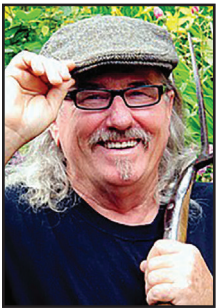


An old rubber tree named Big Jim

Big Jim, my old rubber tree, just turned 45, and still looks great because of a unique Doctor Who ability to start over when necessary. When the tropical tree, which wants to be big enough for the Swiss Family Robinson to live in, gets too large to fit in my cabin, I simply it back to leafless brown stumps. Looks shocking, but within weeks, out sprouts strong new stems with lustrous leaves. I've done this maybe ten times over the decades. That's not really harsh; we do it with overgrown azaleas, crape myrtles, roses, hollies, and other shrubs all the time, and they come back stronger than ever.



FELDER RUSHING

And this is a good time, actually getting close to the last call, to whack old shrubs back. This is especially true of spring blooming azaleas, blueberries, and the like, which need extra time to set flower buds for next spring. Be sure to come back after a few weeks to "tip prune" the new growth to make it bushy instead of long and leggy. No pruning past mid-August. But back to Big Jim. He and a couple others have survived under my care since the 1970s, which is more testament to their desire to survive than my gardening skills. Though it's possible to nurture and coax finicky plants like orchids, African violets, poinsettias, and the like to survive indoors, if neglected just once they can quickly decline and become fit only for the compost. Plants grown indoors need simple things: Warmth, decent light, pretty good potting soil, an occasional feeding, watering when needed, and - this is the real kicker for most - humidity. Plants can tolerate more of less of all those, with varying results, especially if kept in the bright light near south or west facing windows, or right in east windows; some with broad leaves will get leggy but can survive at least for a while, even near office lamps. And some don't need a lot of water, if they are in decent

soil, just an occasional soaking. And anyone who has ever neglected an old plant will agree that many can go years without fertilizer, though they don't perform all that well. But air-conditioning and central heating pull away the last straw for those plants that are native to tropical jungles or misty mountains and simply can't survive without humidity. And misting only helps for a few minutes, until it evaporates. What I do is cluster plants close together, sometimes pots-in-pots, which looks more natural but more importantly creates a humid micro-climate, and make sure the dry air from the AC and heater is diverted away from their foliage. But my real success is in choos-



Big Jim and a colorful Chinese evergreen.

ing plants that tolerate all those conditions, including low humidity. And there are more enough to satisfy most plant lovers. By the way, potted plants do not improve air quality appreciably, unless you live in a closed space station. Air conditioning, or just open windows or doors, negates the minor benefits. Really. But they do lift spirits of folks who are otherwise out of touch with Nature and need a greenery lift. My short list includes rubber tree, Sansevieria, dwarf Shefflera, Philodendron,

Dracaena, Pothos, Sedums, Chinese evergreen (Aglaonema), wax Hoya, Aloe, night blooming cereus, dumb cane (Dieffenbachia), begonias, and a newcomer simply called ZZ plant. There are others, of course, but I've grown these for many years and find them to be close to unkillable near a window, out of the heater draft. And all those can be rejuvenated every now and then with a hard whacking. Old Big Jim is my proof. *Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.*



***Healthy**
(Continued from page 1) throughout the state." The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation has a vision for a healthy Mississippi and provides targeted grants to fund initiatives and programs to improve the health of Mississippians. Visit www.healthiermississippi.org to learn more about the Healthy Hometown Awards Program, or to find additional information about the Foundation and any of the Foundation's programs.

- July 4** - Jeff and Dana Holmes, Cleveland and Diane Whiteside
- July 5** - Harold and Jackie Hammett, Edward and Causey Johnson
- July 6** - Johnny and Cindy Lunsford, Christopher and Kimberly Forrest, Brenden and Elizabeth Brunner
- July 7** - Danny and Ginny Hill
- July 9** - Barry and Paula Blackstock
- July 10** - Ryan and Bree Nolan

NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX LEVIES FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR FOR THE YAZOO MISSISSIPPI DELTA LEVEE DISTRICT

The Board of Levee Commissioners for the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District (the "Levee Board") will hold a public hearing on its proposed budget and proposed tax levies for fiscal year 2019-2020 on July 11, 2019 at 1:00 o'clock P.M., at 140 Delta Avenue, Clarksdale, Mississippi 38614.

The Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District is now operating with a projected total budget revenue of \$4,114,301.00, (52.26 percent or \$ 2,150,000.00) of such revenue is obtained through ad valorem taxes. For the next fiscal year the proposed budget has total projected revenue of \$3,807,851.00. Of that amount (59.38 percent) or \$2,261,000.00 is proposed to be financed through a total ad valorem tax levy.

The decision by the Levee Board to not increase the ad valorem tax millage rate for fiscal year 2019-20 above the current fiscal year's ad valorem tax millage rate means you will not pay more in ad valorem taxes assessed by the Levee Board on your home, automobile tag, utilities, business fixtures and equipment and rental real property, unless the assessed value of your property has increased for fiscal year 2019-20.

Any citizen of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District is invited to attend this public hearing on the proposed budget and tax levies for fiscal year 2019-20 and will be allowed to speak for a reasonable amount of time and offer tangible evidence before any vote is taken.

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