

Bits and pieces

Beware the green thumbs

by MARGARET SCHMALE

I appreciate a warning from friends about a dog that has every intention of removing my Achilles tendon.

And I think it's thoughtful to be informed that residents of a certain home are chain smokers, a sign oxygen will be at a premium. But when I'm told that I should be cautious when visiting a new neighbor because she has house plants, that's when I think my friends are getting a bit too selective.

Almost everyone has a pot of dry, spindly cactus or a vine wandering through the house looking for light. Why should plants be considered a threat to public safety?

The new neighbor had been in the area for four months and I had not called upon her yet to extend my welcome. I whipped up a batch of cookies, washed up my little girl and took advantage of a warm spring day to walk down to her trailer. It was a pleasant walk, and I pointed out the wild daffodils to my girl as we passed by the pasture. She found a dandelion in bloom but couldn't pick it because it had no stem.

As we walked we talked about why some things grow tall and rangy while other plants thrive quite well on short stems. She kept looking at me closely as we meandered down the road and finally said, "I think I'd rather be tall and rangy. You're one of those plants that got a short stem."

Somehow my short legs managed to make it to the neighbor's house. So much for my first chat about the birds and bees. My approach needs some more polish.

I could tell at once that whoever lived in the trailer was a gardener because the beds were cleaned out, ready for the arrival of crocus and tulips. My bulbs still had to fight their way to the surface through a snarl of last year's nasturtiums and petunias. The edge of her lawn was clearly defined by recent spading and the

trees were all painted white from the ground four feet up the trunks.

I knew where the edge of my lawn was too. It was under a wind row of last autumn's maple leaves. As for my trees — painting wasn't necessary; the cats had the bark so scratched up there wasn't enough left for the bugs to eat.

A neatly dressed lady in her early fifties greeted us at the door and invited us in. The first thing that struck me as different about her trailer was the temperature, which must have been 90 degrees and the humidity, which was like a steam room.

The next thing that started me to wondering was the vine in the entry way that was making advances toward my chocolate chip cookies. The lady gave the vine a sharp whack, making it recoil instantly and apologized saying it was a rare African species that seemed to be drawn by sweet smells. She casually mentioned she had to give up wearing perfumes.

The back side of the trailer was completely remodeled into a solarium. My unusual neighbor had orchids in full bloom, tropical vegetation out of some Tarzan movie and ferns hanging everywhere. I clutched my daughter a little closer to me as we wove our way past the plant life.

"You certainly have a remarkable collection of house plants," I mentioned, trying to keep my girl's hands off the leaves.

"Aren't they lovely?" she said. "My husband was a botanist in the tropics and was always sending me home little slips."

"Was?" I asked. "He's retired now?"

"No, he died suddenly on an African expedition."

I hated to cut the visit short, but I found the back door, checked the exit out for vines and pushed my girl toward it.

"Do come back," she called, "I don't get too many visitors."

County sets March 1 dog license deadline

There could be a \$15 tag on your dog, if there isn't one on his collar by March 1.

That's the deadline for purchasing a dog license in Clackamas County's new get-tough dog control program.

There will be a 30-day grace period for dog owners who fail to obtain the necessary license, but that expires March 28. The \$15 penalty will be assessed for each license purchased after Feb. 28.

Persons who apply for dog licenses must present a valid rabies certificate good through Oct. 31.

Licenses may be purchased at the county animal shelter at Oregon City.

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Refunds count as income

Refunds of Oregon state income tax received during 1980 may be considered as income on the 1980 federal income tax return, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

The deciding factor in distinguishing between taxable refunds and non-taxable refunds is whether the taxpayer received a tax advantage the prior year by deducting that expense.

A Renter's Refund is not taxable. It is a refund of a

personal, non-deductible expense.

Refunds of federal income tax are not taxable on the federal return. These have already been taken into consideration in arriving at the correct tax on the prior year's return.

Refunds of state income tax and homeowner's property tax may or may not be taxable, depending on whether the individual received a tax benefit by itemizing those taxes on the

prior year's return. If an individual receives a refund of 1979 Oregon income tax during 1980, for instance, the first thing to check is the 1979 return to see if he or she itemized deductions.

If the taxpayer did not itemize, no tax benefit has been received and the refund is not considered income on the 1980 return. If the taxpayer did itemize, only the portion which caused a tax benefit would be included in income.

Wood industry facing changes

The Pacific Northwest plywood and lumber industry faces a "traumatic readjustment" over the next 20 years as the timber harvest in the region declines, predicted an Oregon State University forest economist.

Darius Adams predicts a 30 to 40 percent decline in timber harvest by the year 2000 in the Douglas-fir region of Oregon and Washington. Timber stumpage prices will continue to rise over the next 10 years, coupled with growing competition from other timber-producing areas of the United States and Canada.

Both plywood and lumber production are expected to drop significantly, and Adams predicts a number of mills will go out of business.

"The outlook could be moderated some if the U.S. Forest Service were to increase the allowable cut on its lands," but such a departure would be only a short-term benefit at best, Adams said.

While there will be a significant decline in timber output in the Douglas-fir region of the Pacific Northwest, foresters predict a "modest increase" in the Rocky Mountains, "stabilizing" in the Northeast and a "significant increase" in the South.

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