

Playing with your plants



For many gardeners there is a placid joy bumbling round the garden looking for newly opened roses, newly sprouted seeds, the dire signs of spider mites or the sweet redness of the first ripe strawberry. We don't ask much of plants save that they grow & bloom or bear. The more unassuming gardeners

among us only ask that our plants not die.

This is sort of like living with a nice dog & asking only that it now & then lie companionably on your hearth & thump its tail while staring doggishly into the frames. Of course, there are dog owners who are not content unless Spot can shake hands, fetch, play dead & imitate film stars. These more strenuous & controlling souls probably need active plants in their gardens too.

There are plants that lend themselves to change, play, & activity. Every child knows grass stems make whistles, maple keys make helicopters & rhinoceros horns, hollyhocks make dancing princesses, that acorn cups are good for small tea parties & that you can suck honey from honeysuckle flowers. These are all wonderful things to know about & the wise gardener stocks the garden with at least a few of these childhood treasures—but these are not active plants of the

sort that will please the jaded gardener who desires movement & surprise.

This gardener would enjoy the sensitive plant, *mimosa pudica*. It is easily grown from seed—stick a few in a six inch pot. The pretty ferny leaved plant may in time bear little puffs of shy pink flowers but it is not for the gentle leaves or the sweet little flowers that our thrill seeking gardener should plant it. This responsive little plant wilts instantaneously if you touch it. It then recovers & you can sadistically touch it once more. This reminds me of a happy childhood day I spent locking my cocker spaniel in the garden shed. He was so pleased to be let out each time. What jumps and doggy glee! My three year old soul lapped up that canine love over & over all day long. The sadistic gardener can make the sensitive plant wilt time & time again. It always returns to trusting vigor. Children, by the way, usually enjoy this process as much as I enjoyed my day with honey eyed Toby the spaniel.

Obedience plant, *physotegia virginiana* (it is also called false dragonhead) is another garden wonder. It is pretty, spreading, mint looking sort of plant with tall spikes of rose, lavender or white flowers who have the odd ability to remain where you put them. This sentence gives me the vision of flowers otherwise dashing around the garden like a pair of young basset hounds while you shout, to no avail, "Stay! Sit! Heel! Do something!" No, what I meant to say is the small flowers may be gently pushed to the side on their stems & for awhile will stay in that position. Okay,



it isn't a very practical sort of trait. But if no one else obeys your wishes you can into the garden & push your obedience plant around. It might be consoling to have one thing in the universe predictably responsive to your desires. Obedience plant does very well in sun or partial shade & looks very lovely with pincushion flowers and

Michaelmas daisies.

Moonflowers periodically creep into these columns & every year or so find a place in my gardens because they are extraordinary, lovely, & completely magical. *Calonyction aculeatum* is the Latin name, should you care. I will confess that the first moonflowers I grew, planted when I knew little of gardening & dared much, were the best. Since those first vines I have had an erratic history of seeds that don't come up, seeds that do sprout only to be eaten overnight, seeds that turn into vines but become the dinners of gourmet deer, & so on. Sometimes I get flowers. They are worth everything as they open in the dusky warm late summer evenings, fragrant & white amongst their heart shaped leaves, unfurling as you watch them, perfect, evanescent, & heartbreaking in their immediacy & their beauty.

Try some. Even if you are, like me, a placid & undemanding gardener you will love the drama of the unfolding moonflowers. You can have moonflower parties, or an intimate *tete a tete* by the moonlight & moonflower. It is not often we can watch a flower bloom, surely & beautifully as we look on in wonder.

Happy gardening!

Kathy Epling

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IF YOU'RE GOING TO SOUTHERN HUMBOLDT - YOU'RE GONNA MEET SOME GENTLE PEOPLE THERE

And here you are. *Not all who wander are lost*, goes the saying. Pilgrims, nature lovers, travelers, tourists – you are in the right place. The beauty here is unceasing. There is plenty to do and bliss to be had.

If you are a first-timer drawn here for work and money, you need also "Be Sure" – be sure you are safe. Gold Rushes attract a diverse bunch of people and employers cover a broad spectrum. If you are a poor traveler with a pack and a dog and no car, we suggest *step lightly*. Be sure everyone knows you and your dog are friendly. Be sure to stash your gear and your pack somewhere safe. If at any time, at work or in town, that you don't feel safe, get safe. **Always make certain** someone knows where you are. If you are partnered, don't get separated until you know clearly where you are. Will your cell-phone work there? Leave your location on your phone. Keep contact with family, friends, and some local contact. Exchange information with other travelers and with supportive locals.

We need you to bring your gentle skills like cooking and clean up and music to our area because our resources have never been thinner. The Food Pantry burned recently. The Mateel Community Center serves lunch from noon on Tues., Weds., and Thurs. but upcoming Reggae will make that more irregular for a time. Our advocacy group – CHILL – has a truck that distributes food, hopefully on Sun., and Fri., but more if available. Dog food and free clothes too: even books. Gentle People here still are loving and helpful. We need you to add yourself to our number.

The Medical services include a Hospital and an Emergency Room. The Redwoods Rural Health Clinic in Redway (RRHC) operates with a sliding scale. There are porta-potties at Renner's north of Garberville. Sometimes the two Markets provide them in season. Restrooms inside may be restricted. Packs are forbidden. The Library has a restroom,

open 4 days around noon mostly. Check out the Vet's Park at the north end of town just in case. Otherwise, be a customer if you want to deposit your waste. If you must go just the same, please take care of you waste.

Camping is a chancy affair. Keep your gear close. You can tent for a fee at Dean Creek and Benbow, when available. If you are camping close to town, you need to be alert. Is it already the center of police activity? on private property and patrolled? under surveillance by cops or civic busybodies? Are neighboring campers cool?

Camp Clean-Up Crews are not vigilantes but locals who go where people camp to help nature out. You know the drill – leave no trace. **If you need garbage bags** they are free from the Clean-Up Crews. **Join them** on Tues and Fridays at 11 at the north end of Garberville to lend a hand.

Last year, vigilantes were in flower, throwing their weight around, claiming protection from the cops, harassing people at will. **This year cops claim to have learned the law** and won't steal your property or try and scare you into leaving without the proper eviction etiquette. Will they provide back-up to vigilantes who can do what cops can't do? Time will tell. So will we.

As for FIRES, just don't.

Computers are free at the library, for a fee at Emerald Tech at the south end of Ray's Parking lot. Local bus runs from Benbow up 101 to Eureka. Amtrak and Greyhound pass through town a couple times a day.

If you are short of contacts, a couple advocates are available from the Group CHILL, Debra at 223-3607 and Paul 923 4488. See the Trimmers of Humboldt Cooperative Facebook page.

-Paul Encimer

FOR THOSE WHO COME TO SOUTHERN HUMBOLDT - SUMMERTIME WILL BE A LOVE-IN THERE

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