

## DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

**The point being**

BY SIOUX ROGERS

Gardening is a life long experiment or is it the other way around: life is a long garden. Well, who really cares? I just garden...because.

This last season was yet another experiment. Between my house and a small landscaped piece of grass is a very large historical water tower. Since the landscaping in that area was basically not edible, I made a unilateral decision to disassemble what I could not literally digest. While my new edible landscaping was not as fastidiously coiffed as it was previously, it was functionally very delicious.

I was experimenting with tomatoes. Some of them I planted in medium size sewer pipes (standing on end) directly on the concrete, some next to the large water tower and then some were planted, well like "normal," whatever that means.

Planting in sewer pipes was the easiest of all. Any sewer pipe, approximately 18" tall and with at least an 8" diameter will hold any size or type tomato. The importance of excellent soil in the pipe and a sunny location, even in the middle of your driveway is the essence of success.

FYI, it was one of these "sewer tomatoes" which would not stop growing. If I had been a little more permissive, one of the plants might have crawled in through the window and jumped into my salad. Think it was happy?

Despite the grandiose success of this small edible yard, my esthetic sense was quelled. Next year, the very t-a-l-l tomatoes will be grown espalier style. This means they will be trained to grow horizontally instead of vertically. Moral or bottom line is, rethink your "standard" garden. There are no rules for design. If it works and feels good to you, then it is good and right.

So what else did I do this fall? Well I had lots of "poopy" times (not supposed to say the "s" word). The events you are about to read are true as I speak and all happened while "lower management was gone."

One day I went either to let our chickens out or put them away, doesn't really matter. They were ALL out of their coop, meandering in the vegetable yard. Fortunately, at this time of year, little damage could be done. Better yet, they are "corn" trained to, "Here chick,

chick, chick." Well, if you call a successful roundup an hour later "trained," (I am not sure if that applies to the chicks or the chick), they were all successfully corralled back in the coop.

To round out that lovely day of exercise, I went out to my very large worm bin, AKA a double industrial sink with drain holes under each sink. This set up is perfect: household garbage in, chicken litter in, buckets fill with some kind of dark murky liquid (fertilizer) out and the big wonderful worms magically appear. I know you are all jealous with envy of this clever set up. However, you must make sure the bottom opening is open, or the sink does not drain and the brown "fertilizer" is on the inside sloshing around instead of draining into the buckets. So there I was, peering into the mucky SLUSH. Then, without any

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glove long enough to reach my shoulder, I plunged my arm in up to my elbow and down to unplug the drain hole and swoosh, the buckets filled. This brown stuff, a.k.a. worm tea, is really fantastic fertilizer.

The point of this story being—sometimes it takes a little maneuvering to get through the "s" word and know that all that smells and looks icky may not be.

Two more "s" stories highlighting the exceptionally good nature of our little four-legged family members.

First story: my niece, Chloe the cat, was close enough to my delicate nose when I smelled a serious "mistake" emanating from her hind quarters. I tried to rectify this error with a damp paper towel, but to no avail. Poor dear Chloe; I had to take drastic measures. I grabbed her very tightly by the scruff of her neck in my left hand while at the same time, with the same left hand, I had her tail pulled over her head up to her mouth. She could not even meow, let alone bite me. Then the "mistake" area was scrubbed down with rose petal soap. All this time, my niece, Chloe the cat, was

necessary, not everyone will be able to do so.

It makes sense for small pets such as dogs, cats and birds to be sheltered with their owners as it is less stressful for all involved. Therefore, we are working to establish evacuation centers that will accept people along with their pets. Local area schools and churches are being identified and agreements are being developed. Once these agreements are in place these shelters will become part of the plan.

For large animals, the challenges are obviously different. It has been recognized that planning has to be done on two levels – both the neighborhood and the valley as a whole. For large animals it is necessary to identify owners, types of animals, and means of transport. The committee feels this process should be initially done at the local neighborhood level. Once that is done the identification of destinations for evacuated animals can take place at the area level. We need to identify fields and barns that would be available and not threatened or affected by the disaster. The largest current locations for evacuation of large animals in Jackson and Josephine Counties are the Jackson and



Sioux Rogers—And the beet goes on.

either trying to eat me, scream at me or just trying to go with the flow and hum a cat tune. I am suspicious of the first option. When this fiasco was finished, she not only smelled like a springtime rose blossom, she actually came up to me, licked my face and started purring. How is that for forgiveness?

Story number two. Our dear two-and-a-half-year-old Border Collie, Barney McGee, was running around the driveway with a long stick stuck to his hindquarters. It was obviously bothering him and he could not seem to get it loose. "Upper Management" here, went over to help. O.M.G. I thought he was impaled and with a very mushy dingle berry attached. I could not remove the stick, lift him in to the bathtub or even get him into the house. This was serious and he thought he was naughty so would not stand up. It was burrrr, freezing cold outside. I ran inside and, right, got the bar of rose petal soap, I had to drag puppy and icy cold hose to approximately the same location. We were freezing. Fortunately, the large stick was not stuck up his you-know-what and I had my pruning shears in my pocket for a quick release of the stick. After several scrubs with rose petal soap and a vigorous dog shake-down, I had one more forgiving household member smelling like springtime.

Autumn was fantastic and most beautiful. Say "good night" to your garden, until next spring, hunker down with a good book, your four legged friends and give thanks to all the wonders we really do have.

*The longer I live the greater is my respect for manure in all its forms.*

*Elizabeth von Arnim*

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### The Applegate Valley Animal Disaster Preparedness Committee

## What's next?

The 2002 Bisquit Fire by now is a distant memory for those who lived in the Applegate Valley at the time, and only a name for the many who have moved here since.

While memories fade and new folks come to live in our beautiful valley, the threats of wildfire are unceasing. We know it's a matter of time before we're faced with wildfire again (or other disaster such as an earthquake or flood). By working together, we can better prepare ourselves and our community.

The Applegate Valley Animal Disaster Preparedness Committee has been meeting for the past year developing a plan for the evacuation and sheltering of animals both small and large during a disaster. While it is the responsibility of owners to make arrangements in advance for their animals as well as themselves in the event evacuation is

necessary, not everyone will be able to do so.

It makes sense for small pets such as dogs, cats and birds to be sheltered with their owners as it is less stressful for all involved. Therefore, we are working to establish evacuation centers that will accept people along with their pets. Local area schools and churches are being identified and agreements are being developed. Once these agreements are in place these shelters will become part of the plan.

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Josephine County Fairgrounds. We also have a possible site at Pacifica in Williams.

Our next step will be to organize workshops in about a half dozen locations around the Applegate Valley to discuss issues and gather information. These workshops will be held in conjunction with other organizations and will also address general wildfire safety issues. The workshops are being planned for early 2011.

The committee hopes more volunteers will come forward, whether they have facilities appropriate for a sheltering site, whether they are able to help evacuate animals, or would like to participate in developing the plan. Our goal is to complete an animal evacuation and sheltering plan for the Applegate Valley within the next six months – coincidentally, just in time for the next fire season!

For more information please contact

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