



Bloom Where You're Planted

I'VE ALWAYS CLAIMED MAY AS ONE OF my favorite months. The grass is revitalized after a long winter lying pinned under frozen boulders of dirty snow. Lush, green and offering a sweet scent, the lawns are perking to life and adding vibrant hues to any outdoor scene. The flowers are at the height of perfection: blooming, colorful, scented and not yet withered by the scorching heat of summer. Let's be honest, even a dandelion is a beautiful sight, with its yellow mop top, after a winter void of color. There is something fabulous about May, as if you are standing at the top of a slide, well aware of all the fun that waits in the coming months of warmth and sunshine, and savoring all of the anticipation before setting off onto the adventure.

The month of May is a busy one for Spokane. Sure, we get the standard-issue 31 days for the month, but it is what we fill it with that makes a difference. For starters, there is Bloomsday, the day that makes *everyone* feel like a runner. I have to admit; the last Bloomsday I ran was in 2008. I get a wee bit cranky in tight spaces, where people are prone to stepping on my feet. Despite the lack of a number pinned to my shirt, or my presence in the throngs of people bobbing up and down along the streets of Spokane, I am a big fan of the event. There is something so comforting and hometown about seeing the crowds that support Bloomsday. From the beloved vulture at the top of Doomsday Hill, to the rock bands that perform along the route, Bloomsday is so much more than the 7.46 miles of roadway or the 53,000-plus registrants; Bloomsday is the spirit of Spokane shining at its best for one beautiful weekend in May.

Just one week later is Mother's Day. My mom's favorite Mother's Day gift is always flowers. Not the kind delivered in a vase by the FTD delivery truck – though I am sure

she wouldn't object – but the kind found in plastic planting containers at the nursery. For Mother's Day, we usually journey to Liberty Park Florist, where she combs through rows of petunias, impatiens, hydrangeas, Dusty Miller and more, looking for just the right combination of flowers to brighten the front of the house. The flowers may be for her, but in reality, the gift is for our family and friends to delight in any time we walk by the front of her house, or sit on the porch enjoying a spring evening. Of course that's the way it is with mothers, isn't it? Sacrificial, nothing is ever really for them, it is always for all of us.

I love watching the transformation of my mom's flowers throughout the season. When she first plants them, they are tiny, shy little things standing a cool stranger-length away from the other flowers in the flowerbed, looking very independent and aloof. They are tame and in control, offering just a hint of color. Once they get nestled into their spot in the ground, or up in the flower boxes, they start to stretch their roots, digging deep into the dirt and relaxing a little. As the weeks go by, they grow more vibrant and large, expanding their territory. Soon their leaves are nestled up against those of their nearest neighbor, intertwining and making a lush, leafy, floral carpet. The flowers grow taller and thicker, and soon the dirt of the bed is filled in completely, and the front yard bursts with color and scent.

The flowers are a little bit like life. When we start out somewhere – whether it is a new city, a new job or a new group – we may be the only petunia in the bunch, and feel like we are alone in a dirt field. The more we push ourselves, stretch, grow and drink deep from the blessings that are showered down upon us, the stronger and more vibrant we grow. In a community like ours, as we all grow and blend together, the vast spaces between us disappear, and our leaves start to intertwine as we build lasting relationships and combine our forces to make a beautiful scene.

So what is it that feeds a community like ours, and helps us grow from a bunch of lone, independent flowers into such a beautiful display? It is everything – the places, the events, the businesses, the resources and most of all, the people – that feed our roots and makes us so beautiful and vibrant. Sometimes it is difficult to get out of the metaphorical flowerbed to see it all that is going on around us, so I hope to bring some of those great things about our community to you through these pages. Whether it is the story of volunteers serving local military veterans (p. 46), a world-class artist visiting a local university (p. 151), a round up of the movers and shakers in this town (p. 105), or the story of a young amputee who is challenging us all to get up and go (p. 21), there is plenty in our town that enriches us, and the following pages will highlight some of it.

Though sometimes in life, things look like they'd be better in a different place - or a different flowerbed - the truth is, there is so much beauty right here where we are. So, bloom where you're planted – because this is a pretty great place to be!

Blythe