

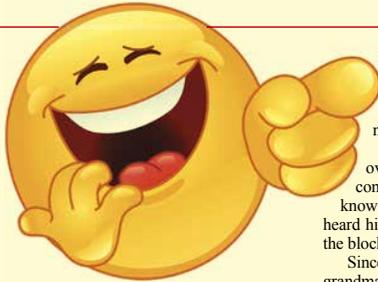
What's for Lunch?

ONE OF MY first jobs was to be a “shop kid” and truck driver for Siebers and Rasch, a foundry pattern shop on the south side of Milwaukee. I well recall working there in summer of 1973.

At noon, a food truck would pull up outside to sell hot sandwiches, snacks and beverages. Most of us carried lunch from home, but I loved Hostess chocolate cupcakes so much that I'd purchase some to have during my afternoon break.

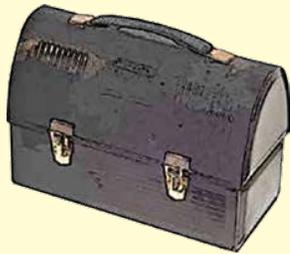
One day after lunch, I was sent on a delivery. As I returned in the truck, I daydreamed about those cupcakes waiting on my workbench. So I got a cup of coffee, walked into the shop and grabbed my cupcakes...or tried to!

Some joker had driven a nail dead center through each cupcake, fastening them to the bench! It wasn't hard to figure



Thanks For the Pranks

In honor of April Fools' Day, we're sharing some of our readers' most memorable practical jokes—from any time of year!



out Al was the culprit because he was the one laughing the loudest. I didn't know what I'd do, but a plan for revenge was soon put in place.

Now, Al loved his sandwiches—I once counted his daily consumption at eight. That evening, I happened to go to Goodwill to buy some new-to-me work clothes. There I spotted a big black lunch pail identical to Al's, so I bought it for \$1.

The next day, I hid Al's real lunch pail in the bottom of his workbench. Then I wedged my Goodwill purchase against one of my truck's tires. Come noon, it didn't take long for Al to begin yelling, “Where's my lunch!”

I let him rant for a while, then I hopped in the truck. “Hey, Al...here it is!” I yelled, while pointing out the window. Then I put the truck in gear and flattened the lunch pail.

Al's jaw dropped while the rest of the crew laughed uproariously.

I stepped out of the truck and began laughing at the astonished look on Al's face. He began chasing me and, laughing

as hard as I was, I could barely stay ahead of him. I made it to his workbench before he caught me, and I revealed the location of his lunch.

My cupcakes were never bothered again. —Greg Harding, West Bend

The Whiff of Spring

GROWING UP in Medford, my three brothers and I created our share of mischief. One day from 1967 comes to mind; I was 10 at the time and my brother Joel was 12.

We were walking downtown when I found a small plastic bottle labeled “sneezing powder”. In those days, you could buy such gag items in the back pages of comic books. Surely some other boy was distraught at the loss of his purchase, but his loss was our gain!

One of the first people we met on Main Street was a man with a flattop haircut, skinny tie and horn-rimmed glasses. It was Mayor Hodge, walking toward City Hall!

As he approached, we quickly whipped up the story that we were Boy Scouts and

were selling some nice scents.

The Mayor leaned forward for a sample sniff, and my brother squeezed a hearty blast into his nostril.

It worked! The poor mayor bent over and commenced sneezing uncontrollably. Good thing he didn't know us! We ran as fast as we could and heard his nonstop sneezing all the way up the block.

Since we'd run in the direction of our grandma's house, we decided to duck in there. Grandma opened the back door and we saw that she was hosting her bridge club. How proud she was to show off her “prized” grandchildren!

Of course, we offered her a sniff. Grandma leaned forward and we gave her a puff of the terrible powder. Her glasses flew off and she grabbed her handkerchief as she, too, sneezed unrelentingly.

It took a few days for our parents to find out how embarrassed Grandma was to walk back into her card game with her nose running and eyes watering. She's been gone 20 years now, and I so wish I could apologize again!

Knowing Grandma, I'm sure we'd also have a laugh. —Jim Brost, Medford

Short Stack

AFTER FARM CHORES on weekends, Dad would make a big breakfast. One time, we kids were excited to see pancakes were also on the menu—an unexpected treat!

We gave thanks, poured syrup over our stacks of golden cakes and quickly dug in. Some of us could cut them easily, but others couldn't.

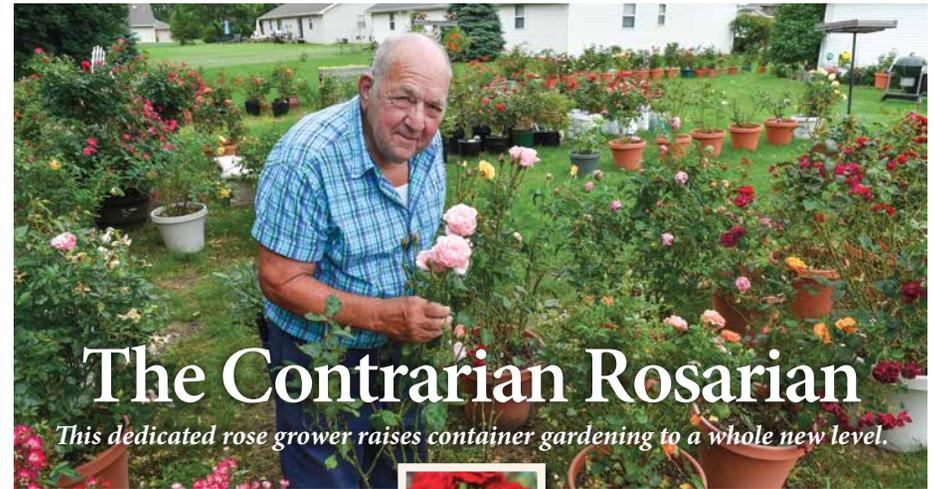
What was up?

We soon discovered Dad had slipped some circles of cut-up bedsheets between a few of the pancakes. Then we recalled the date: April 1.

—Cathy Campbell, Denmark



Foot Us Once! E-mail the funniest practical joke you can recall to: editors@OurWisconsinMag.com and put “Thanks for the Pranks” in the subject line. To send by postal mail, see page 5.



The Contrarian Rosarian

This dedicated rose grower raises container gardening to a whole new level.

By Tina Gohr, Kewaunee, Wisconsin

THINGS are coming up roses in Carl Christensen's yard, where pails never fail.

More than 300 plastic buckets stand here from spring through fall, when folks come to see a colorful show put on by the multiple varieties of roses he grows.

This retired paper mill worker in De Pere takes container gardening to a whole new level. You might say the work done by an average rose grower pales in comparison.

“Right now, all those 5-gallon buckets are stored for winter in an old horse barn 4 miles away,” Carl says. “On April 1, I'll rent a U-Haul and start moving them back.” It takes three trips with the truck to transport the plants.

“There's no dolly, either. I haul all those buckets by hand. I'll tell ya, your back is broke when you get done with that job!”

Come fall, Carl reverses the process, renting the truck a second time to hand-haul his buckets back to the barn.

“My friend Margie says I'm nuts, and maybe I am,” laughs this widower with a passion for plants.

“But the enjoyment of seeing people's faces light up is so worth it. They come here and I like to answer their questions. I give away some roses too. I try to keep up with the newer varieties coming out every year.”

Enjoy a Bloomin' Show

On the day I visited Carl, I saw a sea of eye-popping color. Roses bordered his property two-pails deep. Still more rows occupied the remaining lawn all the way to the home's patio, which holds even more blooms.

“You can place containers to decorate a patio, deck, balcony, a wedding site—anywhere color and fragrance is desired,” he says.

Many gardeners are afraid of growing roses. According to Carl, “Any rose can be grown in a pail. I know what the book says, but this is the way I do it.”

Skeptics need only look at this photo of Carl (above). Better yet, come visit his neighborhood, where he has been growing container roses for 40 years. Before you run out and buy your



BUCKETS OF BLOSSOMS. Carl Christensen's backyard contains more than 400 colorful roses in multiple varieties.

rosebushes, Carl says, remember that roses grown in buckets require more attention than those in a garden. The biggest thing to watch is watering—sun, air and wind can dry the plants out.

You can use any container deep enough to allow roots to grow straight down...that's why a 5-gallon vessel is just about perfect. Ideally, a container should be 12 to 16 inches across on top. If you're using a plastic bucket, a minimum of three 1/2-inch drain holes should be drilled in the bottom.

Shares Tips for Success

Put in a couple inches of commercial topsoil, then a couple inches of humus (compost). The remaining soil should be potting mix. It's best to purchase a disease-resistant shrub rose. Most roses fall into that category.

“Plant the bush so the base, or knot, is at ground level, not below,” Carl advises. “And it doesn't hurt to sprinkle some compost on top,” he adds.

Carl waters his roses every other day. They require more feeding too—he recommends fertilizing every 2 weeks. And watch for pests, particularly Japanese beetles. Sevin dust can help.

“Roses will do as well as the effort you put into them,” Carl notes. The bushes need at least 6 hours of sun each day. Less sun means fewer flowers. Deadheading, or snipping off spent flowers, directs more energy into new blooms.

Carl traces his love of roses to a school field trip when, at age 5, he saw a colorful garden. Today, his place is the destination of many garden and rose clubs. He's currently president of the Gardeners Club of Green Bay and first vice president of the Gardeners of America, with members in 31 states.

Waving his arm like a rainbow above his yard of bountiful roses, Carl says, “Dollar for dollar, the right rose is the cheapest flower you can buy. They can bloom all the time. Plant one in a pail and you can bring it back next summer and place it anywhere you want. Try doing that with an annual!”

Carl is happy to answer rose fanciers' questions. For information or to schedule a visit, e-mail him at CChristensen14@new.rr.com.