



A large red stag showing off his impressive antlers for us. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

Safari in South America

I have reached the age where I can look back and wonder “what could have been.”

I don’t really like to do that because it would symbolize that I have grown up and there is nothing left to do. My wife of many years was hinting that perhaps it is time I start acting my age a little better than I have been because I no longer heal from the injuries as fast as I used to. There may be a little bit of truth to that, but we will let the idea ride.

We have returned from a 10-day safari into the Argentinian backcountry, or travesia, and have suffered the usual amount of equipment failures and a few body failures thrown in. Safari is usually a term reserved for trips to Africa to hunt dangerous game and observe or photograph exotic species native to the area.

In the last hundred years, Argentina has become a hunting paradise. Many species, including red deer, water buffalo, fallow deer, axis deer, sheep and rams of all sorts, and blackbuck antelope have all been successfully introduced and I am happy to report, all doing well.

Safaris are usually conducted on foot, with vehicles to bring you, and equipment to a certain area, but from there on, it is the boot leather express. We generally walked 12 to 18 miles a day through the scrub brush and thorn country. The ground is littered with holes dug by an overabundance of armadillos.

These creatures dig holes in search of food, shelter, or just to be an annoyance. They are completely without regard for the poor clumsy person who is trying to traverse the same countryside and stepping into these indiscriminately dispersed holes is a regular occurrence.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

The result can be a sprain, broken bone, or in our case, bruising to the extremities and ego when you do a faceplant in the dirt. It is interesting to note that the guides rarely, if at all, stumble in these armadillo holes.

I am glad to report that the insect life was practically nonexistent. The reason might be that the seasons there are opposite of ours, and April is in their autumn, so the temperatures were low enough to keep the insects and snakes burrowed in the ground. Fine by me.

In a safari style hunt, you carry everything that may be needed on your person. This includes a backpack with extra clothes, snacks, water, cameras, and any other gear you want during the day. I might caution you to carry only what you need, leaving the extras back at camp as the packs tend to get heavier as the day progresses.

Folks associate safari with dangerous game, and Argentina has a fair population for those of you wishing to encounter something that is not particularly frightened of you and does not run away. The prime example would be the water buffalo, who is larger in size, than their cousin, the cape buffalo. This 2000-pound animal has horns, 3 feet across, hooves as big around as a frisbee, and when they look at you, he already does not like you.

If that is not enough, there is a resident population of puma, a relative

of the Colorado mountain lion. I have never seen one there, but I have stumbled on their kills of game that could not get away, so they are there.

The providence we were visiting is called La Pampa, and most of the countryside is covered in a thick brush, like our oak brush, except theirs has thorns an inch long. These thorns will work their way through the soles of your boots, causing an immediate trailside stop, as you use the pliers on your Leatherman to extract the offending thorn. This happened multiple times throughout the day so a good multitool is essential.

The area has a slow rolling hills appearance and is low in altitude, around 1,000 feet. This is great for Colorado mountain people, as it was low enough that I was not sucking air from the rafters. It was quite pleasant to walk around on that terrain.

The rainy season had not kicked in yet, but this area gets around 30 inches of annual precipitation. Most of the countryside was green and not too dry, although the locals were conducting some controlled burns in the general area we hunted.

We saw wildlife everywhere we went. Red deer stags were in the middle of their rut, which is called the roaring season. The roar, like an elk bugle but more of a deep growl, could be heard throughout the day as they were busy rutting and fighting with other stags over the hinds.

As with any trip of this intensity, the equipment takes a beating. We lost an eyepiece for a pair of binoculars, causing us to have to share the other pair the entire trip. Next time, I will pack an extra set of eyepieces.

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Arbor Day perfect time to dig into gardening



Gardening A to Z

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

Have you heard? Today is National Arbor Day.

Even if you’re not planting a tree in celebration of Arbor Day, it’s a great time to take a stroll through your yard and evaluate the health of your trees and maybe even do a little yard work. There’s so much going on in the landscape right now.

Hopefully you’ve had time to clean up any of last fall’s leaves that were still around and cut off the ugly dead foliage from last year’s flowers and shrubs. I always like to add some new mulch to brighten up the area and give it a clean fresh look.

April showers have been so appreciated but tend to bring not only spring flowers but the inevitable weeds. Controlling them when they’re young is so much easier than dealing with huge mature plants, especially after they’ve gone to seed.

Dragging a hoe over small weeds makes quick work of hoeing. I often hear someone say they used an herbicide but it didn’t work. That’s usually because the wrong product was used or it was applied at the wrong time. I’ll be covering this in my pesticide talk on May 3. You can contact the Montrose Library if you’re interested in attending.

I’ve seen a few roses that were heavily pruned last fall and I’m sorry to say, that was one of the worse things a person could have done to their poor rose. These roses were pruned to a height of about 1 or 2 inches tall and I really doubt if these rose bushes are going to survive.

It’s best to wait until two weeks before the last average hard frost in the spring to prune roses, which is about the first part of May. At that time, Tea roses should be pruned leaving approximately six of the strongest and healthiest canes. Remove dead canes and the weak, spindly canes at ground level.

Also remove canes growing towards the



If you haven’t been in a garden center yet this spring you don’t know what you’re missing. It will definitely lift your spirits. (Submitted photo/Linda Corwine McIntosh)

center of the plant and any that are crossed and rubbing.

Prune living green canes making your cuts at a 30 to 45-degree angle, cutting about one-quarter inch above a live bud with the bud eye pointing outward from the plant.

Place a dab of Elmer’s carpenter’s glue or a rose sealer on the cut to keep stem cane corers from tunneling into the canes.

If you find your rose already has holes and dead canes from the borers, cut the cane off below the darkened hollowed damage leaving green healthy wood and seal the cut.

Arbor Day is a great time to check your trees for broken branches or trunk damage.

The spring winds have been hard on a lot of trees. If you find a branch needs pruned don’t cut into the trunk where the branch is attached.

You should also check the irrigation to the trees when you turn on the water for the season. If you planted new trees within the past few years, the irrigation should be changed as the tree matures. Move the drips away from the trunks of trees that have been planted more than a couple of years. The drips should be placed at the outside of the drip zone, or pointed in a direction away from the trunk. Remove the ties and guides from trees that have been planted for two years or more if the tree has become established.

If you’re planting a tree this year, don’t be afraid to ask questions before

you buy your tree. Make sure the mature tree will fit into your location. Look up to see if there are overhead wires above the planting site that will interfere with the branches.

Knowing the tree’s water needs is also wise.

I strongly advise you plant a variety of trees. A monoculture of one species may lead to serious pest or disease problems. And besides, a variety of trees just looks good!

Be sure you don’t plant your new tree too deep! I say this because that’s one of the most common mistakes that I see. A shallow, wide planting hole is the key to success. Dig no deeper than the depth of the root-ball of the tree and add one part organic material, such as compost, to two parts soil to backfill the hole. Adding more “goodies” than this to your soil will make the new hole so desirable that the roots will continue to grow in the circle of the planting hole and not expand outward. This brings me to the second biggest problem that I come across which is, roots that are wrapped around and around instead of going outward like a healthy root system should.

Often times, roots will wrap around the inside of the pot that it grew in at the nursery. As the tree grows, these roots will wrap around the trunk of the tree, actually strangling the tree. Making sure the roots are loosened and not wrapped in the shape of the pot before planting can prevent this.

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