

## Nature Girl and the Nature Babies

As we all know, summer is the time when babies get bigger and begin to start to act like adults. It can't be too soon for Nature Girl.

The baby birds around her house (where she has MANY bird feeders) are all INCREDIBLY greedy and NOISY. The baby orioles are fat, noisy, greedy, hungry, noisy, and greedy, not to mention fat. The poor parents are losing a lot of weight as they stuff that grape jelly down the baby throats.

The baby blue jays are fat, noisy, greedy, just like the baby orioles, but they're also CLUMSY and they've found that they can cling to the screens on Nature Girl's porch and rest. Of course, they've also found that the cats inside the porch can't get them, no matter how the cats claw at the screens. Nature Girl has had to hang streamers off her porch to try to keep the young birds away. It's either that or have cats with nervous breakdowns.

The baby woodpeckers have found that when there's a queue at the suet feeder, they can cling to the railings on Nature Girl's deck and practice their pecking technique on the railings. One of Nature Girl's cats has been given many a headache as she slams into the door, trying to lunge at the baby woodies.

Then there's the WhistlePig Twins. Yes, twins. Dad (or Mom, it's hard to tell with these animals) has shown the twins where the entrances are to the Nature Girl Groundhog Feeding Area (also known as The Flower Beds). The twins have a marvelous time SQUASHING the pansies by sitting on them while they chew on the black-eyed Susans, DIGGING up the hyssop to get at the seeds in the ground, and crashing around the planting shed in search of seeds.

They've tasted almost every plant in the feeding area and spit out those that they didn't like. They've learned to enjoy the taste of black pepper on the leaves of plants, and they shrug off cayenne pepper as though it was a condiment. Very little will stop them EXCEPT the element of surprise. They really hate to be observed while eating, as Nature Girl has discovered. She even surprised one piglet and discovered that when they're REALLY scared they run with all 4 feet off the ground (but with their big bellies almost touching it). This would have been comical if the piglet didn't have a large fern in its mouth as it ran.

Because the twins are smaller than the Grown Ups (the twins are about 15 lbs each, the size of a hefty cat), they've discovered new places in the fence where they can SQUEEZE under the fence and escape. Therefore, all those spots that Nature Girl THOUGHT were groundhog-proof are now no longer groundhog-proof. She found this out when she walked out onto her deck one day and heard a panicked scratching in the leaves against the fence. She got the binoculars and saw a frightened whistle-piglet scabbling in the ground, pushing at the fence and squeezing through a tiny space.

The bright spot in all of this is that by now all plants which are delicious by WhistlePig standards have been eaten and almost all that remains are those which are non-tasty. Of course, there's many large bare spots in the Groundhog Feeding Area where new non-tasty plants have just been installed (at no small expense to Nature Girl's pocket). But hopefully by next year all tasty plants will be gone, Nature Girl will have updated her "NEVER plant these plants where WhistlePigs live" list, and the non-tasty plants will be big and beautiful.

In short, it is Gardening as Usual.