

## TAKE TIME TO SMELL THE ROSES

Thoughts of spring start to creep into our mind as we move into January. This article fits for spring thoughts.

The expression – “take time to smell the roses” is a gentle reminder to stop for a moment in our busy lives and look at the things around us. It is so easy to get wrapped up in our lives, particularly over the holidays, that we forget to look at the beauty around us and how it can refresh our minds. Recently a friend forwarded a story that had been sent to him. The source is not known, however, it is worth sharing. The story could in fact be about the wild rose of Iowa. It is a story that fits the title of this article as well as the objectives of Keep Iowa Beautiful. It is a great lesson for all of us.

“Several times my daughter had telephoned to say, "Mother, you must come to see the daffodils before they are over." I wanted to go, but it was a two-hour drive from Laguna to Lake Arrowhead "I will come next Tuesday", I promised a little reluctantly on her third call.

Next Tuesday dawned cold and rainy. Still, I had promised, and reluctantly I drove there. When I finally walked into Carolyn's house I was welcomed by the joyful sounds of happy children. I delightedly hugged and greeted my grandchildren.

"Forget the daffodils, Carolyn! The road is invisible in these clouds and fog, and there is nothing in the world except you and these children that I want to see badly enough to drive another inch!"

My daughter smiled calmly and said, "We drive in this all the time, Mother."

"Well, you won't get me back on the road until it clears, and then I'm heading for home!" I assured her.

"I was hoping you'd take me over to the garage to pick up my car."

"How far will we have to drive?"

"Oh, just a few blocks," Carolyn said. "But I'll drive. I'm used to this."

After several minutes, I had to ask, "Where are we going? This isn't the way to the garage!"

"We're going to my garage the long way," Carolyn smiled, "by way of the daffodils."

"Carolyn," I said sternly, "please turn around."

"It's all right, Mother, I promise. You will never forgive yourself if you miss this experience."

After about twenty minutes, we turned onto a small gravel road and I saw a small church. On the far side of the church, I saw a hand lettered sign with an arrow that read, "Daffodil Garden." We got out of the car, each took a child's hand, and I followed Carolyn down the path. Then, as we turned a corner, I looked up and gasped. Before me lay the most glorious sight. It looked as though someone had taken a great vat of gold and poured it over the mountain peak and its surrounding slopes. The flowers were planted in majestic, swirling patterns, great ribbons and swaths of deep orange, creamy white, lemon yellow, salmon pink, and saffron and butter yellow. Each different-colored variety was planted in large groups so that it swirled and flowed like its own river with its own unique hue. There were five acres of flowers.

"Who did this?" I asked Carolyn.

"Just one woman," Carolyn answered. "She lives on the property. That's her home." Carolyn pointed to a well kept A-frame house, small and modestly sitting in the midst of all that glory. We walked up to the house. On the patio, we saw a poster. "Answers to the Questions I Know You Are Asking" was the headline.

The first answer was a simple one. "50,000 bulbs," it read.

The second answer was, "One at a time, by one woman.

Two hands, two feet, and one brain."

The third answer was, "Began in 1958."

For me, that moment was a life-changing experience. I thought of this woman whom I had never met, who, more than forty years before, had begun, one bulb at a time, to bring her vision of beauty and joy to an obscure mountaintop. Planting one bulb at a time, year after year, this unknown woman had forever changed the world in which she lived. One day at a time, she had created something of extraordinary magnificence, beauty, and inspiration. The principle her daffodil garden taught is one of the greatest principles of celebration. That is, learning to move toward our goals and desires one step at a time--often just one baby-step at a time--and learning to love the doing, learning to use the accumulation of time.

When we multiply tiny pieces of time with small increments of daily effort, we too will find we can accomplish magnificent things. We can change the world.

"It makes me sad in a way," I admitted to Carolyn. "What might I have accomplished if I had thought of a wonderful goal thirty-five or forty years ago and had worked away at it 'one bulb at a time' through all those years? Just think what I might have been able to achieve!"

My daughter summed up the message of the day in her usual direct way. "Start tomorrow," she said.

She was right. It's so pointless to think of the lost hours of yesterdays.

The way to make learning a lesson of celebration instead of a cause for regret is to only ask, "How can I put this to use today?"

Use the Daffodil Principle. Stop waiting.....

Until your car or home is paid off

Until you get a new car or home

Until your kids leave the house

Until you go back to school

Until you finish school

Until you clean the house

Until you organize the garage

Until you clean off your desk

Until you lose 10 lbs.

Until you gain 10 lbs.

Until you get married

Until you get a divorce

Until you have kids

Until the kids go to school

Until you retire

Until summer

Until spring

Until winter

Until fall

Until you die....

There is no better time than right now to be happy. Happiness is a journey, not a destination. So work like you don't need money, Love like you've never been hurt, and Dance like no one's watching.

Wishing you a beautiful, daffodil day!"

**Think spring, take time to smell the roses, do it now and remember that one person can make a difference.**

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director  
Keep Iowa Beautiful  
300 East Locust – Suite 100  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
Phone 515-323-6507  
E-mail [gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com](mailto:gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com)  
Web Page [www.keepiowabeautiful.com](http://www.keepiowabeautiful.com)

See you in the next column.

*Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful*

Gerald F. Schnepf