

ongardening | Elizabeth Licata rants in the garden

When I tell a friend the title of the group blog I write with colleagues Susan Harris, Michele Owens and Amy Stewart, I'm usually greeted with an indulgent chuckle and a question: "Garden Rant? What would there be to rant about?"

The question implies plenty about what the world expects from garden writing. Such an attitude suggests: a) that garden writing is not provocative or controversial; b) that serious debate or anger seem incongruous in a pleasant place like a garden; and c) garden blogging is even less burdened by gravitas than garden journalism in its print form.

Yet blogs have long been an outlet for uncensored venting by a variety of authors. Few question the motivations of a career waiter (waiterrant.net) or an overburdened stay-at-home mom (suburbanbliss.net) for complaining—raucously and hilariously—on their respective blogs. Why should gardeners be different?

There are more than enough crucial topics to concern, engage or even enrage anyone gardening anywhere. And because *Garden Rant* is a forum we've created and we alone maintain, we're free of the constraints a newspaper, magazine or radio show might impose. If an issue comes up that one of us wants to address, we go for it, not worrying about whether we should be telling our readers how to plant bulbs for spring color or urging them to fill their hanging baskets with long-blooming annuals instead.

I started my personal garden blog in 2005, which I




named *Gardening While Intoxicated*. There's a long anecdote about that name which saturates the blog in a rakish ambiance, but underlying it is my desire to express the pleasure and passion I find in gardening. Yes, gardening is about picking the right plants and nurturing the soil, but I want the poetry of why I was getting my hands dirty,

as well as the prose.

When Susan Harris first asked me to write a guest post for *Garden Rant* in 2006, the topic I chose was the over-use of the American flag in garden décor. I think few—if any—traditional media outlets would have welcomed such an essay. The fact that *Garden Rant* did demonstrates that nothing is immune from discussion.

Since I became a full-time member of the team many of the topics I have addressed have been much less controversial—mundane, even—but mundane topics are quite capable of arousing passionate discussion. When I posted a picture of two broken hose sprayers, only a few sentences were needed to unleash a torrent of outraged agreement that these are among the most frustrating and often-replaced garden tools. Once, a spirited debate about whether leaves should be lightly mowed, sucked away and mulched, or left where they fall to decompose ran into several posts, each featuring a different viewpoint.

Have I ever thought better of a rant after hitting the "publish" button? Yes—but I've never deleted, either. Not even when I've written about planting fall bulbs for spring color. 

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