

POWER GARDENING

Having recently entered into the bonds of matrimony, Sam and Rebecca continued to daily gain new perspectives into all that such a commitment entailed. With each of them bringing a healthy bank account into the marriage, they didn't struggle with finances as some do in adapting to their new life. Pooling of their assets allowed them to purchase a new home in a new development on the outskirts of town.

Rebecca spent her days as a nurse at a local doctor's office, and Sam spent his as an account executive for a metal fabricating plant in town. Their respective positions gave them the luxury of free weekends. On one such weekend, the couple leisurely sipped iced tea on their back porch. As with many new housing developments, landscaping could best be described as being in its infancy.

Rebecca looked out across their barren backyard and said, "Sam, why don't we put in a garden in that back corner?"

"Hmm," replied Sam. "I'm thinking we can do that. I'll do a little planning, lay it out, and get started next weekend."

Taking her husband by the hand, Rebecca said, “It’s kind of exciting, isn’t it, Sam?”

“Yes, it is,” said Sam. “Yes, it is.”

The next day Sam began laying out string lines to mark the boundaries of their garden project. Rebecca watched him and in a word of encouragement said, “That looks good, Sam. What you have marked off is about the size I was thinking.”

“Uh, huh,” said Sam.

Rebecca went back inside the house to get them some more tea. When she got back outside, she couldn’t help but notice a sparkling gleam in her husband’s eye—a gleam she had not seen before. His entire countenance shone as bright as the sun, and he began working at a feverish pace.

“Sam, what are you doing?”

“I’ve got it all under control, Beck.”

“But you’ve changed the string lines.”

“I’ve got it all under control, Beck,” said Sam again.

“But, Sam,” exclaimed Rebecca. “It looks like you’re marking off the entire backyard.”

“I’ve got it all under control, Beck.”

In a bit of diplomatic wisdom, Rebecca said no more. She couldn't help but have an uneasy feeling, though. She murmured something about learning to adapt and then went back into the house.

The week passed quickly and on Saturday Sam put on some old jeans and got ready to go to work outside.

"I'll change and be out to help you in a few minutes, Sam."

"Uh, that's not necessary, Beck. This first part is the roughest work and I've got it all under control."

"But ... but," stammered Rebecca.

"Let me get this first part done and then you can help me plant."

"Okay, Sam. I guess you've got it all under control, then?"

"Yes, I do," said Sam. "Yes, I do."

Rebecca slipped on some comfortable sandals and sat down on the living room sofa. Looking out the front window, she noticed a big truck with a lowboy trailer stop in front of their house. The trailer carried a massive front-end loader. She

didn't think too much about it until she saw Sam walk to the street and start talking to the driver. The driver then unloaded the loader from the trailer and began showing Sam the controls for the machine. The semi then pulled away, leaving the enormous machine in their front yard. When Rebecca walked out front, she saw Sam patting one of the big tires that were as tall as him. She had seen that same pat as a kid when her father used to give their big dog a pat while saying "Good dog".

"Sam, what in the ..."

Perhaps it would be a good time to relate a few incidents in Sam's life that may have influenced his thinking on this garden project.

The first incident occurred, when as a lad of 4 years, he stood on the front porch with his older brothers and his father. The city garbage truck pulled up in front of their house and a burly worker grabbed their trash can and effortlessly dumped the contents into the back of the truck. Then the worker pushed some controls and the truck let out a powerful roar as it compressed the garbage in the back of the truck. Apparently, Sam became so moved by all that power that he stated, as only a 4-year-old

could, that he wanted to be a garbage truck driver when he grew up.

The second influence occurred over a two-week period, when as a 10-year-old, he got a severe case of chicken pox. He spent a great deal of time looking out his bedroom window and watching huge excavators and bulldozers moving dirt all day long at the construction site across the street from their house. Sam became so moved by all that power that he stated he wanted to operate a bulldozer when he grew up.

The final evidence came when, as a teenager, Sam worked for a construction company over the summer washing and cleaning their gigantic equipment. He had his picture taken by one of his friends as he stood inside the bucket of one of their large machines.

Of course, Rebecca knew none of this history when she saw Sam standing by the big front-end loader. She gained that knowledge later in life during a time of reminiscing at one of their family gatherings.

“Isn’t it great, Beck?” put forth Sam. ‘Look at that big diesel engine. Can’t you feel the power?’”

“Did you really have to get something so big to make a little garden in the corner of the backyard?” asked Rebecca.

“Well, you see, I got to analyzing the soil and discovered that it is so sandy that it would hardly grow anything. So, I decided to remove a layer and replace it with some good rich topsoil.”

“I can understand that, Sam. How much were you planning to replace?”

“Three ... mmph.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t quite understand that, Sam.”

“Three feet,” repeated Sam.

“I see, and that’s why you need all that ... uh, power.”

“Absolutely,” answered Sam. “Then I got to thinking that with this big machine I could easily just go ahead and do the whole backyard. That way we could have a big garden ... like you really want. Plus, I worked a great deal with the trucking company. They could bring in the good soil and haul

away the bad all in one motion. I also called the county, and they came out and assured me there were no utility lines anywhere in the backyard.”

“How many truckloads of good soil did you order, Sam?”

“Twen ... mmph.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t quite understand that, Sam.”

“Twenty.”

“I see ... well, have fun, Sam.”

Sam climbed up onto the big machine, cranked it up, and practiced with the controls until the first truck arrived.

“Where do you want me to dump it, sir?” asked Eddie, the driver.

“I need it in the backyard and the closest way is down the left side of the house. It’s a little tight, but I figure you’ve got about 2 feet to spare, and I’ll help guide you back.”

“Okay, sir,” said Eddie. “We’ll give it a go.”

Eddie backed the truck into the driveway and angled it down the side of the house. Naturally, with the ground being so sandy, the tires cut some

respectable ruts in the grass. Eddie seemed to have the truck moving well toward the backyard. Suddenly, the big dump truck, with its heavy load, started sliding down the slight slope of the sideyard. Before Eddie could get it stopped, the corner of the bed caught the neighbor's fence.

"I'm sorry about the fence, Mr. Wilson," said Eddie. "She's just not gonna get back there."

"Don't worry, Eddie. I'll take care of the neighbor's fence. I guess you better pull back out."

"Will do, Mr. Wilson."

Eddie put the transmission into low/low gear and let out the clutch to move forward. Instead of moving forward, though, the big rig just dug deeper into the soft sand and got stuck.

"I tell you what, Eddie," said Sam. "Have you got a chain?"

"Yes, sir," replied Eddie.

"Okay, Eddie. I'll hook up that big front-end loader and help pull you out."

They hooked up the chain and Sam slowly eased the front-end loader forward and began pulling the dump truck out of its hole. They only ran into one minor problem in the process. The angle

that Sam was pulling led the rear axle of the tandem dump truck into the corner of the house's air conditioning unit. When Eddie saw what was happening, he let loose a blast of the air horn, but it was to no avail.

“Don't worry about the air conditioner, Eddie. I'll take care of it.”

Sam and his big machine eventually got Eddie and the dump truck out, but not without making some very deep ruts in the grass and breaking the sidewalk across the front yard.

“Is there any reason we can't go down the right side of the house, Mr. Wilson?” asked Eddie. “It looks like there's plenty of room.”

“Well, it's a longer path over the grass. But I guess it's our only choice at this point,” answered Sam.

So, Eddie backed his truck across the grass in the front yard leading to the right side of the house. Of course, the truck left some more respectable ruts in the grass. Eddie slowly backed up and he appeared to be making it without any further damage. As Sam watched Eddie maneuvering the big dump truck back, he got this feeling that he'd forgotten something about the right side of the house.

Sam hooked up the front-end loader to the front of Eddie's truck and pulled him out of the hole from the collapsed septic tank. With the right side now out of the question for access, Eddie had to dump his load of rich topsoil in the front yard. He then left without taking a load of poor soil with him because Sam couldn't get around the collapsed septic tank to get into the backyard with the big front-end loader.

Plan "F" required Sam to rent a smaller skid-steer loader that could get into the backyard. Needless to say, he had to renegotiate the deal with the trucking company.

Six weeks later, with the neighbor's fence repaired, a new air conditioning unit installed, the broken sidewalk fixed, the septic tank replaced, and new sod installed, Rebecca planted her first tomato plant. Sam knelt beside her and helped her plant the rest of the garden. Seemingly unfazed by his experience, he planted with a gleam in his eye.

"Beck, when we get done planting, I've got to go down to the hardware store and pick up a sprayer so we can properly maintain the garden."

"Okay," said Rebecca.

“Yeah, they’ve got a great deal on this power sprayer with a twenty-horsepower engine. We can flat out do some spraying with that baby.”

“Really, Sam?”

“Yeah, and in a few months, they’re going to have a new shipment of power rototillers in so we can till the soil for next season’s crops.”

“I hope they’ll have some models with plenty of power,” said Rebecca.

“Oh, I’m sure they will,” said Sam. “I’m sure they will.”

While Sam felt confident they would have plenty of powerful tools to continue gardening for the rest of their life together, Rebecca felt equally confident that before she’d suggest any other project, she would make sure there wasn’t a power tool for it.