

Ask a Master Gardener  
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Out of My Mind, or The Odd Gardener  
By Kitty Barr, Master Gardener Extension Volunteer

One of my favorite large nursery spots had a surprise sale recently and I happened on it with glee. In no time I had completely lost all sense of proportion or reason and filled my old SUV with everything I could fit in it. Unloading at home, I thought, “This isn’t so many, I’ll get more!” And back I went for a second round of the tables as the staff looked on in astonishment. I’m not going to admit to insanity but I did make two more trips the following day. In addition I got three large bags of manure and three of soil conditioner to amend the sorry dirt in my yard. Jack Garvin was certainly correct in last week’s column: Georgia soil needs a ton of amending to enable anything to grow properly.

I have dug about 13 roomy holes in anticipation of getting three ‘Autumn Joy sedum’, five ‘Bordeaux Rose’ salvia and five ‘Peacock White’ phlox in the ground today. Of course I need to dig 30+ more. Here’s the drill - you dig holes twice as wide as the container. If you have a wagon or wheel barrow (I dislike wheelbarrows – you have to use both hands whereas a cart can be pulled or pushed with one, leaving the other free to wipe one’s forehead, scratch, even answer a cell phone). Mix equal parts manure and conditioner in the cart in readiness to fill in your holes after the plants are in them. Put some manure mixture in the bottom of the hole as well. Water deeply and know that cool weather will allow the little roots to grow some and you won’t have to water as often as if you planted all this in the spring. Also this cool weather lets me work without perspiring.

Pachysandra was on sale too and I got the last 2 flats of it. This lovely spreading ground cover can be quite expensive. I have seen it for as much as \$3 for a little container holding a single plant. Once in a hoity toity resort area I saw it for \$4.98! You can’t visualize how fast I loaded those flats of 12 plants at a price of 99 cents per... Pachysandra is lovely growing around anything. The most attractive display I’ve ever seen was growing thickly all around a long line of boxwoods. It was such a striking change from the usual pine straw or mulch.

A lady preceding me that morning had gotten all of the ‘Endless Summer’ hydrangeas, save one, with my name on it. A garden near me has a line of 10 or so drifting down the edge of the lawn. Their sky blue blossoms last from mid-June until late November. They are quite expensive but I plan to shell out next spring for 2 more and group the three together. As you know, the gardening rule is plant in odd numbers – 3, 5, 7. This does not account for the “odd” gardener you may know.

Three holly ferns and five orchid ferns will go in the shade near the patio. The 'Burgundy Glow' variegated ajuga ground cover will go around them. I brought many of this pink and gray plant with me from a former garden but it has not been happy here. I will try them again, in a different spot. Sometimes plants have a mind of their own. In a sunny place near the pink asters the new pink blooming thyme will fill in the bare spots. Having never had "hens and chicks", I got a little container – everyone says they spread like bunnies. We'll see.

The 3 foot oak leaf hydrangea will have a special place in the side yard. They are magnificent bloomers and just now their large elongated blooms, also called panicles, white in the summer, are turning a gorgeous ruby shade. Oak leaf hydrangeas can get 8-10 feet tall so I'm leaving her a generous space. My purchase, a 'Semmes Beauty', will only get 5 feet tall. As I staggered to and fro yesterday with shovel in hand and cart loaded, the AT&T man fiddling with my internet commented, "you certainly get your work-out right here". Yes, I do and I love, love, love every minute of it. Must go: the new 'Limelight' hydrangea, three 'Goldmound' spireas, and a new dwarf butterfly bush need my attention. Whew!

For more information or any other gardening questions, call 770-836-8546 and ask a Master Gardener in the UGA Extension Office at 900 Newnan Road in Carrollton.