

## **Yard and Garden – 11-07-09 – Ted Griess/ Extension Horticulture Assistant**

I don't mean to be trite, but I'd like to use an old cliché that perfectly fits my situation. *Time flies when you're having fun.*

Sixty-two thousand one hundred eighty-four hours ago, on October 2, 2002, I began my career with Buffalo County Extension. At this very moment, as I begin writing my three hundred sixty-ninth column, I'm still having fun.

Although I pride myself on writing a new column each week, I'd like to share with you how I began that very first column which I titled, *No More Sleepless Nights*.

Have you ever awakened in the early morning hours well before the alarm normally rings and could not get back to sleep? During that time you think of every little thing you need to get done. During those moments of sleeplessness, you say to yourself, "If I don't get back to sleep soon, I know I'll be totally exhausted come morning." Guess what? For the past few mornings I have been that person. I recently accepted the position of Buffalo County Extension Assistant for Horticulture, and one of my assignments is to write a weekly article pertaining to horticulture for this paper. These past few mornings I have been stewing about a topic for my first article. During these early morning hours of restlessness, my thoughts spin randomly in all directions. There are so many exciting things to know about the subject of horticulture. Should I begin with a timely seasonal article? Should I write about a particular phase or aspect of plant physiology? Should it be a subject matter that would not only motivate but also inspire my readers? Finally, I took control and decided to begin with something I learned a long time ago, and that is the KISS method (keep it simple, stupid). Thus, I decided to write my first article about the beginnings of horticulture for me.

As I wrote in that very first article, I owe my passion and enthusiasm for horticulture to my mother, Erna England. Growing up as a young boy in Sutton, Nebraska, I readily recall how Mother always had a large vegetable garden and numerous beds of beautiful flowers. My mom was an astonishing person! She loved gardening and was always patient and willing to share with me her knowledge and love.

When I left Sutton and attended Kearney State College, it was that passion she instilled that prompted me to major in the life sciences with a degree in education. During my teaching years, I loved taking my students outdoors on field trips and sharing with them the joys and beauties of the botanical world — just as my mother did with me.

Throughout all these years, even when I was in the insurance business, I never lost my zeal for horticulture.

Together, Rita and I share this passion for gardening. I'm convinced the love of horticulture is contagious. Like my mother, hopefully, I've passed this appreciation and interest to my four grown children. Furthermore, over these past seven years, my hope is by contact with you the reader, as well as with the thousands of people I've visited with either face to face, by telephone, or through email that I've also ignited that spark of passion.

Although I've spent my adult life pursuing three careers, I enjoy my current one most of all. How I wish Mom was alive to see me now. Yes, I've found my *dream job*.

Now, I spend fewer sleepless nights stewing about what to write. Although picking the topic is still the most difficult part of the task, I discovered long ago paying attention to Mother Nature and listening to people make the job easier.

Whether I am blessed with another sixty-two thousand one hundred eighty-four hours of life with Extension or not, I will always believe that with horticulture, *time flies when you're having fun.*