



Dave Rees/Columbia Daily Tribune

It's gardening time in Missouri and that means Ray Rothenberger, friend of the flower, promoter of the plant and state horticulture extension specialist in the College of Agriculture, is busy.

No doubt many Missouri gardens have the Rothenberger touch because his methods of disseminating gardening information are just about as effective as dandelion seeds blowing in the wind. He writes "The Missouri Gardener," a column that appears in 40 Missouri newspapers, as well as monthly articles for *Flower and Garden* magazine. Then there are the five-minute weekly tapes that are aired on 35 Missouri radio stations, call-in programs on KFRU and KMOX radio, and television appearances on KOMU-TV.

But the 47-year-old, ruddy-faced Rothenberger does more than write articles and appear on radio and television. He also answers letters.

There's one from the gardener whose plants "don't grow and don't die. She wants to know why they don't do one or the other. It's a difficult question. They really should do one or the other."

In the horticulture business, it's difficult not to take your work home. Rothenberger's own modest backyard garden, planted with "everything I can cram in there," looks more like a forest than a yard. It's not a Garden of Eden, though. He and his wife, Barbara (a Hickman High School horticulture teacher), have pests like everybody else. □

Ray Rothenberger digs up answers to backyard gardeners' questions.