

She Never Fails to Surprise Me

She never fails to surprise and delight me - my garden that is. Stuff happens in this semi-tamed wilderness – some of it useful, some of it not; but always delightful.

The onions are blooming and most seem normal, all but one. Bunching onions are supposed to reproduce both by seed and by bulbing from the base of the plant. Well, here is one that has set about reproducing by top setting bulbs.

It must be those Egyptians that moved into the neighborhood - hard to trust a walking onion; you just never know where they will show up next. The Egyptian Walking onions are of course top setters that have flowers, but not seeds and produce edible bulblets where the seeds would be. Seems they crossed over with this bunching onion, which is now producing bulbs instead of seeds on some of its flower heads.

So, my next question is, will these bulblets produce new plants and what will happen when those plants reproduce? Gardening the bazaar, at its best - to be continued.

We had dinner the other evening at my sister-in-laws, who is also a kitchen gardener, and her Swiss chard is blooming normally. It's about two feet tall and producing a little pollen. Why does my swiss chard look like a jungle – seven feet tall and impenetrable? When I shake it, a fallout of pollen spreads over the garden like dust. I can still identify the ancestral trilogy of this wildness. Perpetual Spinach Chard, Rhubarb Chard and Italian White Ribbed Chard still display their distinct characteristics, but there's been a lot of pollen swapping going on.

I planted broccoli this spring, for the aphids – but did not expect to eat it. It has been so warm so early this year that I only set out a couple of broccoli plants to provide blossoms for the other creatures at the right time. But, we ate some last night and it's still better than store bought, in spite of temperatures in the 80's. Now I wish I had planted more, but with some luck and careful management, these plants may set out to blooming again in the fall and again next spring. Semi-perpetual broccoli, you ask. It appears possible, but I cannot give you the formula yet. Last summer, after the broccoli was ravaged by the other creatures, I cut the plants off a few inches above ground and left the roots to decay in the ground – never expecting to see them green again. In early fall, one plant put up green shoots with multiple heads and delicious broccoli well into winter. It went through another bloom cycle and died.

For 50 years, I have grown broccoli from seed, eaten it until the sprouts are too small or too spicy and then removed it, making room for the next crop, but from now on, it gets treated differently! Now, I need to figure out a rotation through the broccoli bed to produce the best second growth broccoli – alas, another season, another surprise, another delight.

Truly, she never fails to surprise and delight me.

till next month,
Darrol Shillingburg
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