

Extracted from St John Vianney April 26, 2009 Bulletin

Our Lord has Risen by Carl E Beyer

Our Lord has risen. And symbolically so has the garden. The peas are the largest since they can be planted first. Anyone out there realizes how much work peas are. I know with the can opener it does not seem like that much work, but have you tried shucking peas lately? Makes you wonder; when it was first decided that the pods were not worth eating, and thus discarded? I think I am going to have to try the pea pods so I can find out if they taste bad. See a future bulletin for my feedback on that.

Next largest are the radishes. They have been planted in the corn bed since they are an early crop and then wooden. Is "wooden" the proper word to use? You would say so if you had ever tried to eat a radish after it has gone to bloom. So, they will be pulled and the corn planted. My corn crop in the past has been rather poor so I decided to get a little smarter this year. I found out that corn has to be planted in rows since they cross pollinate. Duh, I have been planting one long useless row in years past. So, here is to big sweet corn for the BBQ later this year.

The carrots are coming up. I planted four different kinds. One kind will only grow to thumb size and they will be ready early. Another kind will be sweet for eating. Then the two remaining are different sizes for canning. How many of you have been digging up your carrot crops from last year? Yes, the best place to preserve carrots is in the garden; to be dug up during the winter and early spring.

The beets are coming, but slowly. Fresh beets cooked up in that fattening butter are going to taste so good. Hopefully we will have enough beets so that we can pickle some. Most people throw away the beet greens, but they can be cooked up and are quite tasty also.

Garden beans have been planted. I forgot what I purchased and they say simply garden beans on the package. So, we will have to wait and see if we get green, yellow or purple beans. I just looked up garden beans on the internet and there are purple beans. The good news is that we will not have to shuck them. Nope, beans are snapped. So later in the year I can report on some bean snapping.

I feel bad and must confess; I cheated and bought some foot high cherry tomatoes. If no one else eats them that will be OK since my dogs love them. I planted these for easy access in the garden so that they will be visited early and often. Most years I let some wild tomatoes grow in the yard and the dogs choose the red ones. Who said dogs are colorblind? Actually, dogs are dichromatic (they see only two primary colors - blue and yellow). That would mean the dogs must be thinking they are eating blue tomatoes. Dogs are weird.

We dug up the onion patch that we have been ignoring for the past several years and planted a strawberry patch. There is nothing like strawberries fresh from the garden. We hope to have enough to make some homemade strawberry jam. Our last strawberry patch was within the dogs' reach so it seemed like we had very little production, but most likely we just had very happy dogs. Again, imagine the dogs eating those blue strawberries.

In past years we have been having a problem with tomato bugs so for our big tomatoes this year we are going to put them into one of those upside down planters. I figure this way the bugs will get too confused about which way is up and just give up. It should be interesting to find out how well these work. If it all goes as the commercial say, we will have a bountiful crop. But then again, I would be slim and fit if everything that was advertised worked.

Inside the house we have our pumpkins, melons, watermelons, cucumbers, squash and peppers started. We are just awaiting some consistent warm weather so we can get these transplanted outside. The good part about vine plants is the dogs tend to ignore them. I guess they are not blue enough for them. Although, if you break open a ripe watermelon, the dogs will dig right into those sweet blue innards.

Our nectarine, peach, plum, McIntosh apple, Granny Smith apple and cherry trees are in bloom so we dream of getting some bountiful fruit off them though we are not too hopeful. The birds tend to have a feast off them. You would think four dogs in a relatively small yard could tear themselves away from the blue tomatoes to chase those birds off. But then when you see the dogs watching the mice carry away their dog food and doing nothing, what else can you expect of them.

Our tulips are coming up this spring but are having a rough time. Some big footed dogs spent the early part of spring seeing how much they could trample them down. I ended up covering them with a fence for protection. Some of the braver tulips have survived and are showing off their blooms.

The periwinkle are displaying their purple flowers and letting me know they should be good ground covering this year. Go ahead and look up periwinkle on the internet to see this evergreen plant. This plant may be showing off my New York roots since periwinkle covers whole hillsides there.

I got a plant in the mail last fall and did not think much of it. I just threw it on the counter and watered it all winter. It took me until a week ago to look at the tag and see what it was and where I should plant it. It turned out to be a blueberry plant. The great part of being forgetful is that you can surprise yourself. So, I have a place picked out where I will plant this single blueberry plant in hopes that it will turn into a patch of blueberries.

Under our Pin Oak we planted some raspberry and blackberry plants. Again, single plants that we hope decide to start a family that turns into a patch. Of course, we have already forgotten which is which so we get to look forward to the berries and can become more knowledgeable about our backyard.

The roses are all looking good, including the Perkins' John Paul II rose. This rose blooms pure white. No blossoms yet, but they are getting bushier this year. We have red, yellow, white, orange, purple, pink, and candy cane colored roses. Most are along the wall between us and our neighbor. This not only beautifies our yard but keeps our large border collie from bouncing off that wall. The builder put up a four inch wide cinder block wall between the neighbor and us and the border collie can move the entire wall when he hits it.

Out front my son built a plant bed under one of our windows where we planted some miniature roses. This is their second year and we are looking forward to seeing what they can accomplish this year. It is shady out front so I am sure their growth will be slow.

The lilac bush planted in our patio is in its third year and growing fast this year. This bush have had it a little rough because when it drops its leafs, the dogs think it is a chew toy. They have chewed the tops off this tree over the past two winters but this year the bush may just push itself up high enough to protect its winter branches from the dogs. We are really hoping we get blooms this year for the sweet smell of lilac as we leave our back door to enter our yard.

Then, last but not least, is the Boston Ivy. In its third year, it is starting to climb the back wall. This is not easily done in New Mexico. When the sun hits that wall in high summer you could fry an egg on it. That is, if you could get an egg to stick to a wall. Boston Ivy is an ivy that is non-destructive to cinder block walls. It does not bloom, but has those waxy green leaves of ivy and turns a nice reddish orange color in the fall.

Oops, I forgot one last plant with which you should all be familiar with. I need your help finding its official name though. So, the next time you are at St. John Vianney; wander over to the high cactus and provide me the name. Yes, I got Father Mansfield's permission, and dug up some of the cacti before they were plowed under. It's on the side of the house we do not visit often because those babies have spines that mean business. It seems as though if you get just a little too close they throw their spines into you. I know the cactus is a Cholla, but what kind of Cholla cactus? I am looking forward to someone informing me of their proper name.

OK, this session of the flower and garden section is over. Go forth and take advantage of the spring to plant God's bountiful fruits, tasty vegetables and beautiful flowers. God Bless You all.