

Situational ethics of plant liberations

Ever pocket a handful of seeds on the sly, without express permission?

Going down a slippery slope this week, by admitting that I believe there are right and wrong justifications, and methods, for liberating plants from other gardeners. Hear me out.

Not talking about outright stealing. Using sleight of hand to snag seeds from a botanic garden display, surreptitiously digging wildflowers from roadsides, or blatantly snatching potted plants from front porches are illegal, period. Just last year a nefarious visitor to last year's state fair flower show filched a big chunk off one of my prize-winning but rare potted plants. That was just plain stealing, and I hope Santa was watching.

Most of the time those plants can be gotten from legal sources, or sometimes just for the asking, making this behavior, well, despicable. And too many times the stolen plants die, leaving a little hole in the fabric of the universe.

But I'm confessing here that I once deliberately nicked a plant for the greater good, by appropriating a small cutting from a branch brought to my family's garden center to propagate.

It was the antique green rose, *Rosa viridiflora*, a stur-

dy small utterly disease-free shrub that flowers profusely from spring to late fall with kinda small blossoms once described as "engaging monstrosities." The many narrow petals on each flower are rich green that later fade to coppery splashes; to me they look like green zinnias with spider mite damage. In addition to being real curiosities, the conversation-starters hold up well as fillers in flower bouquets.

Anyway, a customer had brought several branchy stems to me to root for her, which is super easy to do from small cuttings taken in late fall or winter. In late fall I put fresh cuttings in plastic bags in the 'fridge until I can work up some good flowerbed dirt, then after making fresh cuts on the bottoms I shove them between pansies. By mid-spring they're well-rooted.

But the lady miffed me with a stern warning that, because the rose was "a very rare family heirloom," if I kept even a single cutting for myself she would sue my garden center for all it's worth.

Balderdash. Not that I want to demean the woman's integrity, but this antique rose isn't proprietary; it has been shared countless thousand times since being discovered in Japan nearly two hundred years ago; you can easily get

it today through many mail-order rose nurseries. So, before delivering a dozen or so rooted cuttings to the shrub's owner several months later, I of course embezzled one for myself. I went on to share cuttings from that one to I don't know how many gardeners over the years; who knows, the one now growing by my old bottle tree may have come roundabout from a cutting I fenced with horticulturist and nursery friends so long ago.

Call it situational ethics, but I justified this behavior as an opportunity to set free a selfish guardian's prisoner. My



Purloined green rose - an engaging monstrosity.

taking it did no harm to the plant or diminish the original stock; in fact, it made the original plant bushier with more flowers later. And I shared the liberated creature far and wide.

Besides, the plant-hoarding lady has now passed on, which is sorta like an expired statute of limitations. Only you and I know about this now.

Still, I want to make atonement by planting green roses this fall in the historic Greenwood Cemetery, one block north of our state capitol in Jackson. You are welcome to come take all the cuttings you want. Please share my

guilt with others.

Felder Rushing is a Mississippi author, columnist, and host of the "Gestalt Garden-

er" on MPB Think Radio. Email gardening questions to rushingfelder@yahoo.com.

Willie James Young, a native of Tchula, passed recently. When he passed he was living in Natchez, Mississippi. He was the brother of Napoleon Young (deceased) who lived in Tchula. Keep the Young family uplifted with prayer.

Mr. Tommy, one of the Scott gas company drivers, passed recently. Keep Mr. Tommy's family uplifted in prayer. Mr. Tommy drove around delivering gas for many years. I don't think anybody had any complaints about Mr. Tommy delivering gas. I imagine most gas customers thought he was an A-1 driver. He will be truly missed.

Bernice Mayfield Brown passed recently. She was funeralized Saturday, September 12. Keep the Mayfield and Brown families uplifted in prayer.

Folks appreciate Supervisor Hampton for the food box give away on Saturday, September 12.

Praise the Lord the highway department is paving Highway 17 north. Good-bye pot holes.

Vera Harmon has a sick

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BY LEONA (LENA) FIELDS

brother that she takes care of. His son was in an accident a while back. As a result of the accident he passed and was funeralized Saturday, September 19. So keep the Harmon and Harmon families uplifted in prayer.

To the people that want to do what is right; when it comes to the church, you still owe God your tithes and offerings. Holmes County has a lot to be thankful for. Plenty food boxes were given and still being given away. Even masks and sanitizer were given away. But Holmes County isn't thankful enough because a lot of the citizens will not wear a mask, even though they are mandated by the governor.

Watch the news; If I'm not mistaken, September 26 is National Day of Prayer. Let us get in on the praying. According to the Bible "the prayer of the righteous availeth much." Let's treat this National Day of Prayer as if it is an international day of prayer. Let it be like the day of Pentecost. On that day everyone present heard the speaker, Apostle Peter, in their own language.

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