

## Musings of a Non-Gardener

From *Perennial Notes*, Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, January 2003

*Bob Behrens is the one brave spouse who is not a gardener but has gone on the England trips. He professes not to be a gardener, but sometimes many of us wonder about this. Ask you can see he is pretty observant.*

(While contemplating a double Sambucca the evening of June 22nd, Royal York Hotel.)

I think that the gardener's habit starts with curiosity and progressed to passion, then to compulsion and, finally, obsession. This may be a harmful sequence for smokers, but seems very healthy for the gardener physically and spiritually. I envy that.

The non-gardener loves a good lawn. He can buy seed without knowing Latin—full sun, partial shade and shade pretty much summarizes the necessary vocabulary. He can use chemicals with abandon and therefore never has to pull a weed. The lawn never changes from its beautiful velvet green color and one never, never replaces it with a grass grown from new seed.

Gardeners, on the other hand are quickly bored with lawns, see them as an unfinished pallet, an obstacle to grander expressions.

Non-gardeners work until cocktail time. Gardeners??? Well, you know.

Gardeners visit a garden and ask: "What is that?" Non-gardeners ask: "How many people help you with this? And, "What does your husband do?"

Spouses of gardeners seem to be understanding but not enthusiastic. They are frequently bullied into creating new spaces for, well, you know that, too.

And finally, gardeners are bonded by a common language that unintentionally excludes the non-gardeners. But while gardeners are taking time to add Latin identifiers to beautiful things, I wonder if they realize that those names can be used to identify gardeners?

*Some gardeners are getting old and can be:*

Argenteum (silvery)

Declinatus (bent downward)

Denticulata (slightly toothed)

Griseum (gray)

And close to Funebris (belong to the graveyard)

*On every trip some are early risers:*

Praecox (very early)

*On the other hand, some gardeners are not opposed to a long night of whatever:*

Noctifloris (night flowering)

*Many are younger:*

Barbatus (bearded)

Elegantissima (very elegant)

Fastigiata (upright)

Fragrans (fragrant)

Mollis (soft and tender)

*And when they come home:*

Pendula (trailing or hanging down)

Foetidum (foul smelling)

*But all gardeners are:*

Aestivalis (Summer flowering)

Jucundus (pleasant, agreeable)

Semperflorus (ever blooming)

*In our group, several are:*

Nobillis (notable, stately)

I can't imagine not counting gardeners among my friends, or living my life without one.