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## Midsummer Musings

*Ellen C. Wells*



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It's been hot. I sound like Captain Obvious by stating that fact, I know. It's been hot everywhere but I'm making this utterance more as a disclaimer, or perhaps as an excuse, than anything else. The combination of heat, the natural laziness that lives within the heart of July and the desire to be kayaking on the East Branch of the Westport River rather than, well, rather than doing pretty much anything else—all of it equals a brain whose typically sharp thoughts are instead staccato. That is all to say, my thoughts are like a tube ride down a slow and lazy river.

Much like a kitchen novice throws spaghetti against the wall to see if it's ready, I'll throw my own formless midsummer thoughts onto paper and see what we can make of them:

1. The diversity of garden centers in the U.S. is like the range of retailers in New York City: all sorts and styles of businesses meeting the needs of a melting pot. From the bodega on the corner to the cookie cutter Duane Reades to the Macy's flagship store. Are they all different? Oh, yes. Equal? Economically, no. But I'd argue that happy plant-buying customers are the same no matter the ZIP code. And they each serve a purpose, like the poke-around plant place or the "I need to buy 10 bags of garden soil" place. In other words, they all matter.
2. When does some other type of business become a garden center? I got to thinking about this because there is a smallish apple orchard not far from my new home. They aren't selling much in mid-July but I did notice they have a field full of potted garden mums in the works and what looks like potted corn plants, possibly to sell as dried cornstalks. Lots of today's family-owned garden centers started as roadside stands or produce markets, possibly even your own. And a bunch of you have tipped the scales back in that direction with the addition of produce and farm markets. It's yet another reason I think the term "garden center" is not 100% accurate for a good many of our businesses.
3. What's the "it" edible this year? I mean, edible gardening is as popular as ever, but I don't see one item being the craveable crop. Am I missing the memo on this? Since we're on the edible subject, my never-before-planted crops of the year are collards and corn. Vegetarian recipes are welcome.

4. For years I've been asked by friends to give gardening and landscaping advice. And I do it willingly! With abandon! Why is it that when given the blank slate of a new home I come up with nada? Or, is it that I come up with allota and I just can't make up my mind? It's nearly unbearable, this indecision about what should go where. I feel like if I omit some of my faves, I'll end up offending them, breaking their poor little plant hearts. Is this what you guys go through all the time?

5. I've been driving since I was 8 years old. Even with all that time behind the wheel I admit I did not see the autonomous driving car coming. Did you? I mean the need for self-driving cars— where'd that come from? I love being in control of where the multi-ton vehicle is going. And as a driver of a manual transmission I'm the complete opposite of autonomous! But not everyone is as good a driver as I am so sure, please do replace those inferior drivers with smart cars. Let's just hope they aren't programmed by Massachusetts drivers. Gosh, I hope I'm not around when flying cars get to be a thing.

Taken altogether, what do I think these musings mean? I think it all means that the heat wave can't break soon enough. **GP**