

# JUNE'S GARDEN

## A HANDFUL OF RUSTY NAILS AND TWO RUBBER BANDS STUCK TOGETHER

"Organize your living space and discard what you don't use," was Martha Stewart's advice in her January newspaper column.

With her advice in mind, I decided to clean out my garden shed which I hadn't paid much attention to other than occasionally checking the potted geraniums I store in the shed through the winter.

The paneled door of the shed had swollen from winter dampness. It took force and a couple of kicks to finally open it. When the door burst open, some baskets, a watering can and a rake fell from a rack I thought I'd secured. A handle on one of the baskets broke in the fall which I knew I could fix with wire. Searching through an old two-pound coffee can I found some wire and discovered that some nails I'd also saved in the can had rusted. I dumped the can out on some newspaper to separate the rusty nails from usable ones and found a few things I'd forgotten about: a button that had come off my favorite garden jacket I'd been keeping closed with a safety pin, some drapery hooks I'd saved in case I made new drapes for the house, some fishing lures, hooks and weights my grandson had looked for last fall, a nail punch I thought I had lost, a package of staples that goes with a staple gun that's broken, rubber bands, push pins, safety pins, paper clips, wire hooks, a broken pencil, and a bag of legume inoculant I'd bought last year and had meant to use when I planted my peas last spring. The legume inoculant is nitrogen-fixing bacteria. If you dust the peas or other legumes you plant, you'll have a more productive crop.

I set aside a handful of rusty nails and two rubber bands that were stuck together and the bag of inoculant.

While cleaning off a shelf and restacking all the plastic pots I've saved, I found the box of plant labels and empty flower packets I keep to remind myself what I planted last year. In the same box I found several half-filled envelopes of vegetable seeds: beans, spinach, lettuce, Swiss chard, carrots, beets and peas. When I plant vegetables in my small garden I don't have room for planting the whole packet. The problem was that I hadn't dated any of the envelopes to know how old the seeds were, but I decided to save them to plant this spring.

It was cold in the shed, time for a cup of coffee. In the warmth of the kitchen while enjoying the hot coffee I read the instructions on the package of inoculant I'd brought in with the half-envelope of sugar peas. The instructions said soak the peas overnight, the next day dust the damp peas with the powdered inoculant before planting. The weather forecasters said a week of rain. Knowing the ground was too wet to prepare for planting, I set the peas and package of inoculant aside. I poured another cup of coffee and spread out a bag of knotted plastic garden tape and string to unknit and rewind, and the phone rang.

A friend called to say she had just seen whales south of Haystack Rock. When the great gray whales migrate south in the winter and the ocean is rather calm, at times you can see their huge bodies surface or a cloud of mist as the whale exhales a burst of vapor and water. I grabbed my binoculars, and with my dog Barker at my heels we headed for the beach. After an hour or so passed scanning the horizon, all I could see were white caps. Maybe some were bursts of vapor and water when the whales exhaled. Barker enjoyed himself, along with his friend a neighboring black lab, chasing the seagulls and crows and sniffing a few logs that had rolled in with the tide.

Walking back from the beach, I noticed I hadn't cleaned up a flower bed along the fence. Another hour or two passed as I filled up the wheelbarrow with dead stalks of Shasta daisies and

nasturtium vines that had turned to mush. It was time for lunch.

Lunch is always accompanied with reading a few chapters of whatever book I choose to read.

Another hour or so passed. I was feeling guilty and put the book down to go back to organizing the shed. I thought I could at least sweep the floor of caked dried mud and pellets of fertilizers that had spilled from a damp twenty-pound bag of fertilizer. Taking out the broom to sweep the floor, I noticed the pots of geraniums needed attention. I put the broom aside. Spending time picking off all the dead leaves and watering them, adding Oxygen Plus, a Safer product that chemically releases oxygen to the soil and is also a liquid fertilizer, I rearranged the plants along with other treasures that were on the shelves.

My cottage was built in the early 1900's and people buried their garbage before Cannon Beach had sanitary service. Through the years when I've dug new flower beds I've unearthed many treasures: shards of broken dishes, some patterned, various-sized bottles that may have contained cosmetics, liniment or spirits, some bottles that had turned purple, and pieces of iron that may have been part of a stove. Also on the shelves are seashells, interesting-shaped driftwood, heart-shaped, oval and round black rocks, a few agates, colored glass tumbled and smoothed by the surf, all collected during the years on my daily walk along the beach. I use the old canning jars I found to fill with dried flowers, pods of poppies, branched silver disks of lunaria, pink and purple status and other interesting dried weeds. Someday I'll use the shards and colored glass to mosaic a table top or the seashells and heart-shaped rocks with tile to glue onto a large clay pot. The other rocks could line a path, and I've meant to bury the iron pieces at the roots of hydrangea plants. Someone told me that the iron helps the blooms of hydrangeas to turn a deeper blue.

While I was engrossed in arranging my treasures, Barker nudged me and gave me his look. It was time for his daily walk.

I gathered the handful of rusty nails and the two rubber bands that were stuck together to throw away, and with force slammed the swollen door shut. Something fell, but there's always tomorrow.

Barker carrying his ball in his mouth, me a plastic sack in case I found another treasure, we headed for the beach.

A few rays of setting sun had turned the clouds pink. Soon it would be dusk.

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