

WHAT MAKES A GOOD GARDEN?

THE GARDEN CURMUDGEON

THE GARDEN CURMUDGEON was recently asked to anonymously evaluate a homeowner's garden. Given her usual sarcastic, negative outlook on life—the one that earns her points with her sister at the holidays—the GC looked forward to the opportunity. My opinion? You WANT my opinion? Why, I'll GIVE you my opinion!

This garden had a terra cotta chimenea. The GC despises chimeneas, if only because they are often plunked in the middle of a cottage garden. So those immediately make me go BLECH. And then I saw the chotchkes. Chotchkes as far as the eye could see, at all levels, from the ground to the trees to the far distance. I started writing my evaluation, ripping and tearing, carnage flying. The GC was in rare form! Words like “foul” and “flagrant disregard” came rushing out of her keyboard. You could smell the smoke from her fingertips as she continued to find problem after problem in this carefully photographed garden.

But then an incident this summer came to mind. The GC's office is conveniently located near her garden. She can hear what passersby have to say about her garden, but they cannot see her. People tend to be candid when they don't have to be accountable, don't they? Anyway, the GC had just placed several of what she believed to be charming pieces of ornament throughout the vegetable garden. The Ladies that Walk had plenty to say: *What was she thinking? I don't think I like that very much. She's a nutjob.* The GC wanted to race out to the curb and shout after them *I wanted to add some color! Hey, it's MY garden, missy! And I'm taking medication for that nutjob thing!*



*Glass orbs from Chibuly: good!
I mean pretentious!*

Smith and Hawken (or Smyth and Hawk 'em, as the parodies call them), have a marketing slogan that says something to the effect of “every garden counts.” When I mentioned this to the Original Garden Curmudgeon, he looked like I'd smacked him with a piece of 2x4. “NO THEY DON'T!” he bellowed. When I pointed out some of the, how shall we say, eclectic portions of his garden, the OGC modified the S & H slogan. “Well, MY garden counts.” I love the OGC!

Haughty-culturists are often waxing poetic about how you need to personalize your garden. Then they proceed to tell you what you MUST do, what you NEVER should do, and, if you hope to even try and be fashionable, what is TRENDY. How can we personalize our gardens if we're doing what everyone else is doing? The GC fears that we are limiting our creativity as gardeners.

A recent article from the *Ohio Beacon Journal* tells us that the Garden



*Aluminum orbs in the hedges: bad!
I mean rebellious!*

Media Group has identified what's hot for 2004. Simple chic is hot. Monochromatic containers are hot. Extending the planting season is hot. Splashing water is hot. Organic gardening is hot. Gardening with friends is hot. Now think about that for a minute. Aren't we already doing that?

So I revised my evaluation of the chimenea garden. I praised the creator for his wonderful use of color. I noted how much I liked the repetition of the plantings. And I mentioned how much time and energy had gone into collecting decorations for the garden. And then I made some constructive comments about that blasted chimenea. Because his garden counts... to him. 📷

The Garden Curmudgeon is an NHS member that wishes to remain anonymous.