

Today's topic is all about hands. Andy Rooney once said, "Do not rule out working with your hands, but it should not preclude using your head."

One of the Creator's greatest inventions for us humans is hands. Combined with the computing power of our brain, our hands are capable of marvelous feats. Hands make it possible to physically manipulate our environment. With our hands, we can master gross motor skills such as grasping large objects or accomplish fine motor skills such as gently holding a butterfly. We humans are unique compared with most of the animal kingdom. This uniqueness occurs because we have thumbs. Our thumbs are moveable, capable of touching all other four fingers. This trait of grasping with our hands is often described to as having opposable thumbs. If you do not think your thumbs are important, try taping them to the sides of your hands. Then, attempt to plant a seed, turn on a faucet, or tie your shoes?

Never take your hands for granted. This past week I vigorously put my hands to work completing an assortment of yard chores. I picked up sticks, pulled weeds, tilled the garden, mowed the lawn, dug and divided perennial plants, cleaned and painted, planted seeds, and pruned shrubs. Today, as I attempt to type this column, my fingers are stiff and sore; and the skin on my hands is scratchy and rough. The beauty of all this is, with a little lotion and a little rest, my hands will soon recover— ready for more abuse.

Some ways to protect these marvelous tools we call hands include the following: always wear protective gloves when working in the garden, wash your hands especially after handling fertilizers and other chemicals and moisturize frequently.



Speaking of hands, I wish to extend a hand of sincere gratitude to four special individuals who volunteered to lend a helping hand. Located on the west side of the Extension Building is a flower border, approximately 20 X 20 feet. As with all flower borders, every spring it needs cleaning. On May 2, 2011, I sent out a plea

for help. On Thursday, May 5, 2011, these four individuals showed up, ready to get their hands dirty. Pictured from left to right are Tom Weides, Mary Muller, Marilyn Parks and Janet Olivarez. If you see them, give them a hand of applause.



This last segment about hands is devoted to all you lefties. My wife Rita is left-handed, and she loves gardening. Rita always boasts that left-handed people are the only people in their right minds. Sadly, lefties are all too often forced to use right-handed tools — those tools designed for people not in their right mind. I hate to admit it, but she is right. Most tools, whether they are gardening, automotive, carpentry, or kitchen gadgetry are designed primarily for right-handed people. When lefties are forced to use right-handed tools, it is almost like working with no thumbs! Luckily for me, she has a birthday in a couple weeks, and I found a great web site where I can order left-handed garden tools. Finding this website has certainly come in handy.

I leave you with one last quote about hands from evangelist Billy Graham, “God has given us two hands — one to receive with and the other to give with.” Great advice, wouldn’t you agree?