

In the garden with Shobha Vanchiswar



August 26, 2011

Who's the boss?

As I survey the garden this mid-August, the words rambunctious, rebellious, exuberant and boisterous come to mind. In spite of my benign negligence and the weather battering them with heat, humidity, torrential rain and bone-dry spells, the plants have valiantly carried on. Almost as though they've been determined to out-do the weather. Stubborn perseverance.

I ought to marvel at their resilience. Congratulate them for courage against adversity. Be in awe of such determination to survive. Instead, I'm annoyed at this wild, wayward behavior. I see jungle-like tendencies that must be nipped, quite literally, in the bud. This unkempt, disheveled appearance only serves to make me look bad. For all the care with which I lavish the garden most times of the year, I'm rewarded by hooliganism. That's gratitude for you.

There is serious weeding to be done. The weeds have very cleverly woven themselves into the perennials so it is hard for the eyes to pick them out with ease. And the perennials seem to be actively protecting the invaders. I'm certain there is a conspiracy going on. Well, I cannot allow that. Tackle the weeds I shall. And off with the heads of any plant that has supported the heretics. Traitors.

So much needs neatening. A major clean up is in order. The tools are ready and waiting. My plan of action is clear. Systematically and thoroughly I will work to root out what does not belong, rein in the rule breakers and curtail all excessive behavior. This is not a democracy. Anarchy will not be tolerated. Autocratic rule prevails. Ha! I just have to remind the garden who's boss.

Power feels good. I'm in charge. I'm strong and mighty. I take a nice, deep breath to energize my resolve. Wait, what's that intoxicating perfume? It must be the lilies that in their whiteness are glowing in the evening sun. Or perhaps the sweet autumn clematis with cascading blossoms so numerous and ebullient? I can detect the more subtle fragrance of the phlox as well. Their clove-like notes punctuate the air while the flowers stand in tall clusters adding brightness to beds now in shadow. The air, burgeoning with scent, stirs the roses gently and petals rain silently to carpet the path. Fireflies flit about as cicadas continue their chorus, making for a spontaneous sound and light show.

Perhaps I'll wait a while. Let's hear what the plants have to say for themselves. I am, after all, reasonable. Even benevolent. What's my hurry? There's still some more summer left. I should take advantage of these days. Work can wait a while longer. I don't have any need to prove myself to anybody, do I? I'm still in control. Right?