Plants I Wish I Had Never Planted

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Our garden was big, bare and brown when we moved here thirteen years ago, needing help fast. A new friend gave me six yarrows, a cardamom and a sprig of wedelia. A bucket of sword ferns arrived soon after that and, before long, ginger lilies appeared from one neighbor, then a clutch of elephant ears from another. Yellow iris turned up and an armload of obedient plants found their way from Madison. Did I stop to think why all this largess came my way? Only later did I realize these were rampant invaders, self seeders, underground tunnelers and otherwise strangling plants which had worn out their welcome with their previous owners. Needless to say, I had an instant garden.

Some of these plants have their place, some are on the Florida Invasive List and many of them are monster plants: all are aggressive. They thrive, run over everything in their path and multiply with shameless abandon. Asiatic jasmine would cover the world if left unchecked. Mountain mint, Indigofera kirilowii, canna 'Red Shot' and that shameless Mexican petunia (*Ruellia brittoniana*), pop up many feet from the original plant, crowding out desirable plants and proving impossible to eradicate.

Wisteria is a beautiful plant I wish I had never met. It can't help but grow. I took one rambling branch and tied it to a stake where it became a tree in four years. Chenile plant, a charming ground cover with small, pink, fluffy flowers starts off in lady-like fashion but soon forgets itself, displaying a dismaying inclination to wander.

I saw *Philadelphus coronarius*, the English dogwood, on a garden tour and couldn't rest till I had one. It is a lovely spring shrub with menacing proclivities. Its roots travel many yards, outwitting all methods of control. The tiniest root hair left behind is enough for the plant to rejuvenate itself.
Purple lantana doesn't mind growing in the driveway, defying death with every turn of the wheel, another tenacious traveler. Swamp sunflower takes over and by September is over six feet tall, leaning into and damaging more fragile plants. It drops its windblown seeds everywhere. In the spring, hundreds of seedlings come up through more desirable plants making them difficult to remove.

Although *Thunbergia grandiflora* is a gorgeous blue climber, it doesn't know when to stop. Wonderful if confined to a fence or strong tree, it is impervious to brush killer and was impossible to dig up. It had taken off from a metal arch and climbed a dying hickory tree when I cut it down. Three years later, tendrils still look for the tree.

A small bamboo escaped its barrel recently. Once it found a crack in the staves it took off, coming up far afield, eluding any form of control.

I pull out, dig out, use weed and brush killer but nothing works for all of them, only some them. The lesson learned is: read, research, think and plant...and thank your friends quietly.

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