

Fragrant flowers both sweet and rotten are welcome

It's been said that one person's sweet perfume is another's stink. Well, whether a smell is good or bad, it's welcome in my garden. To a point.

A big advantage of gardening in the South is how our hot, humid climate causes fragrances wafting from freshly-mowed grass and hot-off-the-vine tomatoes to hang in mid-air, where we can savor them better and for longer than our cool-climate friends.

However, not all odors are always pleasant. Some dear neighbors don't appreciate my backyard fire's smoke, and there are some pretty but pongy flowers tucked among the roses. After all, there are reasons why some plants have fragrantissima in their Latin names, while others are foetidissima.

The other evening I snipped a stem of paper-white Narcissus and vased

it up for my cabin; however, in the cooped-up warmth of indoors, its perfume quickly became almost overpowering. And some say the hardy winter flowers smell of cat urine.

Luckily for me, its heady fragrance transports me to my childhood days in a big garden of midwinter daffodils, including extra-sweet jonquils with their thin, quill-like foliage and tiny fragrant yellow flowers.

Most gardeners can wax poetic about delightful garden smells that conjure pleasant times outdoors. On the other hand, some are flat-out repelling. The intense paperwhites, for example, were certainly better than some of my cabin's other smells, including onion peelings left overnight on the cutting board, and a peculiar dusty smell seeping from beneath my sunroom.

That last one, though sub-

The President's List includes students completing a minimum of 12 academic hours with a 3.75 or better average in a four-point system.

Randi Simmons of Cruger is among the list of distinguished Northwest Mississippi Community College students to be recognized for earning a place on the Vice President's List for their outstanding academic work during the Fall 2020 semester.

The Vice President's List includes students completing a minimum of 12 academic hours with a 3.50 to 3.74 average in a four point system.

'Zombie law' cited in court fight over Mississippi marijuana

Attorneys trying to block a Mississippi medical marijuana program say the state is using a "zombie law" about old congressional districts to defend how an initiative landed on the ballot.

Voters in November approved Initiative 65, which requires the state Health Department to establish a medical marijuana program by the middle of this year.

A lawsuit by Madison Mayor Mary Hawkins Butler seeks to block the program, arguing that Mississippi's initiative process is outdated because the state constitution says petitioners must gather an equal number of signatures from five congressional districts.

Mississippi dropped from five congressional districts to four after the 2000 Census. Butler argues that this creates a mathematical impossibility: With four districts, more than one-fifth of the

signatures must come from each.

In papers filed Dec. 28, state attorneys argued that Mississippi has two sets of congressional districts — one set used for congressional elections and one set used for other purposes.

Federal judges drew four congressional districts when legislators failed to agree on a redistricting plan after the 2000 Census. Although the state has been using the federal order for congressional elections, legislators did not clean up state laws to remove descriptions of the five old districts.

Attorneys representing Secretary of State Michael Watson argued Dec. 28 that the five old districts "may be used for anything but congressional elections," including for gathering signatures for initiatives.

Butler's attorneys ridiculed that argument in papers filed Thursday. They said the law



Carrion cactus reeks of old meat.

tle, is familiar to even non-gardeners. You and I recognize it immediately when digging in dirt or turning compost, but nearly everyone picks it up right before an approaching summer rain as the low atmospheric pressure degasses the soil. This smell, called petrichor, is an aromatic byproduct of beneficial bacteria, and is also present in mushrooms, earthworms, catfish, and warm lake water.

And it's in the bare dirt beneath my cabin as well, as I discovered when, what with my garden being a most-everyone-is-welcome wildlife refuge, a raccoon recently decided to take residence under my cabin. Her digging around while enlarging the den stirred up long-buried

describing the five old congressional districts is dead. They note that the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has referred to any law that remains on the books but is unenforceable as a "zombie law."

"The Secretary of State's argument depends on this zombie law's reanimation," Butler's attorneys wrote about the five old districts.

Butler opposed Initiative 65 because it limits cities' ability to regulate the location of medical marijuana businesses.

The Health Department, the Mississippi Municipal League and some others have filed briefs supporting Butler's lawsuit. The Health Department argued that Initiative 65 seeks to transform the department "into something it is not," even as the department is stretched because of the coronavirus pandemic.

petrichor which rose through the floor and made my place start smelling like an Old West livery stable.

I safely trapped the animal and rehomed her to a protected cavity beneath my tool shed (move over, 'possums), but it took several days of frying bacon and burning incense, and finally a bouquet of paperwhites, to get rid of the earthy smell.

Anyway, as I get older and naturally afflicted with a creeping hyposmia that's causing me to gradually lose some sense of smell, I more appreciate strong garden fragrances, especially those that conjure my horticultural great-grandmother's banana shrub, ginger lilies, four o'clocks, and over-ripe figs.

My now-garden fragrances are more than the expected magnolia, gardenia, star jasmine, and antique roses; just brushing through sprawling lantana, oregano, mint, and rosemary, all planted beside walks, releases eau de jardin.

But while to most folks crushed marigold and lantana leaves are merely sharp to the nose, to me Spirea and Pyracantha flowers reek of dirty socks. Bradford pears smell fishy, and ginkgo fruits make you look at the bot-

MDE recommends waiver of passing requirements for 3rd Grade Reading, End-of-Course Assessments for 2020-21

Press Release
Dr. Carey Wright, state superintendent of education, recommended waiving the passing requirements for statewide 3rd grade reading and high school end-of-course assessments for the 2020-21 school year.

The recommendation was included in a presentation today to the Mississippi Senate Education Committee.

"I think this year is a year of grace," Wright said. "I understand that COVID-19 has disrupted teaching and learning this school year, and we want to make sure we support teachers, administrators and students as much as possible."

Statewide assessments will take place as scheduled this year to measure statewide student progress, assess the impact of COVID-19 disruptions on learning and meet U.S. Department of Education requirements.

"Statewide assessments provide critical data to the department to identify any learning gaps and what resources the state needs to accelerate learning opportunities for students and pro-

toms of your shoes for dog leavings. I grow a carrion cactus and hardy voodoo lily, and have occasional stinkhorn mushrooms pop up in my mulch, all reeking of rotting meat.

Other less-savory olfactory garden aromatia include lily pond gunk, overwatered potting soil, sulfury garden hose water, and string trimmer exhaust. But like 'em or not, in their ways of being authentic parts of the process of gardening, they all bring familiar comfort.

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

fessional development for teachers," Wright said.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is working with technical advisers to examine ways to meet requirements of federal law to address accountability concerns. MDE recommends all districts and schools retain their letter grade from the 2018-19 school year for the 2020-21 school year.

All recommendations in assessment and accountability are subject to policy decisions from the incoming presidential administration.

Mississippi lawmakers requested information from MDE on the impact of the pandemic on public education and how the MDE is addressing student needs.

Wright said MDE will continue to help districts plan afterschool, enrichment and summer learning opportunities. Literacy-Based Promotion Act funds could fund summer reading camps, afterschool programs and reading enrichment programs. These funds are available because of reduced face-to-face training and travel costs due to COVID-19. Districts are expected to use federal funds to support literacy and learning efforts as well.



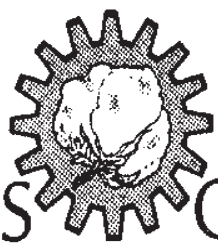

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We will be closed Monday, January 18 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



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