

Other Gardening Ideas

Not everything gardeners have on their wish lists is a plant, or even a seed. Located in Vermont, where you know not a lot of gardening goes on this week, Gardeners Supply Company has lots of time to find things we might think we need – pots for example. Their catalog cover has a photograph of “designer self-watering Wet Pots.”

These pots are paired: a clay pot nests inside an outer glass pot the diameter of which is an inch or so larger allowing water to surround the clay pot, thereby watering the plant by slow seepage through the clay walls of the inner pot. Neat idea and it would surely work for those species which do not like to be dry. However, what about directions accompanying houseplants advising ‘let the soil become dry’ before watering?

Before investing in these handsome Wet Pots why not test your favorite domestic greenery by repotting it into a clay pot inside a cut-off 2-litre drink bottle and see how it behaves. If you don’t have a clay pot without drainage holes, plastic wood or putty might plug the hole long enough for your experiment.

Another curiosity in the same catalog is an idea finding favor on the continent – growing plants flat on both interior and exterior walls. Living walls they certainly are. Clever arrangement: I was given a plastic grow bag once but I never put anything in it because I think plants look uncomfortable growing out of a vertical surface instead of up from the ground. Besides, it looked like a souvenir t-shirt. Do you want a wall of sedums in the powder room?

Another question: would the tomatoes growing out of the bottom of a bag of potting soil hung from the porch ceiling get enough sun? We gardeners are a determined lot. We manage to grow things in the unlikeliest places!

Decades ago when we rode trains instead of planes, we would chug through crowded neighborhoods before coming to the big city station; it was fascinating to see plants as well as laundry waving from fire escapes. Smaller towns usually had homes fairly close together but deep yards in back for an orchard or vegetable garden. One of my neighbors had chickens and a pond from which he offered frog legs for Sunday dinner, although I don’t remember that his kindness was accepted.

Somewhere along the way we have gotten the idea that food should come exclusively from the store. Amateur efforts are a waste of time, so we go to the gym for exercise which takes more time than a garden? If any people anywhere are city folk, it is Londoners, but 14% of London’s 8 million residents produce some of their own food. The English are notably mad about gardening so one would expect roses, trees and glorious lupines, but food is an achievement in cool softly lit London. More understandably, 44% of people living in Vancouver on Canada’s west coast grow some of their own food. I would like to know the percentage for Mathews and Gloucester.

Isn’t it common knowledge that netted cantaloupes have orange flesh and smooth honeydew melons have flesh of pale green? Not any more –supporting those of us who think everything we learned in kindergarten is probably wrong. Cantaloupes have been crossed with honeydews so that the deep netting characteristic of cantaloupes is gone! Smooth is easier to clean. It seems people carried the surface contaminants to the flesh when cutting melons and became ill. Was there no sticker saying ‘wash before cutting’? In any event new smooth melons will have orange flesh and, as well as being slick-skinned, the hybrid is healthier than the old version, having a long list of good-for-you components.

CABBAGES & KINGS

Ignoring laws in Brazil and fines from the US, GMO seeds are being planted illegally in Parana, Brazil by Syngenta, incorporated in Delaware. The courts in Parana are easily persuaded to grant favors to agribusinesses not averse to using thugs to thwart justice. Such chutzpah!