

Rabbit Redux

By Lyn Pearson

The first article I wrote for the Green Pages was about the interconnected web of life of which our local rabbits are a part. Well, it spring again and the rabbits are...well, springing. Although this is the first year our yard hasn't been a rabbit nursery there is still ample evidence of rabbit romance in the form baby and adolescent rabbits. They're everywhere. There are so many of them it's almost laughable. I'm reminded of one of the funniest Star Trek programs, "The Trouble with Tribbles." In this program, a small, very cute and cuddly alien life form was brought aboard the starship Enterprise. In short order, the tribbles decided they were in the perfect environment and began to reproduce with abandon. Soon, tribbles were falling out of bulkhead storage, all available drawers and closets, making their way into the engine room and bridge.

Casa Pearson is not unlike the overwhelmed Enterprise. There are bouncing bunnies everywhere. They're shameless and fearless. Today, I walked right up to a rabbit gnawing on our grass talking to it the entire time, explaining that I saw it and wanted it to leave the yard immediately. It didn't move! It stared at me and continued to gnaw. "Shoo," I said, along with a few other choice words. When I was perhaps 18" from it, it decided to amble off and eventually jumped to the top of our rock wall and disappeared. <sigh>

We've been busy planting, pruning, mulching and making lots of visits to our favorite local garden store. Haney, my husband, decided he'd like a few hollyhocks and I chose a few very pretty mallows, very old fashioned and nostalgic flowers. We planted them lovingly, adding some well composted mulch that we'd been nursing over the winter, adding shredded mulch to keep plant roots cool and moist, and watering well. We also surrounded one hollyhock and two mallows with a large wire cage. We didn't cage the other mallow because it was late and we didn't have a cage made up.

We thought the cage was necessary after watching our neighbors never ending battle to protect their hollyhocks from the rabbits. So we went to bed secure in the knowledge that at least some of the new plants were protected.

Post Planting Day 1

Well, the uncaged mallow was taken to within a quarter inch of the ground. Both stems were sheared at a 45 degree angle as neatly as if I'd cut them myself. All that was left were two puny stems and one small leaf. But joy! The plants we caged look great. We build a cage for the abused mallow and vow to save it.

Post Planting Day 2

The caged hollyhock and two mallows were murdered sometime between 6 pm last night and 8 am this morning. How? How did the rabbit get inside the cage? It appears intact. Did it drop down off the rock wall into the cage and then leap out after consuming a fresh salad? Have our rabbits mutated? Do we have Super Rabbits?

The remains of the plants are truly pitiful. Leaves stomped to the ground, frayed stems, one flower lying forlorn on the ground.

Well, we'll simply have to regroup. Yesterday, a friend asked me if Haney had a gun. I said, "Yes, he does." Her response was, "Shoot it!"

It's going to take a lot more than a butchered plant to make us mad enough to kill a living creature. Now it's become a game, similar to the games we played with our gray squirrels in Maryland. It's actually entertaining and certainly puts evolution in perspective. Here we are at the top of the food chain, thinking humans who use tools, and we're defeated by a small, furry, and yes, extremely cute bunny that might not weigh two pounds.

I'm sure there will more to this story as summer progresses...