



You know how when you live with someone for a long time, you really don't *see* them anymore? As we age, this isn't necessarily a bad thing! But this can happen with your garden, too, and that

is
a

bad thing.

I had a house guest recently, my daughter-in-law, Sylvia, and when she came outside while I was working, she stayed awhile. This was unusual behavior, so I relished having the company. She began to point out little details and ask questions. Having my attention drawn to the way a Clematis wound its way through a potted wisteria tree brought me up short. I hadn't *really* noticed how charming it was for months, years probably.

Later, while working in the back of my property, it occurred to me that the only time I actually spent back there was to work. I never stayed just to enjoy being there. There is some wisdom behind the 'all work and no play' adage. Spending hours and hours working to take care of plants that I never stopped to notice or appreciate . . . How dumb is that?

One of my favorite gardening authors, the late Margot Rochester said, “If gardening becomes too tedious, it’s time to change either the garden or the gardener.” I’m going to try to do both.

I’ve already started. Every morning, I go to the koi pond to throw in fish pellets. Recently, I stayed and watched. It was a bit overcast, but a tree and some streaky clouds in the sky were reflected onto the mirror-like surface of the pond. The graceful koi looked like they were flying instead of swimming. How many times had I missed this beautiful moment? I was glad I had my camera handy.

Instead of making a quick trip around the back yard to clean up after my dogs (a necessary part of owning them), I’ll use this regular chore as an opportunity to stop and really look at what is going on in the garden. Sure, it’ll make me notice that I haven’t weeded for far too long, but I’ll also notice that the Abraham Darby roses I love so much are blooming with gusto. I’ll make mental notes of gardening chores that need doing, and maybe I’ll even remember to do some of them.

Instead of just noticing that the Johnny Jump-ups have again taken over the garden beds in spring, I will take the time to notice that these charming little flowers look like tiny faces, which would make me smile if I would just stop and really look.

I will take the time to inhale the sublime fragrance of the blossoms of the citrus trees which are dotted around the yard. There is always something with fragrance in the yard, even if it’s only breaking an Anise leaf in half or running your fingers over a rosemary plant. Fragrance in the garden is the best kind of aromatherapy.

Although I don’t do it often (fireants can lurk anywhere), I’ll walk barefoot across the lawn just to feel the tactile play of the grass on the soles of my feet.

I’ll look upwards, too, when I see a yellow trumpet shaped flower of a Carolina jessamine on the ground, and try to see how high up in the pine trees this determined vine will grow.

I'll relish the first days of warm weather when the dormant bulbs take their first tentative peeks above the soil and branches and twigs become plump with new growth.

I'll do my best to think twice before bringing still more plants into my garden to care for, but my road is already over-paved with good intentions. I don't have a single gardening friend who doesn't have at least one or two pots which have remained unplanted for far too long. They, too, have heavily paved roads.

It's a good thing that we don't set type for printing anymore; we would have run out of "I's" for this article. But it was good to be reminded why I started gardening in the first place and to never again let it become too tedious to enjoy. So thanks, Sylvia, for opening my eyes.