

Gardens reflect and recharge us

By Ginny Gregory

I have just come in from a smothering hot steamy day. It was the usual end of the summer job. Weeding, cutting back shrubs that were entangling the house and adding a bit of late summer color. My clients' husband died in 2002 and she is just now feeling like looking at how to really tend to her outdoor room. She said, "I just feel so sad when I drive up. It looks like no one really loves this place. I want to have company over and feel excited about my yard again." Music to my ears.

I decided that we would do what I call some Hollywood Color. It will last until the end of October. Company can come and go and enjoy the new look. This will buy us time to really think about each area, how it will be used, if it is still important. Do path

ways need attention? Has anything every been fertilized? This is a huge, grand old garden that needs some real TLC.

She is very wedded to the same comfortable plants and shrubs she and her husband shared. She has boxwoods at the front of her house that were in her grandfather's garden. They are huge and lumpy in a way that only English Boxwoods can pull off. So what I know is at some point there really was a heart and soul in this garden. Now we are going to peel back the layers and see how we can make this garden more reflective of the person that my client really is at this stage in her life.

Trees grow and shade areas in new ways over time. Rose gardens become more complication than pleasure. Travel, visiting and having small parties begins to become a part of the next life chapter. Our gardens must reflect who we are now.

I was just in Massachusetts for 10 days helping my daughter move to a different house. After three aggressive years of cuts she became a lay off statistic. This is huge for her in that she went to the school who has now laid her off after nine years of employment.

In packing up, she called to ask if she could transplant her peonies. Of course I replied ... do it right before I come up to help you unpack. These



peonies are a collection I have been giving her each Mother's day for 5 years. Peonies are a family tradition that has a long history in my family. The first thing I did when I arrived was establishing a new bed for the peonies and get them snuggled in with good compost and plenty of water. This is not the best time to relocate peonies, but they will be fine.

The last thing I did was replant five plants she has been collecting over the years and fill wrought iron hanging basket.

As I was mulching in the new areas and watering them one last time with my wild monkey almost-three-

year-old grandson I thought ... my life begins with beauty and ends with beauty. I would starve to death with out it. I did this planting hoping that as my daughter waters these plants with her son she will be warmed by the act of nurturing and will feel hopeful about the next life chapter of her book.

Like many folks she feels the rug has been pulled from beneath her feet. A job she interviewed for did not come through. She called very sad and scared. She has misplaced her brilliantly talented self. I listened and then said ... go outside with your wonderful son. Play in the water, water the peonies ... make this a day filled with just your love for your son. Enjoy him! Breathe. Know that each day the sun will come up and a new page will unfold. Your surroundings will heal you. You have a new place to explore.

My garden was knee high with neglect when I returned. The guys and I gave it a hard hit the first day and now I can look with great joy as my hummers flutter and my butterflies flutter. I have a third round of babies in my blue bird house. My daughter is in a new stage in her life. Many of my clients are in new stages in their lives. I know that nature can be our stepping stones into that new phase. We are constantly re-defining and refining our gardens as well as our lives. Day by day, plant by plant we are creating a better world for ourselves. Our gardens must reflect who are.

Ginny Gregory is owner and creative energy behind "Beyond the Pail... Creating Gardens and Beyond." She is starting "Beyond The Crate... Finding Simplicity Out of Chaos," an organizing, de-cluttering, down sizing business. For more information, please check www.beyondthepail.net

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