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GEDDY GARDEN NEWS

*"If you would be happy all your
life...plant a garden."*

Old Proverb

As September moves on we realize the old Estonian proverb "all autumns do not fill granaries" to be so true. After the drought of this summer there are many granaries in this land that are not full. I have finally succeeded in getting a few morning glories to bloom after replanting them for the fourth time!

Another serious problem this year was the West Nile Virus. At last count there were 116 deaths attributed to the infection and 2,330 reported cases of it in D.C. and 30 states. It is carried by mosquitoes and can cause the brain to swell and other flu-like symptoms to occur. There is a product I know of called Indoor/Outdoor IGR that can control the breeding and multiplying of the larvae. If you worry about the virus, you might want to investigate this mosquito control method. There are also insect repellents you can use for personal protection. You must look for repellents that contain DEET. Lavender is also a natural mosquito and bird repellent.

September is a month with several gardening traditions. Michaelmas was celebrated on September 29 in the past with festivals that ended the harvest. It was also when dues and rents were to be paid. It honored St. Michael the Archangel and because of his reputation for healing the sick, it became customary to serve ginger, a healing herb, on Michaelmas. The use of ginger can be traced back thousands of years. The roots were chewed by Chinese sailors in an effort to prevent seasickness. Recent studies indicate it is still as effective as a treatment for seasickness as remedies sold in drug stores. Even the candied form that is available in our apothecaries will ease queasiness at sea as well as a Dramamine pill.

September 1st is also the feast day of St. Fiacre. He is known as one of the patron saints of gardening. Patron saints are servants of God, but also human people that have been chosen as protectors or guardians in areas of life because of associations or events in their lives. For some, they serve as role models. Some of the interesting ones, for example, are St. Ambrose, patron saint of bee keepers; St. Isadore, a patron saint of gardeners; St. Gabriel the Archangel, patron saint of postal workers; St. Brendan, the patron saint of sailors; St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland; and we must not forget St. Andronicus, the patron saint of silversmiths.

The patron saint most frequently associated with gardens is St. Francis, who lived close to nature, the earth, and God's creatures. He is, therefore, also the patron saint of animals, and in 1979 Pope John Paul II named him the patron saint of ecology.

Garden elements, the eye catchers such as fountains, obelisks, arches, sundials, urns, benches, seats, small buildings, and statues were added to gardens for aesthetic beauty and hope for the coming of spring.

In 1634 Henry Peacham recorded the introduction of statuary in the gardens of England in the *Compleat Gentleman*. He wrote of King Charles having ancient statues placed in his palaces at St. James and Somerset House. Some were from the ruins of Apollo's Temple at Delos and there were some very rare brass statues placed at St. James. He praised their artistic beauty. Some critics of the time disagreed, however, and thought marble statuary had a place in Italy, but no place in English gardens. Some believed nature's beauty incomparable with man-made sculpture and disapproved of the mixture. My feelings are that your garden should reflect your individual personality so you should feel free to include whatever elements you wish in your own garden.

St. Fiacre belongs in my own garden because I can relate to him. He was born in Ireland in 1590. He became a monk and was sent to France to spread the Word of God. He chose to become a hermit and was given a secluded spot in the forest to build his oratory by the Bishop of Paris. He welcomed hunters and impressed them with his healing powers using herbs and flowers. When he needed a larger garden for this purpose, he approached the Bishop and made a deal with him. He was offered as much land as he could clear in a day's time with only his spade. St. Fiacre proceeded to set out boundaries with sticks that would satisfy his needs. The size he measured out was way beyond what was possible for one man to dig in a day. He then prayed fervently for help. Unbeknownst to him, there was an envious woman who was an herbalist who hid in the bushes and watched him. The next day his lot was all cleared. The woman in anger went to the bishop and accused Fiacre of magic. The bishop, however, upon seeing it, declared it a miracle and proclaimed Fiacre a saint. The bishop also called the woman a witch and declared Fiacre's oratory off limits to all women from that time on. Fiacre in his lifetime was credited with healing many and many miracles and cures were attributed to him. His shrine is still a place of pilgrimage.

Totally unrelated, he is also the patron saint of cab drivers in France. That came about when the first vehicles for hire in France happened to be located outside a hotel named St. Fiacre in France in the 17th century. In fact, French cabs are called fiacres.

I relate to him because he was Irish and went to France, which are the two nationalities of my heritage, and he was known for the vegetables he grew. His statues usually show him dressed in peasant attire, looking toward the ground, holding a spade and with a basket of vegetables by his side. Both France and Ireland celebrate his saint's day.

In this month of September we observed the first anniversary of what is certain to become an American, September, memorial tradition. If some of you found the viewing of the horror of September 11th on TV again disturbing or reading the vivid accounts of it depressing, perhaps you might want to start your own tradition. I suggest that to remember the day you take the positive approach. Since many of us plant bulbs and other things in the fall, why not dedicate what you plant as a living memorial in your own back yard. I suggest a rose bush known as the Peace rose that was so named since World War II. Emotional healing thrives in a garden.

Janet Guthrie