

IN THE GARDEN WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz

No Impatiens



Group barrels of coleus together for a startling effect

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

Here's one for you. I have an area in my garden that gets very bright, diffused light but no hot, direct sun. I'd like to put some large tubs of color out there but the sunny, summer annuals I've tried such as petunias, zinnias and marigolds don't get quite enough light to do well. Please don't tell me to plant impatiens because my husband hates them and the mess created by their fallen petals. Got any suggestions? Thanks.

Signed,
Brighton Shadee

Dear Brighton,

I have advice for you: plant some coleus. Okay, okay I know you're thinking of those old fashioned red leggy things that your granny grew on the porch out at the summerhouse but no, some of today's coleus have very large and very crazy splashy colorful foliage. These new super-coleus are the Jackson Pollocks of the plant world and the color combinations are too numerous for me to list. But wait, there's more. Some even have zig-



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Coleus in
splashy reds
and yellows
brighten up a
shady spot in
the garden



Get Professional Help

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I had a drip irrigation system installed a while back that now needs "tweaking." Having watched the ease with which professionals connected lines and emitters, I thought I could undertake simple repairs myself.

First I tried to fix a cut drip line but for ten minutes I wrestled a coupling like it was an alligator in a death roll. My hands and arms were near cramping when I finally gave up.

Still thinking I could change emitters and risers on spaghetti line, it took much less time to realize I couldn't do that either as the tubing just seemed too stiff and narrow to make the connections fit.

What's the deal, Mr. Greenjeans? Help!

Signed,
Irrigatingly Irritated

Dear Irritated,

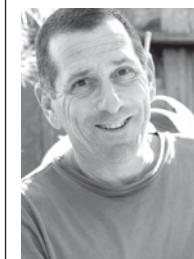
If you're asking me why you had such difficulty fitting your couplings, risers and emitters together it could be a case of ITDS or Irrigation Technical Difficulty Syndrome. Here are a few causes of ITDS:

- The drip line or spaghetti tubing is too rigid, causing it to become kinked and generally awkward and uncooperative. Try putting the roll or spool in the sun for a little while to soften it up. This will make it more flexible and easy to work with.

- If you can't pop holes into the drip line while installing emitters, you probably left the drip line in the sun too long resulting in the plastic collapsing under the pressure of the hole punch. Use a newer punch as those things go dull or often don't even work when new.

- If you are unable to get the drip line into the coupling, it could be the wrong size coupling. The stuff you buy at a real irrigation store is not necessarily the exact same size as the stuff you get at a hardware or home center. It looks the same but trust me friend, it's different and there's no way you can use the two together. I've been down that road.

On the other hand if you're asking me why professional irrigation guys make it look as easy as playing with Legos, it's probably for the same reason that I put the new 30 weight motor oil into the hole marked radiator the last time I did an oil change by myself.



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever "Peaches." He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to greenjeansmr@verizon.net.

zaggy-shaped leaves and others that resemble duck feet.

In bright shade, coleus are easy to grow, rarely bothered by pests and thrive with consistent watering and some food if you feel like it. Pinch off the flowers as they bloom and plants will stay full, lush and compact.

In the fall, take some cuttings indoors and keep them going until the following spring when they can again go outside to create another show.

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