

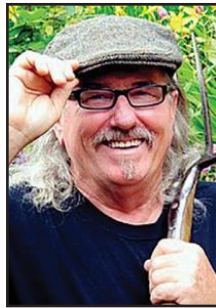
Coloring Outside the Lines

Hard core gardeners often color outside the lines, don't always fit in neatly. It may help with neighborly relations to literally spell out what we are attempting, make intentions more obvious.

I was reminded of this while helping a friend prepare his rogue garden for a revisit from his city's code inspector. In spite of the masses of

names for doing my job."

As I worked with the homeowner to resolve these mandates (and getting loads of free plants in return), I remembered an official looking sign I saw decades ago in a McComb garden, that proclaimed the landscape "Area Yard of the Season." Curious, having never heard of such an organization, I stopped to inquire.



FELDER RUSHING

flowering plants, including a few rare ones, nearly all smothered in butterflies and hummingbirds, the place was more than a bit untidy.

And, of course, someone had complained that his garden was an eyesore, and the inspector, following his guidelines, made a few, um, recommendations, which basically meant "do these things or you will be fined."

Some parts of his letter made sense. "Pick up the scattered black plastic pots and empty potting soil bags littering the front yard. Pull the plants spilling over the curb back a bit. Remove the shrub blocking the stop sign. Mow the lawn a bit more often. Stop piling mulch on the driveway so it won't keep washing into the gutter. Stop calling me

The gardener, who I found out later was a retired florist with a horticulture degree from MSU, answered a bit abruptly but with a laugh. "Made it myself. Too many garden club ladies wanted me to do things their way."

It's sorta like my filling out the online form and purchasing an official Urban Wildlife Habitat sign from the National Wildlife Federation (details at NWF.org), which I installed right by the curb of my garden to let folks know I am growing those pollinator- and songbird-friendly wildflowers on purpose. Not just letting a bunch of weeds grow willy-nilly. I also created a better habitat by putting up a few colorful bird houses, a generous size birtbath and water source, bird feeding sta-



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tions, and some driftwood accents, which also serve as social cues for neighbors.

Yeah, some times parts of the garden look raggedy, especially with the spikey caterpillars of our beautiful Gulf Fritillary butterfly skeletonizing my passion flower vine, and in the winter how I deliberately leave faded coneflower, zinnia, native sunflower, and other flower stems intact to pro-

vide seeds for little winter migrant songbirds.

I once helped a friend with a naturalistic garden style whose large compost leaf pile in his side yard wasn't neatly contained. I had him stick out a large, neatly lettered Worms At Work sign which interprets the unruly leaf pile for those who live by guidelines. Like have a "Butterfly Crossing" sign in a meadow lawn.

So, once we unruffle the

features of both my beleaguered cottage garden friend and the city inspector, neaten up the front yard potting area, and move a few plants away from the city's right of way, I think it'll be appropriate to put up a sign for the neighbors whose personal preference ends at the street.

Rather than poking everyone in the eye with a simple statement such as "Garden Is Up To Code" I have given him a garden medallion proclaiming the resident to be a

DIGr - a Determined Independent Gardener.

Won't prevent him from trashing it out again, but for now it conveys good intentions, reminds the gardener to respect neighborly relations, and hopefully also allays the inspector's concerns.

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

MSU summer 2022 graduation list

Mississippi State University has released the Graduation List for the 2022 summer term.

Honor graduates include all bachelor-degree candidates with exceptional scholastic averages and at least half the total required course hours earned at MSU. Their specific levels of recognition and the minimum required averages for each, based on a 4.0 scale, include: summa cum laude, 3.80; magna cum laude, 3.60; and cum laude, 3.40.

The academic honors

are recorded on the graduates' diplomas and permanent records, as well as in the commencement program.

Graduates from Holmes County include:

Reather L. Anderson, Tchula, MS, College of Education, MSIT;
Taylor M. Pitchford, Lexington, MS, College of Education, MAT;
Cody Ryan Weeks, West, MS, College of Education, BS

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