clichés

BY SIOUX ROGERS

I certainly do not have ten black thumbs, as they say. But indeed I do have ten dirty fingernails. Good grief, I'm a gardener. What did you expect? Furthermore, I have been in "nursery school"—that is what I call my garden—most of my life. I have learned so much from my teacher.

For starts, whether I like it or not, my garden insists on my being patient, but that's not exactly my innate inclination. I can't rush a redwood to hurry up and grow 150 feet, even if I am in a rush. Said Leo Tolstoy, "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

There are other pithy sayings—or clichés—I have learned from my garden.

"Be prepared." In my ever-giving Applegate garden, I am reminded of the old Boy Scout motto. Hmm, so if I want to plant tall pole beans, I need to be prepared to have something to support the tall fellows or they will be sprawling on the ground. So, my "being prepared" not only means I am prepared to physically support what I plant but also that I am prepared to tend, love, and nourish what I plant. I am the "mother" and these are my "children." My garden taught me if I take care of my "children" while they are young and growing, they will then feed and nourish me when I'm all grown up. You saw that coming, right? However much a cliché, it is true.

In "real" life we always talk about foundations. The foundation your parents give you for adulthood, the foundation of

your education for college, and, of course, the foundation of the house you live in. Gardening anywhere is no different in that it needs a good foundation for future success. If I have a crop failure—bugs, stunted growth, low production, or whatever else—due to my lack of planning ahead with a good foundation, trust me, the garden reminds me. A good foundation in your garden means friable (easily crumbled) soil teaming with earthworms, good drainage, and, of course, the right location. Ask a realtor about location, location, location.

"Don't judge a book by its cover." Check this out: corn smut (see photo). You might be put off by the looks of this fungus that forms galls on all above-ground parts of corn species. But it is edible! In Mexico it is known as a mouthwatering delicacy,



Edible corn smut (u.osu.edu/mastercorn/corn-smut).

called huitlacoche (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corn_smut). Another fungus that might surprise you is Cordyceps, a rare, hybrid, parasitic, "highbred" fungus (see photo) with several healing properties. It often attaches itself to caterpillars, which eventually eat the host.

"Variety is the spice of life." Not really referring to spicy as in "hot," per se, but rather having a variety of interests, friends, and, from your garden, the foods you grow. More to the point, if you plant just one variety of, say, lettuce, what happens if that particular variety is very susceptible to a

particular disease? Boom, all gone. No lettuce. If you had planted a few different varieties, you might have great dinner salad tonight. Right?

Friends or companions

The "three sisters" method is "used widely by Native American farming societies. Corn, pole beans, and squash are grown together for the mutual benefit of all three. Pole beans use the corn stalks as a means of support while stabilizing the corn and helping restore nitrogen to the soil for future crops. Squash keeps weeds down, shades the soil, and helps prevent moisture from evaporating from the surface" (swansonnursery.com/blog).

Not a bad idea, since we all need companions and friends who will stand up and protect us. I certainly do, but it's not always that simple. Lesson learned: not all "friends" are really "friends." However, a truly compatible friend supports you, and you can become both strong and productive like the three sisters.

At my age, this is now my favorite quote: "I don't remember planting this."

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Cordyceps is a rare, hybrid, parasitic, "highbred" fungus with several healing properties (businessinsider.com).





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HAVE YOU SEEN COSMO?



Cosmo was a talking crow last seen on Dec. 18, 2021. He was considered a nuisance bird and may have been legally killed. There's no liability. No crime. Just hoping for closure. Any and all leads welcome. You can remain anonymous.

Email any tips to:
cosmocrowtips@gmail.com