

Hello. My name is Tim and I am a rose-aholic.

Chorus: Hi, Tim!

Well, it's Show and Tell time. Again. Must mean that the scheduled speaker has canceled. Again. You didn't miss much. It was just old Vinnie Mueslix maundering on about how he leaves stuff all over his property but calls it pre-planning instead of forgetfulness. He hasn't changed that talk in ten years; he just gives it new names. Of course, since he doesn't remember giving it before, it is always fresh and new to him.

The Topic tonight is Non-rosarians as friends, neighbors and family. Now I know that we are supposed to get all gooey about bringing them in as prospective new members. Hooey. Keep 'em as far away as possible. They ain't a bit human in the first place.

Non-rosarians as Friends:

You can't really have a non-rosarian as a friend. They give up too easy. You are barely into your first hour talking about your new roses and their eyes glaze over and they nod weakly after each and every sentence till they look like those little kewpie dolls on the dashboards of low-slung cars. And just when you are started on your second hour, they make a mad dash for the commode blubbering something about a call of nature. Why don't they just cross their legs like the rest of us? Or water the compost pile? A call of nature is when you plant one more rose bush than you thought you had room for.

Non-rosarians as neighbors:

The damned fools sow the wrong plants, with the wrong ideas and the wrong attitude. Creeping vinca covers the eastern part of the property. Tradescantia infests the southern fence. Honeysuckle eats the boards of the temporary fence they threw up on the north. And I tried to explain to them gently, and patiently, that these plants weren't good for my roses. I honestly did. All they did was get all hoity-toity about 'property rights' and the 'common good.' They don't understand that I grow something important and they just waste good fertilizer on 'weeds.' But I maintain a cool temper and a friendly mien. They also like shade. They like it so much their trees cast it all over my yard. And their pets—midnight marauders who frolic with the possums and coyotes, dig holes, and disport themselves among my roses....

But my day is coming. Soon the collective effect of all those empty containers of illegal hazardous materials that I toss into their jungle of plants will pay off. Anybody who suckles a little honey from the north is gonna wind up a test case for the Center for Disease Control. And before I'm done, I'll get their little dog, Toto, too.

Non-Rosarians as family:

You can't dismiss family the way you can with friends and neighbors. For one thing, they keep bringing up that blood tie thing; although to tell the truth, I have more blood in common with my pyracantha than with most of my relatives. But you can deter them a

little. Planting Marilyn Monroe right in the path to the front door brings fewer visitors every year. And it has the beneficial byproduct of discouraging visitors at Halloween as well. You would be surprised at the number of crybabies who fret at the sight of their own blood. Too bad most of the children don't feel that way.

Your own children are a great help in the rose garden, digging and weeding, toting and fetching—at least until they reach the age of reason. Then they reach the age of hormones and disappear for years at a time. Spouses are also a great help if they supply money for the roses, or dig holes for the roses, or take them up to the placement table when you have finished grooming them. Or help remove prickles from your palms. Sometimes, though, they get strange ideas about roses and want you to plant 'pretty ones' rather than the ones you know will win awards. Or they want to adopt 'orphan' or abused plants from unprofessional nurseries; they just don't get it when you snarl that this is a rose garden, not an infirmary.

Now I know that some of you think I am negative about all this. That is not true. I welcome the non-rosarians in the marketplace. They buy the roses that die. They replenish them year after year. They glut up the sewers with their lemon Pledge magic potions and sour milk elixirs. And every spring they light up the cash registers as they purchase dried out sticks with the fervent expectation that the Gardens of Babylon will be recreated in their own little patches of real estate. Corporations call them customers; cruel and unkind people call them suckers; but I call them non-rosarians.

I warmly welcome them as members of the buying public. Of course, NIMBY.

JD

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