

Take Time to Smell the Roses

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Today is Mother's Day, and like much of the population, I bought some flowering vegetation for both my wife and my mom. If you forgot to buy something, it's not too late to visit a garden and enjoy the sight and scent of the flowers growing there. However... please do not pick the flowers if it's not YOUR garden!

Last weekend was my birthday, and rather than spending another Sunday moving mulch and doing other exhausting yard work, I took my two golden retrievers out for a long walk at the 4-H Center. It was rather relaxing, watching them romp through plants that, during the week, I am forced to call weeds and teach people to kill. But since it was my day off, I was able to look at these plants as spring wildflowers, and just enjoy them.

I think that we, as gardeners, get too involved with working in our gardens, and not enough time enjoying them. Taking time to smell the roses, as it were. I remember visiting my mom one summer and visiting a local rose garden. She had to smack me on the back of the head and tell me to stop looking for beetles and mildews, and just enjoy the flowers.

Gardens should not only be a chore. Gardens should be a source of enjoyment and relaxation. A place to go to clear our heads, and reduce our stress. (I'm sure my wife is about to look over at me and tell me that's cute, but I'm not getting out of spreading mulch today...).

Certainly, there are ways we can reduce the amount of work that's needed in our gardens. Well-designed beds will look natural and pleasing to the eye, but shouldn't be so convoluted that we are forced to do a lot of hand-trimming of the lawn. Mulching won't eliminate the need to weed, but it should reduce many weed seedlings.

Plant selection is also important to have a beautiful, yet low-input garden. Annuals generally have smaller and shallower root systems than many of our perennials, and will require more watering and care. Place plants with similar requirements together: dry-site beds can be ignored, while you spend more time on the plants in beds that need frequent watering. And of course, try to purchase cultivars that are resistant to insects and diseases.

If you have questions or need information on labor-saving gardening tips, please contact the Purdue Extension Service at (812) 435-5287.