

Got Clutter??

Got clutter? Maybe from making myself stay so busy while cooped up in it for over a year, but my garden is starting to get to me.

Old-timers remember Fibber McGee closet, perhaps the best-known running sound gag in American radio's classic period. Every time someone opened McGee's hall closet, a cacophony of clutter came clattering down. "I gotta get that

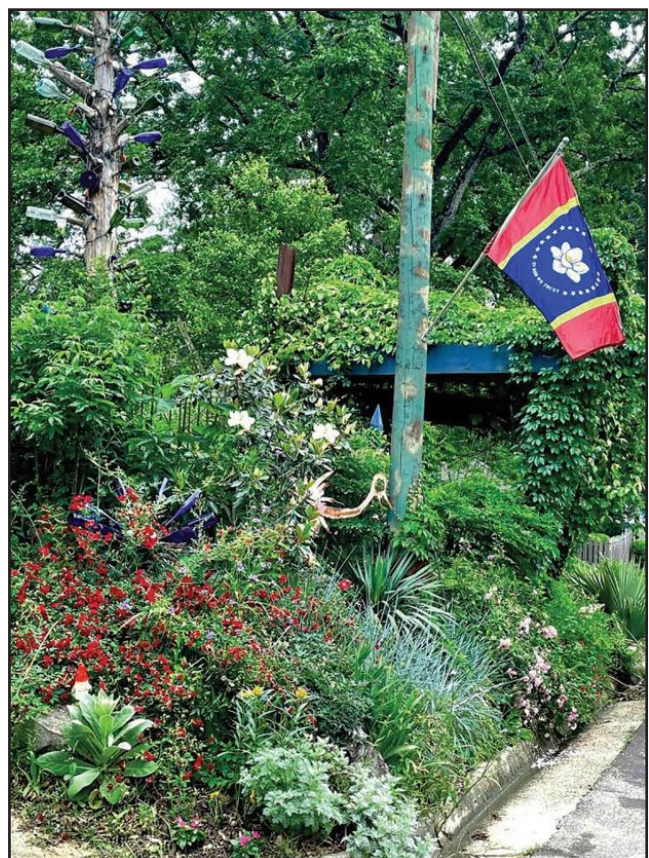
slowly, after over four decades of dragging plants and objets trouv   (the "found objects" I call yard art) home, my once-neat cottage garden has devolved

into a yard art-loving horticultural hoarder's catchall. What started out as wall-to-wall lawn with a green moustache of shrubs hugging the house foundation has become a jumbled gallimaufry so cluttered and complex that my mother once described it as looking like "a kaleidoscope having a stroke."

It's okay for now, of course, because I am a bona fide maverick gardener who loves every plant I see, and imagine art potential in everything someone else has discarded. And though visitors have to squint to disentangle the sweet vignettes amongst the disorder, I cherish it all.

And now I realize that But lately, in a big if some-

what macabre admission of my getting older and stiffer, and pondering the future, I realize that someday someone is going to have to sort



FELDER'S OVER-CLUTTERED FRONT YARD

through the garden accumulations I leave behind. Like clearing out Granny's attic, my beloved home grounds may become a sad, frustrat-

ing chore.

So rather than leave unsavory decisions to my perplexed children, I'm taking a proactive approach which I hope will improve my life for many years to come: I'm getting professional help.

In an unusual approach towards what we are calling "creative deconstruction," my longtime friend Rick Griffin, whose highly successful career as a creative landscape architect has seen many a blank slate become a beautiful, useful tapestry, has somewhat reluctantly agreed to help me dial it back a bit. He was the one who first conjured the round decks and other people spaces, curved the walks, and added privacy screens and other "hard" features that made my garden a series of functional spaces.

Now, instead of turning a bare lawn into beautiful, interesting garden rooms, we are dismantling some of the small, distinct but visually-muddled areas, carving out larger more restful spaces with less maintenance.

The hardest part? Truthfully, I don't need all these broken shovels, buckets

of paint, empty pots, dozen glass bottle trees, and countless precious plants. How many daffodils, herbs, wildflowers, roses and other antique shrubs, and mismatched containers do I really enjoy tending myself, seeing as how I can savor them (often in better condition) all around town and in the many botanic gardens I visit every year? Do I have to possess them all, or can I delight vicariously?

I'm not planning to go anywhere soon, but I'm finding myself surfeited, with less fire consuming me to do more, more, more. I'll keep enough to keep me challenged and happy. But this fall I will probably have a real yard sale in which I pass the largesse along to others, with the caveat that I can come visit if I miss them too much.

It's just time I get a grip on my garden desires before they bury me and my heirs.

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