

# Combating the fusion of three fevers

Gardening activity is being supercharged right now by three fevers working together to keep more of us close to home.

Pardon my deconstructionism, but both church-goers and pub crawlers alike understand that what's being euphemistically presented as "social distancing" and "sheltering in place" is actually a legally enforced quarantine. It makes important

sense, of course, and it's forcing a lot of us to get creative.

As an aside, I'm softening the chafing with a gentler term used by Polynesian Māori for a temporary prohibition placed over an area: Rahui. Rhymes with phooey, but still sounds better than the alternatives. But it's weird how, just as spring and cabin fevers are releasing a torrent of "get up and

go" juice, they are being thwarted by concerns over catching a virus fever which is keeping us cooped up. So, we're getting away from the electronic entertainment and the refrigerator by puttering in the garden.

As in other times of stress and concerns over food supply chains, a Victory Garden spirit is washing over people who haven't gardened in years, or never gave it a go. They are digging in the dirt, making small raised beds, and filling pots and hanging baskets with vegetables and herbs, giving them a little fertilizer, and watering and weeding to stay sane.

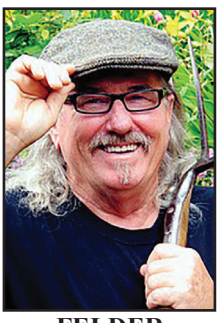
Luckily, Commissioner of Agriculture Andy Gipson has declared that garden centers can remain open as "essential services." I have been visiting and surveying wholesale growers and retail stores (keeping safe distance, of course) to see what's happening, and they are booming more than ever. By the way, I was reminded by a friend at a locally-owned garden center that his cash registers are programmed to not tax customers on stuff bought for growing food. Mississippians aren't required to pay sales tax on seeds or plants of vegetables, herbs, or fruits, or the fertilizer used to grow them.

That's just one of the little things that new gardeners should know about saving money in the garden. Another biggie is that you can rent a powerful tiller in top condition and wear it out once a year a whole lot more cheaply and with a lot less hassle than owning and storing one. Just saying.

For years now I have ended every single weekly radio program with the refrain of "take a kid to a garden center or a farmers' market, or just outside, to show 'em how to do what we do best - and that's get

dirty!" And I mean it - reasonable exposure to dirt has been pretty well nailed down by healthy microbiologists as a good way to boost our immune systems. And a garden is the best place to be exposed to the good stuff.

Nothing new to those of us raised right. Way before it was proven science, every time a new child was born into our family my parents would have a pile of topsoil delivered to their big Delta yard, and for several years it was that grandchild's personal pile to scatter with tools and toys. By the way, this was way before cell phones, the



FELDER RUSHING

Internet, and Netflix, when a stick was enough to stimulate a kid's imagination. The yard looked like a giant fire ant colony but as the children grew up, what started out as personal playgrounds (and inoculation to boost young immune systems) ended as a lesson in responsibility as they helped Granddad spread their piles into low areas and tree stump holes.

So let's relearn to get out a bit more, play in the dirt, plant some stuff. Water, weed, and wave to the neighbors.

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



Playing in the dirt - good for sanity and immunity.

## International spotlight brings donations and offers of assistance

### Press Release

Touching, heart-felt emails addressed to the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. James L. Henderson are coming to the Holmes County Consolidated School District following an article published April 6 by *The Guardian* [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/06/in-the-poorest-county-in-america-poorest-state-a-virus-hits-home-hunger-is-rampant>] highlighting the food insecurity of many Mississippi families.

The story profiled the efforts of the HCCSD to sustain students and their families by delivering breakfast and lunch meals to 3000 residents each day. This unprecedented outpouring of

support has left many in the school district and county speechless, particularly since some of the donors indicate that they, themselves, are on limited incomes or dependent on disability payments. They express the need to do something and want to help others in need.

"As a retired school nurse who worked with children in rural poverty in northern California, I know only too well how important school meals are for some children in the best of times. Given the COVID-19 crisis and impact on families already on the edge of calamity, I want to send my heartfelt thanks for what you are doing."

Some messages included questions about crowdfund-

ing efforts and writers said they were sharing a link to the article to encourage others to give.

"My heart is heavy in that the richest country in the world cannot provide nutritional food to all children of this country," wrote a Minneapolis donor who indicated he had already mailed a check.

A person in Seattle wrote, "We are expecting to receive a stimulus check and I would like to donate some to your district."

A former teacher wrote, "I get about \$800/mo. from SSI but can afford to send \$100 to someone who needs it more than I do. I have enough food every day. I am outraged and devastated by the fact that some people [you know] don't."

### PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The City of Durant is considering applying for rehabilitation funds from the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC) HOME Investment Partnerships Program- Homeowner Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Program. The State of Mississippi has allocated approximately \$3 million that will be made available to cities, and counties, on a competitive basis to undertake homeowner rehabilitation /reconstruction activities.

The activities for which these funds may be used are in the areas of affordable housing for low and very-low-income persons. The City of Durant proposes to apply for grant funds through the (MHC) HOME Rehabilitation Grant Program. More specific details regarding eligible activities, program requirements, and the rating system will be provided at a public hearing which will be held at the City of Durant City Hall located at 253 West Mulberry Street, Durant, Mississippi on Wednesday May 6, 2020 at 4:30 p.m.

The purpose of this hearing will be to obtain citizen input into the development of the application. The location for the hearing is a handicapped accessible facility. All comments are welcome and must be submitted in writing. If a translator is needed for non-english speaking persons, please contact John Wiggers at (662)283-2675 at least 5 days prior to the meeting in an effort to accommodate this request

The City of Durant does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to or treatment or employment in its programs or activities.

Dr. Henderson, in consultation with the board of education, has decided to use the donated funds to provide weekend lunches and dinners for some of the hardest hit families—those laid off from work or who have parents who have tested positive for COVID-19—and others in great need identified by school personnel.

Dr. Henderson responded to donors with a written statement of gratitude which says that the donations instill hope because they remind him "there are still people who want to help the underserved and who care about the children... (of) Holmes County, Mississippi!"

Anyone wishing to contribute to help students and their families in Holmes County is urged to make a donation payable to:

HCCSD  
Feed the Children Grant  
Attn: Ernest Clark, CFO  
313 Olive St.  
Lexington, MS 39095

Donors will receive a letter acknowledging their gift and letting them know how their support was used to aid the children of Holmes County.

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