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Pets, plants and people are all alike

By Ginny Gregory:

It is nippy outside. This makes my heart sing and my puppies leap into the air with joy. I love watching them as their noises point to the sky. They are sniffing the change. Fall is moving in on us. The wind is rustling through the trees and they are filled with joy. I learn so much from my dogs. They are political opposites.

Jackson really is the most flexible, tender, loyal animal I have had the pleasure of knowing. He is lean and muscular with tan hair that hugs his body outlining his shape. Since he really is just a puppy (1-1/2 years old) his nature seems goofy, but you know he is just a gentle lover. Wherever his folks are, he's there. If you want to walk, he's there. If you want to lie on the sofa and catch the news ... he is there in the crook of your leg snoozing. He is easy.

Chloe loves to leap and run with Jackson, preferably in the lead. She is top dog. She is the curly haired terrier. She too is all muscle even though she looks like a black and tan lamb. She is just the sweetest love of a dog, but it is always on her terms. She is crystal clear about what she wants. When we snuggle on the sofa, if my hand stops petting her she is off to sleep in her lavender puff. If I am typing in my office and her puff is in the other room ... guess where she is ... in the puff. If there is a snake or a turtle in the garden ... hell would freeze over before she would willingly come inside.

There are plants in my garden that share the same flexibility and rigidity



Just like people and pets, the Camellia Japonica needs tender loving care to thrive.

of my puppies. As I gaze out on my sister Sue's rock outcropping, I see those extremely flexible and durable plants that her late husband, Larry planted. It is so remarkable. Now let's get real clear here, when I say rock outcropping, I mean mountainous boulders that were left here some millions of years ago. They had a party once that was quite "the do." Folks were getting jolly and one guy, who was not from around here, put his arm around Larry and said, "Man, those boulders must have set you back a pretty penny."

Larry hee hawed and said, "Yep, around \$64,000." The man was just astounded. It wasn't until he was leaving that Larry took him aside and said flatly, "They came with the land ... 37 acres worth." The man just grinned at how he'd been had and Larry just soaked up the moment.

I digress. This rock out cropping has creeping rosemary in full bloom softening the edge in the fall and creeping phlox lighting it up in the early spring. The purple Setcresia lounges with long succulent leaves that break up the green along the garden's outline. The mullie, blue Sioux, and zebra grasses are all moving with tassels held high as the autumn breeze set them in action. The catmint, yarrow and lemon balm are soft round blue grey bodies hugging the rocks. The black-eyed Susan is busy sharing their seed heads with the birds. The

salvias, Russian sage and Mexican petunias are still going strong in full bloom.

These plants need only sun to show off. They enjoy the rain, but can hang in there without it. The heat generated from the rocks will carry all of these plants through the worst of winters. Yep, this garden is filled with my flexible and most dependable plants. They appreciate attention, but don't demand it. Jackson enters stage left.

Now on the front side of this garden we have all of the 'Goldilocks' plants. This is the ridged, the "just got to have it my way" plants. They want it perfect or they are going to show out. Daphne and Edgeworthia are cut from the same cloth. The drainage must be absolute. They would rather not have afternoon sun and too much water sends them over the edge. This just "gets my goat" because they are both fragrant bloomers in the first moment of spring.

As I think of it, rhododendrons fall into this same category. These plant families are like cats, by the time you know they are sick they are on their way out. It starts with one dead branch ... kiss of death! The camellia japonica is a club member in that she must be sited in a corner ... protected from wind and winter morning sun. Without this attention her leaves scorch and the blossoms show up all cold hurt. She positively hates wet feet, so in this clay soil you really have to amend. It's the old goldilocks syndrome too hot, too cold, too soft, and too hard. Chloe enters stage right.

We are just puppies, plants and people all struggling to have what we want, when what we need is our real common concern. My Jackson is snapping at bees while they work the creeping rosemary. He is so content to just be. He loves the fall movement in the air, the warm sun on his back as he plays. He is one grateful hound. May we all follow his lead.

Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail...creating gardens and beyond" and "Beyond The Crate...Finding simplicity out of chaos", an organizing, de-cluttering, down sizing business. www.beyondthepail.net

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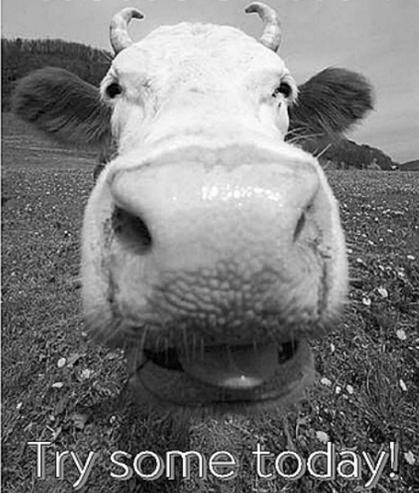
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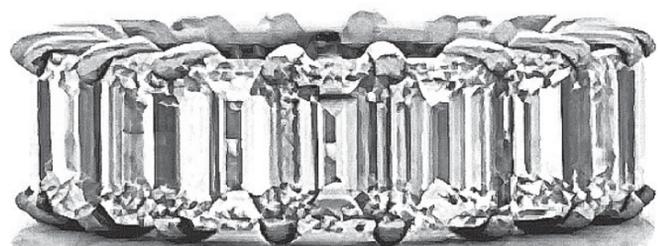
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