

Happy Thanksgiving, Y'all!

Looks like it's that time of the year again when the hummingbirds fly the coop.

You'll be glad to know I'm not going to bore you to death with inside renovations of the house this year. About the only things I've worked on is removing an old chimney, patching the ceiling from that and from the wall that was taken out when I did the guest bedroom, plus I removed that big box ceiling fan and sealed up that hole. A picture would only show a boring blank ceiling.

All of last years newsletter projects were finished projects or project components. And what I have planned to do next are the kitchen and bathroom renovations, which require a lot of pre-prep work under the floor in order to install all new plumbing. You can read that as a LOT of digging. I estimate that I have (since I started digging down there) removed over FIFTEEN THOUSAND buckets of dirt from under the house. So it has consumed a lot of my time as well, not to mention where to GO with all that clay too.

One of the first things I did after taking care of the spring chores was to make a temporary patio outside our back door, which is our kitchen door and the main door we use. Nothing fancy, as I'm working on a larger patio up further in the back yard, which is where a lot of the dirt is being dumped to get it up to level up there.



After digging out the earth until level, I added a layer of 30 lb roofing felt I had on hand to help block some of the weeds.



The brown is Pathway style mulch. The original mulch I used was Mickel Bark, but the picture on the left, taken some time later, is a newer layer of Pine Bark.



In the background under the umbrella, where the red cart and upside down chair are, you can see where the new real patio will be located, once that area is filled up to make it level.

One thing about owning DOGS and having a doggie door all their own, especially dogs that dig in good ole sandy Tennessee red clay from time to time, is they tend to not wipe their feet before coming into the house. Needless to say, they make a dirt path inside the house, hi hi.....

Debi came up with a WONDERFUL idea! Pretend they are all SUPERMODELS and build them a nice LONG carpeted runway, OUTSIDE, so by the time they make it into the house, their feet are at least a little bit clean. SUPER IDEA, so it was added to my Honey-Do List! Did I mention that my Honey-Do List is on Rolls? 400 sheet rolls too, 2 ply, 48 per case.

Naturally, we would want the doggie run covered with a roof and fenced in as well, so they had to run the entire length of it to get inside. BUT, if I make the top FLAT, I could use it as a workbench, or even better, a place to set plants on. That's it, a plant bench! Perfect! The carpeted ramp is sloped with a 4 inch drop in 16 feet and the bench top is sloped with a 1 inch drop in 16 feet, plus a ¼ inch back to front drop.



The doggie run was stained in redwood, also the wall because the mangy mutts would get it dirty too quick enough. Then I added some dark green mesh screening over it. I'm not including a picture of that step because it will appear in other pictures.

Well, the doggie run still needs a roof, RIGHT! Fiberglass is cheaper than Cedar Shake, RIGHT! Wolmanized lumber is cheaper than pre-cuts! RIGHT! And of course, if I want it to work out right it has to be sized for a standard size screen door. Only makes sense to put the door in first then, RIGHT!

If you haven't figured it out yet, a simple 16 foot doggie run is turning out in MY FAVOR, it's quickly becoming a summer greenhouse. Just in case I get shoved out the doggie door too!



Here is the rough-in framing. I was staining some of the lumber each evening when I was finished with that days construction. And I wanted to stain between the lumber as well for moisture protection.



Left is framing done. Right is staining all finished. I will be using welded wire fabric for the bench tops.



Fairly hard to see this small, but the clear sheeting is up, the roof is on and all the benches are covered with the welded wire fabric.

### BIG PROBLEM!

They sent OPAQUE instead of Translucent WHITE sheeting for the roof.

I must have been tired and didn't catch this until AFTER I had installed it. NO REFUNDS with holes in it, so I'm stuck with it.



No one had the particular translucent I wanted in stock locally. I had one clear piece left over and purchased two super cheap translucent blue, until I can afford to redo the whole roof in a smoke shade, which actually lets more light through than the translucent white, and looks better.

To me, the roof looks downright UGLY right now. Glad it's only temporary!

I started hauling a few plants up from my hole in the ground as soon as the stain smell was gone.

I chose this picture because it shows the screening over the doggie run and the bench tops the clearest of all I have taken so far.

It looks a little sparse because many of the plants were moved outside after spending a week or two in here first to get acclimated to higher light than I have in the hole in the ground.



I have plants located all over the place outside, depending upon what stage of growth they are in, and how much acclimation they have received.

From my growing area downstairs, they go into the greenhouse first to harden up a little, then to an area alongside the garage, and then finally the full sun plants get moved back by the kitchen door.

I will include at least one picture of the greenhouse while it was packed fairly heavily.



It's always hard to figure out which picture to use when you want to show somebody something, since each one is a different angle and one just don't show the best of everything.

ALL of these plants were in the greenhouse until they were placed out here.

The tall plants are Brugmansias, and all the flats of plants are ground covers of various types.

And here is one last peek inside the greenhouse, before we move everything down into the basement for the winter. The photo below is in the basement.



As you can see, it REALLY IS a jungle down there.

The plastic boxes on the right of the picture with plants inside of them, is just a couple of feet on this side of the center of the basement. My hole in the ground I have been digging out for years now, hi hi....

And last but not least, that ditch by the road that I am working on getting it to the point I won't ever have to mow it again. Unfortunately, I'm still a long way from finished with it down there. But at least I make a little more headway each summer along with everything else I need to take care of each week.

If you remember from last years newsletter, I had just planted the row of bushes, installed the plastic bricks for that part of the temporary retaining wall, and built a wooden retaining wall around the water meter box. A few plants were just planted, but had not yet grown at all.

Taking things in order here, I was given a couple of Yucca's that I planted at the far end of the ditch along with some Coreopsis that I planted last fall, it is now in bloom. Since taking this photo I have planted some Cordata between the Yucca and Coreopsis. Both of these plants die back in the winter.



The birdbath in the wedge of the front yard is so I don't have to trim. The mulch is at the same arc my riding lawn mower makes when I turn.



What I have done here is begun work on a simulated creek of sorts. Adding this wood (because it's cheaper than 1/2 width pipe) is just the start. It also raises the angle of the dirt considerably on each side.

These boards will be lined with heavy mill plastic and then the edges covered with flagstone. SOME DAY!

Note how the Lemon Thyme has grown by the water meter lid.

This longer view, toward the pipe under the driveway, might give you an idea of how DEEP this ditch was before I began adding all this fill dirt recently. Needless to say, the bottom of the ditch was as low as the bottom of the drain pipe and sloped downhill toward the under road drain in the center between the driveway and left property line.



At that steep of an angle, it was very hard to get anything to grow. Water would just run off and the hot sun would fry everything.

Well, I see I have a WHOLE extra page to work on here, hi hi.....

Since I was actually done with what I had to show. I'll just add a couple of pictures from last years newsletter as a reminder of what it was THEN, compared to NOW.

NOTICE how those BUSHES have grown in only one year!



This photo was taken last year, just after I finished building the wood retaining wall around the water meter.

The temporary plastic brick retaining wall was not yet installed up near the grassy area. The under road drain is at that location.

Notice how steep the fill dirt is and how far below the water meter the drain channel is located.

To the right is just a memory jogger from last year of the start of the plastic block retaining wall.



And left, how it looked just after being planted.

Below is a view of the ditch as it looks today, after a heavy trimming.



We all, miss Y'all, not having the chance to get home very often.

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to Y'all.  
Love Gary, Debi, Maw, and all the critters. Moocher (my parrot) said Bye Bye too!