

# TEN REASONS (OUT OF 100) WHY GARDENING ISN'T RELAXING

BY THE GARDEN CURMUDGEON

HAUGHTY-CULTURISTS and garden writers often wax poetic about how gardening rejuvenates the soul and calms the psyche. I often hear gardeners say, "I find that working in my garden is so relaxing!"

I rarely find myself calm and rejuvenated in the garden, let alone relaxed. It is more likely that I am sweating like a madwoman, cursing the wildlife, and running from project to project like I've forgotten my attention deficit disorder medication.

Here, then, are ten reasons why gardening should not be confused with truly relaxing activities such as reading on a sunny beach with a fruity drink in one hand and should instead be nominated as an Olympic sport.

🌿 1. SLUGS. We need to off 'em, and there's just no way to do that nicely. My first year of gardening, I put slugs that boozed themselves up in my beer traps into the greenhouse garbage disposal. That worked swell until the disposal clogged and I had to clean out the goeey remains on a hot day...

🌿 2. PLANT SALES. Anyone who has tried to find a cart at the fall NHS plant sale or buy holiday garlands at Greens Galore knows that plant sale attendees should be tested for performance enhancing drugs at the door. No clean urine sample, no plants for you.

🌿 3. PLANTING. Getting a gardener to commit one plant to one place is like getting my bachelor friends to host a dinner party. Most gardeners like to move their plants at least once a year, preferably ten. I myself don't even bother putting plants in the ground. I just stack them in my nursery.

🌿 4. PRUNING. No matter how many classes you've had or arborists you've studied under, making sure you don't remove too much in a pruning session can be a nail biter. There is nothing relaxing about pruning (although basal cuts with a chainsaw do make me happy).

🌿 5. ALLERGIES. I don't know one Northwest gardener that doesn't suffer from some kind of allergy. The garden curmudgeon herself takes a potent daily cocktail that is supposed to reduce her sinus passages to normally functioning tissue but instead is something like eating a box of Tic-Tacs. When I garden, I drip, snort, snot, and generally produce more mucous than a small developing country.

🌿 6. WEEDING. Rather than using herbicides, I hand-weed my borders. Sure, it looks nice when I'm done, but the physical acts of digging clover, snaking morning glory root, or chasing horsetail roots clear through to China is mind numbingly tedious and let's face it, really an act of futility.

🌿 7. PARTNERS. If you're lucky, your life partner / spouse / roommate could care less about gardening. If they do, and you have to share your allotment, then you may as well start ordering beige-colored plants now. Better still, just make a duct tape line down the center of the garden and take the sunny half.

🌿 8. BUDGET. The garden curmudgeon always says that there is nothing fast, easy, or inexpensive about gardening, and anyone who tries to tell you otherwise should be assigned greenhouse garbage disposal cleanup duty. But the cost is what really gets outrageous. Those of you at last year's

NHS auction know that a trillium with maroon foliage went for \$900. There is nothing relaxing about spending \$900 on a trillium.

🌿 9. MAIL ORDER. Come winter, the garden curmudgeon loves spending her time on the sofa, shades drawn to avoid looking at the garden, with a warm drink next to a stack of plant catalogs. But how often have you ordered that blue-flowered perennial, only to find yourself duped once again by the powers of Adobe Photoshop? Online catalogs are equally as frustrating. Ordering plants through the mail is a crapshoot best done with wild abandon and a warm drink.

🌿 10. MULCHING. Every spring the garden curmudgeon has ten yards of Cedar Grove compost delivered to her driveway. Having Cedar Grove's double-axis dump truck show up in my suburban cul-de-sac with its rear beeper beeping, dump truck dumping, and then realizing, oh-my-god the cars are still in the garage is one of the most heart thumping gardening experiences I've had.

I know what the haughty-culturists are thinking. "Why do you garden, then?" they sniff. I garden to meet my neighbors. I garden to grow my own vegetables. I garden because I like the pretty flowers. And I garden because it's a competitive sport and I'm an overachieving yuppie. I garden because despite all of this agony, I really love it. But you will never hear the garden curmudgeon say that gardening is relaxing. 🌿

*The Garden Curmudgeon is an NHS member who prefers to remain anonymous.*