



## Summer's warm reality

By Ginny Gregory

The spring of my youth has passed us by and the summer of now is here and sweltering. The wickedly hot days surround us with a thorny reminder of the summer past. How do you know what to expect from plants when the environment is changing as fast as we breathe? My historical gardening experience is often a useless measure. Each moment is a unique experience.

I believe that it is my expectations that have colored my view into my garden.

In my life I have had extremely high expectations of myself. I have always felt that I needed to work harder, plant the best varieties, have the perfect color/ texture blends and do more than three humans ever could manage.

Weeds need not show up in my work. Plants better grow only in the height range stated on the tag. New installations need only grow and be fabulous.

The mulch in my gardens should be the proper variety for the situation.

Water should know not to leave gullies after a hard rain. Get the picture?

I have been struggling to learn what nature has to teach. I grew up in an alcoholic family so I will learn my lessons over and over and over, but I will never stop trying. Nature has no expectations of me except that I listen, learn and be respectful. Her timetable is pretty flexible. I have found that the color scheme and texture blends that she has up her sleeve is the absolutely, most unexpected perfect ever seen. Newly installed plants either make it or limp along and die. If they do the latter then we just didn't know how to read the signs that nature gave us along the way. Fact: You win some and you

lose some. Fifty gallon losses are harder to swallow than cell pack death, but I am learning more with each design and garden I am involved with.

Weeds are simply job security. Some days I wish for less security!

A plant that lives in New Jersey and in North Carolina is going to have a different timeline in terms of height. This year when I did my first round of pruning I had clients call back to say I needed to return because I did not prune enough. Well, in North Carolina there can be three rounds of pruning because even too much heat and humidity causes the jolly green giant effect.

Planting the proper variety for plant height helps. But the real truth is that, you ain't in Kansas anymore! Even the dwarf, truly dwarf is going to be wild and wholly here.

Mulch ... it is an effective moisture retention and weed suppresser and each variety had problems. Just when you are hooked on the perfect mix (just like the perfect compost blends) ... they change it because this or that is not available any more. The color has to be the same all throughout the property. Even if it is 102 degrees and your supplier's tractor isn't working you just have to have his mix for it to match so you hand load it and wonder what this expectation of perfection is all about.

Nature is teaching me that when I can lower my expectations just a tiny bit I get to enjoy the humming bird on the salvia rather than see only the weed infested area it is living in. I get to see pure exuberance not the wild Polygonum taking over the terraced garden. When you don't deadhead your shrub roses you get a complete break from the blooming performance for about three weeks then it starts back up again...even if you don't deadhead every week.

Nature is teaching me that I am enough exactly the way I am, that she is enough exactly the way she is. I am learning that having breakfast outside every morning soaking up my garden first thing is healing, revitalizing and without expectation. I am drowsy enough not to be critiquing it and awake enough to hear and feel the beauty. We are surrounded by a vibrantly glorious world. Relax and release the details to other compulsive gardens that don't have time to smell the roses.

My grandson knows to pick the blooms, throw the rocks set between the flagstones and to fall into the rosemary ... because it feels good. No blood, no foul. Good lesson to learn.

Happy summer.

*Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond". For more information, please check [www.beyondthepail.net](http://www.beyondthepail.net)*