

YOUR WISH IS.....The Sod Jobber

"SOME MAY COME and some may go, but I go on for ever." Tennyson originally penned these lines, as you are doubtless aware, to describe jobs in the garden. And there is a certain lyrical quality to gardening at my age — a sort of poetry in slow motion. But he was right: gardening jobs are sequential. Build a conservatory, dig a pond and before you can say "Percy Thrower" the boss is enquiring what you plan to do with the land in between the two.

"Such a silly little piece of lawn — no use to man or croquet ball."

Short pause as the horticultural knife twists.

"I'm sure a new flower bed would look good there."

Her wish is my command. Alternative suggestions are treated with counselling smiles and folded arms. The message is clear: over to you, old son.

Perfection would be demanded. No point in just digging over the whole area or my weekly ration of jam doughnuts would be severely curtailed. No; the turf must be removed first. Cutting neat little patterns with my metronomic spade and then it was down to one knee before the boss's approving gaze. Like the horror sequel to "Osteopathy 2" I leant far forward lunging under the turf with my spade, vertebrae squealing in protest. Levering up each turf revealed a battalion of newly beheaded kamikaze worms. On the fence a robin licked its beak.

Barrow loads of turf disappeared. The process lost its precision, neat turfs lost their symmetry. As a friend remarked, my noble calling to the teaching profession made me ideally suited to dealing with sods of all shapes and sizes.

Once cleared, we were left with a seemingly polished brown sheen of achievement. Coffee was served vertically lest complacency set in. Then with a sigh and a fork I began to dig over the surface. Great gobbins of clay welled up from the infertile depths. And the boss had spotted them. Wordlessly I headed for the compost corner, returning with barrow loads of leaf mould and sand. Thus veneered and chopped up, a neat edge was dug and I returned to the shed, tired with a capital K! Still, nothing that an hour long jacuzzi in 50% whisky, 50% Sloan's Liniment wouldn't put right.

But it was well worth it. Within a fortnight, 'she-who-works-wonders-with-a-thimble-sized-trowel' had planted up the new bed with a selection of seedlings, cuttings and transplants. A mature spirea goldflame defied its summer uplift to dominate the bed whilst decorative cabbages, rudbeckias and a golden marjoram completed the view.

We looked warmly at our success before taking an evening stroll around the garden.

Suddenly a certain person caught sight of the turfs — "Now wouldn't it look nice if....."

AAARGHHHHHH!!