

Why do we garden? This simple question could be answered with a multitude of responses. I read somewhere that gardening is the single most popular hobby or personal activity in America, and quite possibly in the world. Gardening surpasses baseball, football, basketball and even golf. For many of us, gardening is a way of life.

Every winter I anticipate the arrival of nursery catalogs and spend hours reading, planning and dreaming. Then, when spring finally arrives, I devote more hours to digging, planting, watering, fertilizing, mulching, weeding and the list goes on. Throughout the growing season, each morning, following a long day of working in my garden, I awaken with new aches and pains; yet, I remain eager to return to my yard for more gardening. I think it is safe to say gardening is my passion.

Rest assured gardening need not be an obsession. Others may garden for the following practical reasons.

- People garden to raise their own healthy food.
- People garden to create a beautiful area in their landscape.
- People garden to meet interesting and accomplished people.
- People garden to exercise.
- Gardening creates a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.
- Gardening provides an opportunity to commune with nature.
- Gardening can be a form of spiritual healing and meditation.
- Gardening can make you money.

Chances are you are familiar with a comedian by the name of Jeff Foxworthy. He became famous with his “You know you’re a redneck” jokes. Similarly, over the years, I have collected a number of “You know you’re a gardener” jokes. Although each conveys a bit of humor, they also are somewhat descriptive of a passionate gardener. I share with you a few of my favorites. Most fit me to a tee and perhaps some describe you.

You Know You’re a Gardener When —

- ✓ Your neighbors don’t recognize your face because it’s usually not the end they see.
- ✓ On vacation, your car automatically turns into every garden center along the way.

- ✓ The last time your car's trunk was free of mud and garden tools was the day you drove it off the lot.
- ✓ You would rather share your toothbrush than your hand pruners.
- ✓ In the middle of winter, you start cultivating the mold in the refrigerator just to see something grow.
- ✓ You watch golf on television for the beautifully landscaped courses.
- ✓ You find yourself removing dead leaves from the houseplants while waiting in your doctor's office.
- ✓ Your houseguests are afraid to stay in the guest bedroom because the philodendron looks hungry.
- ✓ You carry more photos of your garden in your wallet than photos of your kids.
- ✓ Your children have names like Hyacinth, Iris, Lily and Phil O'Dendron.
- ✓ You insist on saving all 225 tomato seedlings even though you only need six.
- ✓ You're running out of places to garden, but under your fingernails looks promising.
- ✓ You know far too much about manure, and you insist on sharing that information with your friends during dinner parties.

All kidding aside, I am convinced gardening is an activity most anyone can enjoy. You can make it as complicated or as simple as you wish. If you are a seasoned gardener, or if you have never attempted to garden and perhaps are thinking about trying it for 2012, for me, the following quote sums it all.

**"I am thankful that gardens exist,
for the garden is our repose,
and the garden makes all who take part,
better human beings."**

Author unknown