

SO IT GOES

BY JASON LOVE

I spend a lot of time apologising to my houseplants. It's not that I'm negligent; it's just that there is so much on TV. Sometimes I forget to water a plant for, say, October, and then, to make amends, turn a fire hose on the rest.

And the victims add up: ivies, climbers, berries, shrubs. I even killed a perennial (talk about false advertising). I'm not proud of this, *Gardener's World*. I feel awful every time it happens. With a short tribute, I bury the plants in bin liners, hoping the angels will water them with their tears.

It's a good thing we can't be tried for plant murder. I could just see the detective on my doorstep: "Broken stems, starved for water, cigarettes in the soil ... Yeah, this is our guy."

When I was a child, my mother said that I had green fingers. She was, unfortunately, talking about the digits with which I used to pick my nose. My relationship with nature went downhill from there.

Today my home is a nightmare to plants from all stalks of life. Some have already passed on; others are counting the days. They droop when I enter the room, trying to catch my attention before I find the remote. You can almost hear them gossip among themselves: "Can you believe he left *Fagus* dead in the plantpot? Talk about bad feng shui."

In my defence, the plants also die to insects, climate, and diseases normally confined to the tropics. Some plants, like ex-girlfriends, "just need room to grow"; others are so wasted from dehydration that they must be anorexic.

It is only for love of nature that I keep trying. I enjoy how plants grow up through cracks in the pavement and how, like the common nose hair, they always stretch toward the light. When I shop at the B&Q garden section, it is with a sense of possibility, as if I had never killed anyone. I read the labels and carefully weigh all of my options before making the wrong

decision. Two months later, you can't tell the flowers from the weeds unless you follow Gallagher's Theorem: "If you water it and it dies, it's a plant; if you don't water it and it grows, it's a weed."

For the record, *Gardener's World*, I have tried everything. For a time I watered the plants with Evian instead of tap water. Dead. I worked coffee grounds into their soil. Jittery, then dead. I even talked to the poor guys. I ask the plants how they felt about global warming and tension in the Middle East. I think they died to shut me up.

Snapshots at jasonlove.com



God answers what He thought were worldwide prayers for peas.

Maybe it's time to introduce plastic plants, which don't pester you with things like photosynthesis. I would have to find plastic plants that appear diseased so as to blend in with the others. Hell, while we're at it, I might as well get stuffed animals to replace those needy living ones.

Or maybe, at the risk of serial murder, I will carry on. Surely the angels will feel for my persistence. In fact, that's it. I am turning over a new leaf (ha). I will redouble my efforts to save this secret garden. Excuse me while I go out for some fresh seeds, a little pesticide, and, just in case, an economy pack of bin liners. ■