

From the Editor

Being a gardener helps prepare you for nearly every other facet of your life.

As spring gives way to summer, I resume my battle with the buttercups which, starting several years ago, began appearing in my front and back gardens, and have taken over large swaths of flowerbeds, choking out other, more desirable (and expensive) plants.

I spend a good deal of time fulminating about buttercups, which are part of the ranunculus family. Friends, whom I am sure I bore to distraction with tales of buttercups, wonder (among other things they wonder about me, I am sure), why I don't just let the buttercups be, pointing out they have a sweet, golden yellow flower starting about June, which blends nicely with lily of the valley, baptisia, poppies and other early summer flowers.

But I persist in trying to literally root them out, devoting large chunks of the weekend to their eradication.

In researching buttercups over the years, I've learned that they can be dangerous to livestock, including cows, sheep and horses, that they are considered invasive nearly everywhere they appear, are a "Weed of Concern" in Washington State and come in several varieties, including creeping buttercups, the variety

I am hosting, and the aptly named cursed buttercup.

Sadly, I have also learned that, short of dangerous chemicals, paving over the area, or deploying a flock of chickens, the only way to rid yourself of buttercups is to get down on your hands and knees and dig them out individually, since the chief characteristic of the "creeping" variety is that they spread by seed and by stolons, or creepers, which expand the plant's reach, setting down a set of leaves that later become a "daughter" plant in their own right—and, if you're not vigilant, setting up a lovely, but noxious mat of buttercups as far as the eye can see. Believe me, I have tried other methods, including boiling water, salt, and some serious cursing of my own.

I'm sure you see where I'm going with this. Philosophers have been using the garden as a metaphor pretty much since philosophy began, and most do a better job of it than I.

There's a lot of work in maintaining a garden, but there is a lot of joy as well. There are days when I almost welcome the battle of the buttercups, and others, like yesterday, when I surveyed an area I worked in for at least four hours two days ago, and nearly wail at the sight of, yes, another cheerful buttercup.

Summer is a time for relaxing,

for recharging and for pursuing avocations that most of us can't get to year-round, including gardening.

Fortunately, it's also usually a time when everything else slows down, including state and federal legislatures.

Unfortunately, although the senators, representatives, assemblymen and others may go home, executive and judicial branches are still working, and the civil "servants" only take short breaks to million dollar retreats and seminars.

Summer also usually marks the time when politicians begin appearing (we won't necessarily compare them to weeds) in unlikely places. The Mayor of Buffalo opened this year's Greek Festival, just as I was sitting down to a taste of rice pudding with my friend Sue.

A few nights later, a representative of Hizzoner rang the bell (during dinner) and thrust a clipboard at me, asking if I would sign to get "the mayor on the ballot."

"Isn't he already on it?" I wondered aloud—since as the incumbent I know he has a million dollar plus war chest and the endorsement of his party and at least two minor parties.

The mayor's man sort of shrugged and said "that's what the petition is for."

When I declined to sign it

he said “you won’t sign?” in a sort of shocked tone and stalked down the front stairs (past the buttercups).

We are pretty used to having dinner interrupted this time of year by supplicants for various candidates and I’m usually disposed to sign petitions for ballot access on the theory that everyone deserves it, especially if he or she has dedicated volunteers out on the hustings.

Most of the petition pushers are affable and usually make a general pitch for their candidate, using his or her first name and asking if there’s any particular issue that I’m concerned with.

I usually engage in some polite

banter, generally have an issue ready for discussion—such as firearms civil rights—and, as I said, mostly sign the petitions, even if I’m pretty sure I won’t be voting for the candidate.

I just wasn’t buying it this time around. For the first time in a dozen or so years, the mayor will have a challenger in his party’s primary and the other party will actually be fielding a candidate as well. And while the current occupant of city hall isn’t the worst we’ve ever had—not by a long shot—he hasn’t exactly inspired, well, much of anything. So, keeping my options open, I may sign his party challenger’s petition, if

he comes by, doesn’t interrupt dinner and doesn’t have quite the air of entitlement the mayor’s guy did. Or I might not and just hold out for the primary, and then the general election.

Call it the buttercup syndrome if you like, but I like to do some digging beforehand, so that I’m less regretful later.



*Peggy Tartaro,
Executive Editor*