

Live and Learn
by M.L.T.

Over the years I've learned many things about gardening. One of my most memorable gardening experiences began when my family and I moved from the very northwest corner of Montana to a warmer climate where plants require a little less care. Before I moved, I had to baby every tomato like they were newborn infants or they just wouldn't grow.

After the move, it was with great anticipation that I looked forward to gardening in the warmer climate. Visions of a lush garden, productive orchards and landscaping ran rampant through my mind. With these visions clouding my better judgment, I was easy prey for a salesman, and the first one pulled into our drive that first spring. He said "All that I have left are three lilac bushes and a plum tree. If you take them all, I'll give you a good deal, ma'am."

I hesitated, wishing my husband were at home to ask, but his philosophy echoing in my mind, "plant what you want, as long as it doesn't take up too much time and labor". I said to the salesman, "I'll take them all". A few minutes later, I started to think what I'd gotten myself into as the salesman's helper unloaded my plants and said "Wait, doesn't this plum tree need another one to cross pollinate with?"

"Oh, no, no, no" the salesman quickly answered. If my head hadn't been so full of visions of bushels of plums, then all kinds of red flags would have come up. But, I'd already committed to the purchase.

It wasn't until later that we found time in our hectic schedule to stick those bare roots into the ground. We didn't get much for the effort. One lilac bush never attempted to live. It preferred an immediate death to a slow lingering one. The other two barely survived, that is until a weed eater string ended another one's life. Now we were down to one single lilac plant and it clung tenaciously to life. It actually produced several bloom for the first time in the ninth spring of it's life.

Meanwhile, the plum tree thrived mostly on neglect, which is my kind of tree. But today, after almost ten years later, it has yet to yield a single plum. It has grown into a fairly large tree. And as I pull plum shoots out of my nearby rose garden, I am reminded of that slick talking salesman who found a gullible housewife to unload his wares onto.

Editorial note: After years of experience, M.L.T. now grows a beautiful garden every year with fruit trees, flowers and vegetables. Her experience is something we can all relate to, in that it takes time to grow a healthy garden. I would like to hear your learning experiences.

Ed Says:

Most plums need a good pollinator but some are self-fertile. It seems that M.L.T.'s plum tree needs a pollinator. Before you buy, make sure that you know what you are getting. A trustworthy salesman will tell you.

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