

Nothing's Small About Load of Dirt

THERE is no such thing as a small pile of dirt. Somehow they seem to grow while being transported, and few of us have enough faith or equipment to move one except with scoop and wheelbarrow.

What brought this on was a critical look at a front flower bed last fall. It had a couple of misshapen holly bushes, the iris was crowded by multiplying evergreen liriope, while "Creeping Charlie" ground ivy overspread it all. It had to be dug out.

In sizing it up, I thought it would be nice to make the bed, 27 feet long, wider to give flowers a better chance. The heavy concrete curbing was relaid to make the bed seven feet wide instead of three.

That entailed digging out a small tract of dense Bermuda grass sod. This and the flower bed residue were used to fill low places at the back of the lot. There were quite a few loads of it, and the last one seemed to be somewhat heavier than the first.

Before this job was completed, a timely accident occurred. A heavy concrete urn from the flower bed

rolled over onto the big toe of my left foot. Although certain boresome people to whom I mentioned it said they had experienced more spectacular accidents and recovered more miraculously, the sore toe did have some benefits.

It abbreviated post-Christmas shopping tours and gave an excuse to watch a superfluity of football bowl games on TV.

Time heals even sore toes, and the work had to go on. Finally, the entire bed had been dug to leave eight inches of wide open space above the red clay. Here's where the pile of dirt came in.

I called Kenneth Minick, who had supplied topsoil previously. Yes, he could bring a load of good sandy loam, free of trash and rocks. It was eight cubic yards, he said. That sounded like enough. The price was about what an acre of farmland used to sell for.

A couple of hours later a huge dump truck arrived with a load that looked to be 10 feet tall. The driver manipulated levers to use hydraulic power to dump half the load in one end of the flower bed and the rest in the other end, right where it was

needed.

No sweat there. The driver didn't seem to tire a bit, but I did. After scooping a mountain of soil to fill the corners, I was exhausted but the dirt was not. Two huge piles still overflowed onto the lawn and driveway, where they could glare at me while I typed.

Next day, some of the dirt was used to fill small holes in the lawn, as near to the piles as possible. A couple of barrow loads were used in setting out a tree received for Christmas. Wheelbarrow load after load was hauled to the vegetable garden — to be spread later.

That left only one big heap, but it stood out like a sore toe. A "spare dirt bin" was built beside the woodpile and after several days the last of the dirt was used, distributed or stored.

Then came a welcome shower that helped to settle the topsoil into the flower bed and lawn. It also helped to settle me into an easy chair to contemplate seed catalogs and dream of colorful blossoms that I hope will result from this "small pile of dirt."