

## DIRTY FINGERNAILS AND ALL

## Putting all your eggs in one basket

BY SIOUX ROGERS

Putting all your eggs in one basket is generally advised against in the financial world or otherwise. Let's call this basket analogy "monoculture," and call storing eggs in different containers "polyculture." What is the concern?

Monoculture vs. polyculture is actually a no-brainer, but somehow, while the principles may be understood, the long-term consequences of polyculture are often elusive. Think of monoculture as having a continuous diet of hot dogs three meals a day. Okay, cook them every which way, but still you have a monodiet. Think you will eventually become ill, malnourished and unable to function? Well, yep, I would think so. So why are you eating just hot dogs? The rhetorical answers could be: (1) cheap; (2) easy; (3) convenient; (4) can always take medication if you get sick; (5) very short-sighted; (6) short-term cravings override long-term wisdom...or something like that; (7) probably missed a few.

So why do most big agribusinesses and many home gardeners practice a system that will have an eventual bad outcome? In the short run, check out (1) through (7) above.

While planting single crops is simple in that watering, fertilizing, and spraying for disease are no-brainers and the gardener can focus on a single crop, eventually a domino catastrophic effect will occur. In other words, the hot-dog diet may work for a while and may be simple, but eventually the fatal flaws will catch up.

If nothing else, planting the same crop, same species in the same space year after year would get rather boring. So maybe the plants actually die of boredom.

If all of this monoculture babble still appears ridiculous or elusive, read about the Irish potato famine of 1845 ([http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/agriculture\\_02](http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/article/agriculture_02)).

A healthy, well-balanced garden should have an abundant variety of crops. Variety, aside from being the spice of life, has a synergistic effect in all of nature. In

the garden, for example, peas put nitrogen back into the soil so a green leafy vegetable such as kale can grow tall and healthy if planted in the same soil after the peas are harvested. Another great practice is to plant a cover crop such as clover or legumes. Digging or plowing under the finished crop will then replace and



Several varieties of cucumbers grow in a raised bed with dill and volunteer gladiolas.

refurbish the soil's nitrogen. This is called "green manure."

I was taught to rotate crops by planting a root crop one year—such as beets, parsnips, carrots, potatoes—with an aboveground crop the next planting. Aboveground crops might be lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, kale, etc.

Now that you have read all my rantings about monoculture, you logically might ask, "What do I need to do to be a polyculture gardener?" Clue: This is not the same as Polident.

For starts, if you are really planting a large crop of any one food, plant different varieties, like several types of beets or corn.

Rotate crops, for goodness sake. That means you do not plant the same type of tomato in the same spot year after year. If you do, I bet you are using more and more pesticides every year and will eventually pay the piper's fee. The fee being that bugs will like your spray and you will need to switch to another flavor spray and then the bugs eventually will like that, too, and you will need to switch again. Sooner or later, you will not be able to control any disease that may attack your former favorite tomato.

Personally, my garden strategy has included multiple approaches. First, and most important, is to keep the soil healthy. I continuously add compost. Actually, since I am a very lazy gardener and, since you've probably already heard the gossip, I confess that I actually dig a pit in various garden beds and dump kitchen waste directly into raised beds. I also add the regular compost that I have made along with rotten leaves, chicken coop sweepings, you name it, I have added it.

Secondly, I am a profound believer in edible landscaping.

Outside my kitchen door, I often have Japanese eggplants interplanted with colorful petunias, and basil growing with my flowering lavender.

Acknowledge the wisdom of volunteer plants. I figure that if they are willing and able to volunteer, they must be good, strong survivors. Right now, I have a giant squash plant growing in the onion patch. Who would have thought onions and squash would be good teammates?

While I have always loved and practiced companion planting, I am, of late, more drawn to "trap" plants. For example, I have many volunteer orange calendulas. Several years ago I noticed that



Sioux Rogers—And the beet goes on.

about halfway through the growing season, say about mid-July, the calendulas started to be devoured by a small black beetle and I would pull all the calendulas out. What I finally (okay, so I am slow) realized is that calendulas seemed to be the black beetles favorite food and, therefore, the beetles did not dine on any of my vegetables. The calendulas now have permanent residence wherever they seasonally drop by. This is called a "trap" plant. Often having weeds around the perimeter of your garden serves the same purpose.

In conclusion, on the subject of mono/polyculture—well, what happens if you put all your eggs in one basket and then drop it? Splat, you have scrambled floor. Monoculture simply does not occur naturally in nature.

Dirty fingernails and all  
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**"But perhaps the most alarming ingredient in a Chicken McNugget is tertiary butylhydroquinone, or TBHQ, an antioxidant derived from petroleum... Ingesting five grams of TBHQ can kill."**  
— Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*

## Coins for Kitties

Friends of the Animal Shelter and Jackson County Umpqua Bank branches are again teaming up for Coins for Kitties, a spare change fundraising drive.

Throughout the month of September, Coins for Kitties offers a convenient and tax-deductible way to donate the contents of piggy banks, coin jars and heavy pockets to a great cause just by dropping by an Umpqua Bank location.

Coins for Kitties donations fund 2-Fur-1 adoptions of homeless cats and kittens. The 2-Fur-1 program enables qualified applicants to adopt two cats or kittens at the same time from the Jackson County Animal Shelter while paying only one \$70 adoption fee; Friends of the Animal Shelter pays the second \$70 adoption fee. Cats and kittens that have a playmate tend to be healthier, more socially well adjusted, less likely to have behavior problems from shyness to scratching furniture, more active and playful, and live longer, happier lives. All kittens and cats are neutered and spayed before adoption at no extra cost. So, 2-Fur-1 adoptions help alleviate overcrowding at the Shelter today, while reducing the number of homeless cats and kittens in the future.

Friends of the Animal Shelter and Umpqua Bank hope to raise \$1,000 for the 2-Fur-1 program in the month of September. FOTAS accepts donations anytime during the year, but Coins for Kitties containers are at Umpqua Bank during September only! Donating change is an easy way to help FOTAS find forever homes for the many needy kitties.

Umpqua Bank is accepting Coins for Kitties donations at all Jackson County branch locations.

Donors do not need to wrap or count their spare change. Umpqua Bank's coin counting machines will tally donations free of charge.

Your spare change can change kitties lives forever!

Contact Jeane Lind for additional information at 541-482-6272.



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