

Liberation found in garden irregularities

Don't know when or why, but somewhere along the line I stopped being an "even" numbers guy. Now I'm a happily odd guy, at least when it comes to symmetry in the garden.

Humans don't require total "even-Steven" balance to be happy; one of my favorite Pink Floyd tune, Money, is in 7/4 time - not exactly something to dance to, but quite tasty musically.

Sure, gardening implies at least a modicum of human control over the seeming chaos of nature. We affect it with tightly pruned hedges, edged lawns, identical plantings mirroring one another on either side of the porch, potted plants in matching containers or arranged by size. You get it.

I've seen it overdone in the intricate patterns of Versailles, and Colonial Williamsburg's simpler boxwood parterres. One of my own neighbors frets over his

struggles to keep a double row of sidewalk-hugging shrubs pruned exactly alike.

And let's not even get into different kinds of symmetry: Directional, reflective, visual weight (a single tall plant on one side of the porch, three smaller chunkier ones on the other), yin-yang, and eye-for-an-eye moral balances.

Yet most symmetry is thrown off with perspective, the instant we step to one side of dead center.

Truth is, in most gardens, repetition and balance can be a real yawn. The cloying urge for safe, secure symmetry can close some of those doors to imagination. People need opportunities to explore new ideas. And the easiest way forward is to deliberately do something off kilter.

It's totally uncomplicated. Well-dressed women wear eye-catching brooches, and Miss Kitty Russell, the doyenne of Dodge City, had



A single flower can tone down a heavy wall.

that perfectly-placed beauty mark on her cheek. And great garden designers, except when forced to work within a strictly formal setting, will place plants in odd numbers

or askew. One accent plant or sculpture, not two. Irregular groups of trees. Perfect circles and curves are interrupted, hedges are broken up with contrasts in shape, size,

and color or even materials. A solid fence is toned down with a wall hanging or small tree just one side of center.

It's a nod towards *koten engei*, which in Japan is the cultivation of deliberate imperfection. My top-award designer friend at the prestigious Philadelphia Flower Show always includes placing every one of his otherwise perfect lawn creations, and the judges refrain from taking away points because it is so obviously deliberate.

I know this rubs against mundane conventional wisdom of keeping things orderly. But as J.R. "Bob" Dobbs observed, "Are you abnormal? Then you are probably better than most people."

It isn't easy at first, because among the appeals of symmetry and its close cousins regularity, order, harmony, proportion, balance, and conformity, is the comfort we get from putting alluringly simple repetition into play. This naturally easy route of trying to fit in to be accepted reminds me

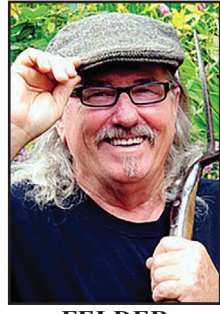
of one of my favorite demotivator clichés: When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate one another.

Sure, if you get too erratic your neighbors will do more than just whisper. But you can do something simple, like putting a flag by the porch, curve a walk and accent it with a sculpture, big rock, driftwood, or bench, put pots in irregular sizes and numbers, hang a mirror on a garden wall. It won't necessarily lead you hopelessly down the path of helter-skelter.

I'll close on another favorite quote, from avant-garde musician Frank Zappa: "Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible."

Coloring outside the garden lines a little can be liberating.

Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Gardener" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.



FELDER RUSHING

Businesses and Services Directory

Jim Arnold
Attorney at Law



- Chapter 13 Bankruptcy • No upfront fee except filing fee
- Chapter 7 Bankruptcy • \$750 plus filing fee
- No Fault Divorces • \$399 plus court fees

Call for an appointment 662-653-6448 or 601-656-6914

D's Diner
51 Depot St. Lexington
(662) 450-8131

Senior Citizen Discount Mon.-Wed.



Monday - Thursday
10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Friday - Saturday
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. (May Vary)



LEXINGTON HOME CENTER



662-834-9007

THIS SPOT COULD BE YOURS!



CALL THE HOLMES COUNTY HERALD TODAY TO SEE WHAT OUR ADVERTISING SPOTS CAN DO FOR YOU!

662-834-1151

Need help getting approved for Long Term Care?

Let us guide you through the application process.

Durant Healthcare, LLC

MON. - FRI. 9 A.M. TO 5 P.M. • 662-653-4106
15481 BOWLING GREEN ROAD • DURANT, MS



SCOTT PETROLEUM CORPORATION
www.scottpetroleuminc.com



309 Depot St.
Lexington, MS 39095

Office: 662-834-1089
Fax: 662-834-6082
Cell: 662-299-7461

kjoiner@scottpetroleuminc.com

KENNY JOINER
Division Manager

Visit us in Tchula, Lexington, Durant, Pickens and Canton.

Affordable
FUNERAL HOME OF DURANT



James and Veronica Smith, Owners

390 East Madison Street
Durant, Mississippi 39063
662-653-3770 / 662-653-3711 fax
www.affordablefuneralhomeofdurant.com

Close-out Prices on 2019 Models

FINANCING LOW AS

0%

UP TO 72 MONTHS ON SELECT MODELS

REBATES AVAILABLE!

CHECK OUT OUR PRE-OWNED VEHICLES @

www.hammettmotorco.com

HAMMETT MOTOR CO.



INTERSECTION OF HWY. 12 W & 51 N

662-653-3141
DURANT