



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Floral Infanticide

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Deer Off: A commercial product that prevents deer from eating certain flora.

Roundup: A commercial product that kills certain flora.

2014 was the year I was going to pitch-in and help my wife, Holly, with the grass, shrubs, trees, bushes, and flower gardens that surround our home in Hayden, Idaho. I took responsibility for re-planting selected flowers (selected by Holly), killing-off undesirable species of vegetation, and fending-off hordes of predatory deer from having one of their favorite meals in our yard: Holly's flowers.

Holly does the bulk of the horticulture around our home, as these tasks require a modicum of skill. Nonetheless, a few weeks ago, she supervised my moving a few plants to other locations, as I could not do much harm executing this operation. She took on planting over 100 newly-purchased flowers.

Upon finishing this task, she left town on some business. Before departing, I was instructed to buy *Roundup* and apply to places in which rogue grass, weeds, and dandelions were sneaking up on innocent plant life. I was also to buy *Deer Off* and spray it on the newly planted flowers. She left for California, and I left for the local hardware store to purchase bottles of *Roundup* and *Deer Off*.

Sprayless Sprayers

I am amazed by the number of products consumers buy that are contained in spray bottles that do not spray the content in these bottles. Some of the nozzles on these bottles are adjustable to supposedly spray a concentrated stream of the liquid or a finer mist. I find these two adjustments often take the form of spraying nothing or scattering a dribble of mist sideways. I often have to transfer the contents in the bottle to an empty bottle of Windex. (I am happy to report that Windex works as does its sprayer.)

Taking no chances with the *Roundup* and *Deer Off* bottles, I took a short-cut and purchased two empty sprayer bottles at the hardware store. I have had great success buying such a product, as it actually sprays. In fact, these specialized products are noted for their spraying prowess. With my newly appointed responsibilities, I was not going to take a chance of returning home with spray bottles that did not spray.

I had scores of infant flowers in my care whose lives depended on the application of *Deer Off* that very day. The deer make regular raids on our yard. They also post sentries in the area. The job of the sentries is to signal to their comrades when rookie plants have been planted. Unless a person is physically present or a smelly chemical is in the air, the other deer immediately leave a nearby bivouac to attack the plants. They always hone in on the newest plantings and take no prisoners. Thus, I needed to spray *Deer Off* on Holly's baby plants as soon as possible.

Transfer and Application of Contents

I did not bother testing the sprayers on the *Roundup* and *Deer Off* bottles. I had purchased several bottles of each and intended to enter into a long-range spraying program. I

¹ Wilted flower on cover sourced from keying in "Wilted Flowers." No copyright cited.

expected the specialized sprayers to outperform the wannabes; hence, the direct use of the professionals. When in a bind, go with the best. The result was the transfer of the liquids into two high-powered sprayers, one seen in Figure 1. Notice the special sprayer (in the middle) is taller than the other two sprayers. Tallness is important to us humans. It conveys superiority to things less tall. Clearly, the sprayer in the middle is more awesome than the others. Just look at that rooster-like comb on its top.



Figure 1. An Awesome sprayer.

I made the transfers of Roundup and Deer Off into the generic bottles, then...ring, ring, a cell phone call came in. The call required I return to my office to log onto the Internet. That I did, and there I remained for three hours. When I returned to my spraying task, it was nearing darkness. Luckily, the deer must have been marauding a neighbor's pansies and not yet eaten any of the *fabulous one hundred* in our yard.

I picked up the Deer Off bottle first and sprayed the newly planted flowers. There was some light left, so I finished the yard tasks for the

day by spraying Roundup on the villain flora.

A couple days later, I noticed all the newly-planted plants were dying. Not one, not two, all of them. How could that be? Holly has a green thumb. Even her fingers are green. The plants she plants usually thrive.

No! Could I have used the wrong bottles on the flowers? Could I have put Roundup on the flowers and Deer Off on the weeds?

I ran into the garage to re-check the bottles. Because of the Internet interruption a couple days before, I had not taken the time to label the two new bottles. Their contents are almost identical in looks: a semi-thick creamy liquid, slightly brown.

Upon examination, I could not tell them apart. On the evening of their first use, after the Internet call, I had assumed the Roundup bottle was to the right as I faced it, and the Deer Off bottle was to my left. Now, after smelling the two, I realized I had mixed-them-up two days before, and had spent two days devoutly doing my duty with the wrong bottle in hand.

I had committed floral infanticide. Not only that, I had protected rogue flora, which would ethnically cleanse the yard.

Making Amends

Surprised at and disgusted with myself, I had to fix matters. I hurried back to the hardware store, because it also sold baby flowers. Several metal racks in front of the store held these products, but the pickings were few.

- I asked the cashier, "Any more flowers than those out front?"
- "For now, no. New shipments are due in two days."
- I did not have two days to waste, "I'll take what you have available."
- "I'll have a clerk give you a hand."
- I hurried back to the front of the store to begin my mass selection of flowers in an attempt to hide my use of a weapon of flower mass destruction.

- A clerk arrived, “Which ones do you want?”
- “Almost all of them.”
- “Pick’um out, and I’ll load’um up.”

I opted for the most colorful petals, had him put them in my vehicle, paid for them, and rushed back to the house to: (a) dig up the dead bodies, (b) remove the poisoned soil that had surrounded them, (c) refurbish the holes with fresh soil and fertilizer, (d) begin the replanting, and (e) encounter six days of rain, having planted only a few of the replacements.

True to the old saying, “Past shame, past grace,” I came clean with a call to Holly. I explained the massacre, my plans for the reincarnation, and how the weather had stymied my noble intentions. True to a fine mate and a practical gardener, she dismissed my error, and asked what kinds of flowers I had purchased. My reply of “mostly whites, reds, purples, and blues” was not what she had in mind, but I was not aware of this fact until she returned from her trip.

In assessing the final damage, I discovered I had assassinated not only 100 new plants, but 58 of Holly’s prized Primroses. They had once graced the perimeter of one of her favorite flower beds. I was guilty of more than floral infanticide, I was the liquidator of adults as well.

Once again, true to a fine mate and practiced gardener, Holly left the matter behind with, “I’ll take care of the purchases.” As my eyes glazed over, she informed me my selections did not meet the needs of the yard in relation to perennials, annuals, and deciduous things. She then used a marker to label my two generic bottles. I took her action to mean that in spite of my sin, I had not been completely banned from the garden.

By the way, pay me a visit. I have about 100 flowers in the garage. I’ll let you have at a deep discount. While awaiting your arrival, I’ll make sure to keep them properly sprayed.