

For the love of a large old quince

Each year; as we put in the early vegetable garden, this magnificent quince is at the end of the garden strutting her stuff! It vibrates with honeybees so I always equate this sound with this mighty shrub.

I see my grandmother in this shrub in that so many of our hybridized quince had this fine plant as its parent. She was my very fine grandparent and she adored this shrub. It pops with white; pink and orange/red blossoms all over the same shrub looking like the bad home perm many southern girls were given in the 50's.

It gets ginormous by sending up new shoots from the base. Before you know it you have a whale of a shrub on your hands. The plant itself is never known as a soft, touchy-feely plant. It sports one and a half to two inch thorns all along the spin so at any given time when you are trying to cut branches from it, be it pruning or for a vase on the kitchen table, it will always leave you with some degree of a gardening wound.

Late August it produces the largest, most unexpected fruit, from which I have never



In the Garden

by Ginny Gregory

made anything. My grandmother used to make quince jelly from this strange fruit, which she always served with any pork meal. I'm pretty fond of anything in the food family in general, but I never had that "ah ha" moment with quince jelly. I also really believe in eating from the garden. I am not much of a vegetable processor be it frozen, dried or canned. I like to eat the fruits of one round of my labor.

It has been a standing conversation my partner and I have each year when we first start the spring vegetable garden. First of all we are always late. Now, in this our 11th year of gardening together, we are not planting in May what should have been planted in February. We are sneaking up on the ever so important reality of timing in the vegetable garden. When

spring slips one day into "full-on" summer, all of your efforts just curl up and turn into non-eatable crunch. Timing is vital!

So we were pulling back the straw on our raised beds when I hear my partner clear her throat and say, "Well, we sure could use more sun on this garden." That is the preamble to the unspoken, "When are you going to move this monster of a quince?" Each year I reply, "I will cut it to the ground when it stops blooming and it will come back much small next year." EVERY YEAR...we have this exact conversation. I then get swamped with work, the time passes when I can cut it back and still have blooms next year and it keeps getting bigger.

There are several unexpressed truths about this quince. I REALLY love this quince. It is almost irrational. I suspect it is a historical flash back into my childhood... one filled with so much love and connection. The next reality is I really am not sure that I could transplant it. This whale is like moving a pampas grass. It may be moved by hand, but some bobcat help would be suggested. And then there is

the cutting it to the ground. Well, I feel so sad when I think about doing that. Cutting down part of my history is what it feels like... so I just say, "I'll cut it back when it finishes blooming." and pray to get to another year.

My deep connection with plants has grown in me all of my life. Rented property or owned land, I have always planted flowers, shrubs and some veggies.

When I think of Chatham County, I think about the land, the clean air and the gentle whirl of nature and humans. All of this what make it so grand here in this southern county. I like how we all really talk about the weather, crops going in, needing rain, the noticing of the first leaf of spring. Where could I ever have my big old quince and have so much joy than right here in Chatham County?

Seize the day. Live the moment. Take deep breaths of joy.

Ginny Gregory is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. She is the owner and creative energy behind Beyond The Pail... Creating Gardens and Beyond www.beyondthepail.net.

PUPPY MILL

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through internet websites, or from pet shops, which often purchase their inventory from puppy mills. The websites don't say they are puppy mills, and show beautiful pictures of rolling green hills giving the illusion that this is the life their dogs enjoy. The consumer was often encouraged to buy the puppy at a very young age, some as young as four weeks old (puppies removed from the litter before eight to ten weeks old are almost guaranteed to have lifetime anxiety issues). The puppy was shipped to the pet shop or buyer by commercial airplane (a good breeder would never subject a puppy to the cargo hold of a plane). As a result of each of these negative experiences the puppy is subjected to, there is an ever deepening level of anxiety.

If you are meeting a puppy in person with a breeder, be aware of the signs they may be operating a puppy mill. The breeder will only bring out one puppy at a time for you to see, and will not allow you to see the property where the dogs live, or meet the puppies' parents. Often the breeder will ask to meet you at a different location with the puppy. The seller is only interested in your financial credentials, and shows little concern for the type of home you will give the puppy. They do not provide health information or guarantees for the puppy.

A very common practice is for the puppies

not to be the pure breeds as advertised. The new owner does not realize this until the pup is almost grown. By then they are attached to the dog and don't want to return it. The puppy mill operators are counting on this.

Even though North Carolina is known for having a large number of puppy mills, there are no statutes regulating these operations. However, House Bill 930, titled "Dog Breeding Standards", recently passed in the NC House of Representatives. HB-930 requires basic care for the animals living in puppy mills. In the

Bill, "puppy mills" are described as operations with 10 or more female dogs over six months of age used for breeding purposes. Some of the basic care items HB-930 requires are: daily exercise, fresh food and water, veterinary care, safe confinement and protection from extreme weather, frequent removal of feces from enclosures, and lighting.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) is supporting the approval of HB-930 by the NC State Senate. HSUS is planning to hold a rally in every county in North Carolina.

They want to bring light to the plight of the puppy mill dog, and help make citizens aware of House Bill 930. In the end the hope is for North Carolina voters to encourage the NC Senate members to pass this important and long overdue legislation for the wellbeing of so many innocent animals.

Valerie Broadway, the Canine Coach, is a dog trainer and behavioral specialist. For information, call 919.542.4726 or online at www.caninecoachingservices.com.

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