



Keep Calm and Garden On

by Lydia Holley

Gardening seems so easy. Plant a seed. Watch it grow. Or, purchase a plant, dig a hole and plop it in the dirt. What could go wrong?

If you have ever gardened, you understand that a lot goes wrong, and all gardeners make mistakes. Henderson County Master Gardeners recently reminisced about some of the mistakes they made as new gardeners. Here are a few of their stories:

When Sherry Bitz moved to East Texas, she didn't realize that a vegetable garden placed in the middle of a hay field would soon be overrun with coastal Bermuda grass. The next year, having conceded defeat, she built raised beds in a more appropriate area. She was surprised to see that heirloom tomatoes had reseeded in the abandoned grass-filled bed. She transplanted all that she could. That was another mistake, as she soon realized that it can be bad to have too much of a good thing. "We ate tomatoes for breakfast, lunch and dinner prepared any way I could imagine, gave them away, froze them until the freezer was full, bought a new chest freezer and filled it, traded tomatoes for blueberries at a nearby blueberry farm and finally, in desperation, loaded the van with tomatoes for friends and family up north and left", Sherry exclaimed.



Susan Stokes purchased a perfectly sized plant with beautiful flowers for her first garden. It looked gorgeous and complimented the other plantings wonderfully. Then one day she noticed that it was being eaten. The rest of her garden began to suffer. She decided to do a little research. Susan found that she had planted what was usually considered a weed as it had a reputation for attracting bad bugs. She pulled it out immediately and her garden quickly recovered.

Bob Erickson left his compost bins unattended when other obligations required him to be away. When he returned, he was surprised to find vines growing out of his compost. He reported that he "had over a dozen of the best looking and tasting acorn squash we have ever had. We also had five or six nice spaghetti squash." If only all mistakes had such a happy ending!

LaTrecia Jeffcott has one of the funniest, and one of the most painful, stories I've ever heard from a gardener. As a new gardener, she loved the look of ivy growing up a tree, just as her mother had in her garden. She asked and received permission to transplant some of this beautiful ivy as a start for her garden. She didn't realize her mistake until later in the day, when she began to itch. Then wheals began to form. Instead of the English ivy surrounding her mother's trees, LaTrecia had mistakenly transplanted poison ivy.

As a young adult, I once rented a small house which had a short strip of dirt in front of it. One Saturday morning I spent a few hours planting several packages of flower seeds. A friend commented that I would have to weed the bed. The next Saturday, I did just that. Then I waited for my beautiful flowers to emerge, which never happened. It took me years to realize that all those new little green sprouts were not weeds at all, but my newly emerging flowers. I had pulled them all up.

If gardening frustrates you occasionally, you are not alone. Gardeners make mistakes. These mistakes can be disappointing, infuriating, interesting, and even painful. Just stay calm and keep gardening on.

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