

Gardening Boys

Treatment / Step-outline
For a television series

A situational crime-related buddy comedy.

By
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Tagline: Honest gardeners in a rich people world.

Logline: Two simple gardeners are hired by a wealthy eccentric to perform gardening tasks that expose them to criminal activity. They are pressured by the greedy eccentric and an ambitious special agent to investigate the criminal activity, but the criminals get away every time.

SYNOPSIS:

Bobby and Chaz are long-time friends and landscaping partners. They have remained as independent landscapers well into adult life through a combination of lack of ambition, a desire to avoid adult complexities, and having affluent and permissive parents. Their simplicity and lack of ambition is embodied in their living arrangements: Bobby lives in a garden shed behind his parents' house, while Chaz lives in the basement of his parents' house. Their simplicity and lack of ambition is also clearly apparent to other people, since at each location they visit they are housed in a garden shed.

One of their principle landscaping customers is Mr. Plonk, a wealthy eccentric with a taste for the excitement of illegal activity. Each episode, Mr. Plonk tasks Bobby and Chaz to perform some gardening work at a different location, threatening them with a different form of misfortune if they fail. Mr. Plonk communicates with them remotely via a holographic communicator throughout each episode, pressuring them to investigate the illegal activity so they can get him money or goods.

They are also pressured to investigate the criminal activity by Special Agent Johnson, an ambitious law enforcement agent with a fervent desire to break the big case that will give him the headlines he needs to become governor. Special Agent Johnson employs different camouflage techniques to lurk on the fringes of the action, and uses Bobby and Chaz as his inside men to try to break the case.

The characters and types of criminal activity that Bobby and Chaz encounter is determined by the nature of the location they visit. The constants are Bobby and Chaz, who use a combination of common sense, optimism and snacks to handle the pressures placed on them by the

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conflicting interests of Mr. Plonk, Special Agent Johnson, the criminals and other characters.

The basic structure of each episode is:

- Introduction to the gardening mission and the personalities and setting of the criminal activity;
- The details of the criminal activity become apparent with Mr. Plonk, Special Agent Johnson and sometimes the criminals dictating the nature of Bobby and Chaz's involvement in it;
- The criminals always escape, leaving Mr. Plonk and Special Agent Johnson empty-handed and Bobby and Chaz shaken but unharmed.

The series has no story arc, since Bobby and Chaz's characters are relatively fixed and further development unlikely, but over time they become more comfortable with the authority figures they persistently encounter: Mr. Plonk and Special Agent Johnson.

There is a consistent subplot involving Bobby's love of snacks and his willingness to force Chaz into the clutches of predatory women to obtain them.

EPISODE: UPSTATE

Mr. Plonk sends Bobby and Chaz upstate to an estate he has just purchased to have them give an estimate for the landscaping work required to repair the ramshackle grounds. They are driven to the compound, where they meet the caretaker Tony, the housekeeper and cook Gertrude, and the groundskeeper Carlos. Chaz is harassed by Gertrude in the kitchen when he attempts to get dinner. When Mr. Plonk reaches them on their communicator, they learn that to encourage their efforts to find him some illegal goods he has kidnapped their girlfriends and is holding them hostage in a plastic cube surrounded by lions. Special Agent Johnson fast ropes from a helicopter to outside their shed to let them know that the compound is under surveillance but he needs them to explore the grounds and gather intelligence.

The next day, Bobby sends Chaz back to the kitchen for more food. Gertrude harasses him again, leading him to flee the kitchen. Bobby has discovered a storm cellar door outside the kitchen door, and when Chaz flees the kitchen he and Bobby escape into the basement, where they discover a massive drug lab and grow room. They search

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the basement, but there are no illegal drugs present. Caretaker Tony lets them out of the basement when they realize the cellar door is stuck. When they let Mr. Plonk and Special Agent Johnson know about the empty drug lab, both demand that they explore further.

The next day, they sneak into the barn and are forced to hide in the hay loft while Carlos directs a number of outside workmen to clear away the old machine parts and farming implements to prepare for a big delivery tomorrow. Caretaker Tony has to rescue them after the ladder they used to climb into the hayloft falls down. When they let Mr. Plonk and Special Agent Johnson know about the imminent shipment, both are excited at the prospect of getting illegal goods or breaking a big case.

The following day, Bobby and Chaz awaken on the couch in the shed to the sound of helicopters and shouting. They open the door to discover that the big delivery has arrived and Special Agent Johnson has raided the compound. He tells them that the delivery was gardening equipment and leaves the compound in disappointment. Caretaker Tony contacts them on Mr. Plonk's communicator to explain that he is actually the head of a criminal organization and they were creating the illusion that a big shipment of illegal goods was imminent in order to distract law enforcement from the site of the actual delivery. Mr. Plonk then contacts them on the communicator and, while disappointed to learn that he will receive no illegal goods, he agrees to release his hostages. Bobby and Chaz are relieved, and begin weeding the driveway while waiting for the driver to come and take them home.

EPISODE: DUPLEX

Mr. Plonk tells Bobby and Chaz that he met a curious individual at a benefit who says that they need help with the terrace garden of a duplex apartment, and that because he suspects this individual might be engaged in illegal activity he's sending Bobby and Chaz to investigate. He has a sniper rifle on his desk, and implies that he will shoot them if they fail to deliver.

Mr. Plonk's driver drops them off outside the urban apartment building, where they meet the charismatic doorman, Joseph. They take the elevator to the 42nd floor, where they encounter a room entirely full of boxed

luxury goods as well as Francoise, the tenant, and her associate Claudette. Francoise explains that her rich uncle in France has assigned her the job of buying luxury goods for cash and then selling them at a loss on the internet. She claims not to know why her uncle wants to do this business. While Francoise is leading Bobby and Chaz to the terrace garden, Claudette tells Chaz that she is a chef and intends to smother him in béarnaise sauce. Once on the terrace with its overgrown garden, Francoise tells them that the immediate need is weeding, and then she will need them to go to her storage unit to retrieve and install an irrigation system.

Bobby and Chaz begin weeding the overgrown terrace garden, and Special Agent Johnson pops his head out from behind a shrub. He tells them that they've been watching Francoise for weeks but haven't been able to determine what she's doing. He tells them he needs them to provide him with intelligence, and then slips over the side of the terrace to reel down the building.

Bobby has Chaz collect some food from the kitchen, where he is harassed by Claudette, before they take the elevator back to the lobby. Joseph appears to be professionally interested in what is happening in the duplex, to better serve his tenants, and directs them to a different elevator bank leading them to the basement. A storage unit has been prepared like their standard garden shed, with beds and a couch. Mr. Plonk contacts them, and they tell him about the rich uncle and the shoes. Mr. Plonk remotely threatens them with his sniper rifle and directs them to pay close attention to the storage unit, since that might be the key to any illegal activity.

The next morning, Bobby and Chaz are on the terrace weeding the garden when Francoise tells them that they will need to take a van to retrieve the irrigation system from a remote storage facility located in the marshes. They drive the van to the storage facility, where they finally locate the storage unit as dark closes in. Bobby mistakenly sits on the tarp-covered box containing the irrigation system while Chaz searches the storage unit. He discovers printing supplies and a palette of uncut banknote sheets, which they mistakenly believe to be table cloths. Driving back through the marshes with the

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irrigation system, Mr. Plonk contacts them and tells that he wants them to bring him the "table cloths".

The following morning, Bobby and Chaz are on the terrace assembling the irrigation system when Special Agent Johnson appears from behind a bush. Learning about the "table cloths" of banknotes, he instructs them to retrieve them for him and then slips over the side of the terrace. Francoise appears on the terrace and, having apparently noticed Special Agent Johnson, she tells them that she will need to accelerate her plans and that they will need to return to the remote storage facility to retrieve her art project, a palette of "money quilts", as well as a paper cutter.

Heading through the apartment to the van, Bobby asks Chaz to get him snacks from the kitchen. Claudette chases Chaz with a meat tenderizer before he escapes with a stick of butter, which he gives to Bobby. They encounter Joseph in the building's lobby, who tells them that he will personally handle the delivery of the "money quilts" to Francoise, and that he will meet them in the garage when they return from the storage facility.

Returning from the storage facility with the "money quilts" and paper cutter, Mr. Plonk tries to reach them with the remote communicator. Since Bobby has stored the stick of butter in the same pocket where he keeps the communicator, Mr. Plonk is not able to tell them to bring the van directly to him, and they do not understand him when he says he'll come to the building himself to collect the "money quilts".

Upon their return to the building's parking garage, Joseph greets them and takes the keys to the van, saying that he'll handle the delivery personally. Bobby and Chaz take the elevator back to the duplex, where they are surprised to find Francoise having a conversation with Mr. Plonk, who tells them that he has reached a business arrangement with Francoise: He will split the palette of "money quilts" with her in exchange for his silence. The communicator in Bobby's pocket vibrates, and when he activates it they are all surprised to see Joseph, who tells them that he has just used some of the counterfeit money to purchase one of these communicators, plus a private jet and secret island.

Bobby replaces the communicator in his pocket just before Special Agent Johnson barges through the door separating the terrace from the living area. He accuses Françoise on having a mountain of counterfeit cash, but finding nothing he goes back over the side of the building in disappointment. Mr. Plonk offers Bobby and Chaz a ride home and they prepare to leave. Chaz confirms with Françoise his understanding of the situation (money sheets plus paper cutter equals luxury shoes equals bank deposits, "offshore, naturally") before rejoining Mr. Plonk and Bobby as they leave.

EPISODE: ISLAND

Mr. Plonk tells Bobby and Chaz that his Uncle Chester has contacted him from his island retreat to request gardening help, and that he is sending them. He tells them that Uncle Chester's branch of the family used to be pirates and smugglers, and that he wants them to locate some pirate treasure for him. To encourage them, he tells them that he arranged for their morning coffee to contain time-released cobra venom which will kill them unless he gives them the antidote.

Bobby and Chaz drive to the ferry that will take them to the island where Uncle Chester lives. After being seasick on the ferry crossing, they walk across the island, which turns out to be bigger than the map made it look. Nearing Uncle Chester's cottage, Special Agent Johnson hangs down from a tree branch to tell them that there have been strange things happening in the cove beneath Uncle Chester's cottage, and he needs them to gather intelligence for him.

They find Uncle Chester at his cottage. He tells them that he would like some cypress trees, and they talk him into junipers due to his sandy location. Uncle Chester offers to pay for the gardening work with an envelope of cash, which he takes from a basket containing numerous similar envelopes. He tells them that he receives the envelopes from a fisherman named Stubbs in exchange for the "liberty of his harbor", and that Stubbs has been setting lobster traps in the cove that other boats retrieve. Stubbs has also been periodically depositing a crate with people in it on the shore, which is also retrieved by a different boat. Asked about pirate treasure, Uncle Chester says that there are smugglers'

tunnels beneath them, and he can show them the entrance in the morning.

Uncle Chester shows them the gardening shed where they will be staying, which has a television and an old VCR to play tapes of rallies that Uncle Chester attended when younger. Bobby and Chaz watch a video of a fish liberation rally ("Free the fish! Free the fish!"). Mr. Plonk contacts them, and threatens not to provide the antidote unless they get him pirate treasure from the smuggler's tunnels and whatever's being smuggled through the cove.

The next morning, Uncle Chester leads them to a door in the ground that he says is the tunnel entrance. Opening it, they discover what is apparently only a shallow root cellar. Disappointed, they walk to the top of the bluff behind Uncle Chester's cottage, where Uncle Chester uses his telescope to see Stubbs in a small boat heading toward the cove. Bobby and Chaz walk down a rocky path leading from the bluff top to the shore of the cove. Once on the beach, they see an overturned lifeboat, which has Special Agent Johnson hiding beneath it. They tell him about Stubbs, the lobster traps and the people cages, and Special Agent Johnson becomes excited since this could be a smuggling operation for narcotics and humans.

Special Agent Johnson instructs them to interact with Stubbs to gather intelligence from him. Stubbs pulls his boat near the shore to talk to Bobby and Chaz, and they can see an older man chained to one of the boat's seats. Stubbs tells them that he's doing lobstering and some ecotourism as a side business, and that he doesn't know too many details about either since they were set up by the captain, Ahab, who is chained to the seat because he's moody and can't be trusted alone on the main fishing vessel (the Pequod). Since Special Agent Johnson has instructed them not to let Stubbs know that he's hiding under the lifeboat, they agree when Stubbs proposes sending Uncle Chester his "tribute" by shooting it into the side of the lifeboat with a spear gun.

Stubbs shoots a spear into the lifeboat and then heads out of the cove while Bobby and Chaz return to the lifeboat to see whether they need to give Special Agent Johnson a Viking burial. They find him alive, and he instructs them to find a way aboard the Pequod to gather

additional intelligence for him. Walking back toward the path leading up the bluff, Bobby and Chaz notice what appears to be a pirate standing in the mouth of a tunnel in the middle of the bluff face. They manage to scramble up to the tunnel entrance, where they discover a tunnel and various chambers that contain no pirate treasure but appear to be well-known to the island's high schoolers.

In one chamber they discover Cap'n Billy, an island local who when drunk believes himself to be a pirate. Cap'n Billy tells him there's no pirate treasure in the tunnels, and that he can show them the secret exit from the tunnels nearest to Uncle Chester's cottage but they can't let "the crone" (AKA Milly or the Black Thorn) know where he's hiding. Milly calls down to Cap'n Billy through the chamber's natural chimney that she's come to twist his taffy, and in panic Cap'n Billy leads Bobby and Chaz to the secret exit.

All three sit with their backs to the door of the secret exit as Milly storms back and forth in the tunnel. Chaz then realizes that they are sitting in the root cellar where they were earlier that morning, and they just hadn't gone far enough to the back to see the door. They ask Cap'n Billy how they would get out to the Pequod, and he suggests going down to the harbor where there are boats for hire. Before they leave, he warns them that "the crone haunts that harbor". In the garden shed that evening, Mr. Plonk contacts them, is disappointed by the lack of pirate treasure, approves the plan to board the Pequod, and has a brief virtual reunion with Uncle Chester when he brings Bobby and Chaz some pinecone stew.

Bobby and Chaz arrive at the harbor the next morning to find four captains of local day-fishing boats on the pier. The captains tell them they take their boats out to catch fish, not fishing boats. While Bobby and Chaz are talking to the captains, Milly approaches from behind them and harasses Chaz until Bobby and Chaz flee down the pier and run back to Uncle Chester's cottage.

Not knowing what else to do, they rush down the bluff path to the cove's rocky beach. They try to talk to Special Agent Johnson under the lifeboat, and then discover that he has situated himself at the edge of the surf wearing a wetsuit with a plastic shark fin on his head. Stubbs begins unloading a crate containing people

onto the shore, and Special Agent Johnson tells Bobby and Chaz that they will need to sneak aboard Stubb's launch to get to the Pequod while he deals with the human trafficking situation in the cove. While Stubbs is unloading the crate, Bobby and Chaz manage to sneak aboard the launch and hide under a tarp in the bow.

Stubbs pulls the launch out of the cove and heads back to the larger fishing vessel. His conversation with Ahab on the way reveals that he has hijacked his ship and kept him drugged and chained while he used it for his smuggling operation. Stubbs also clearly notices that Bobby and Chaz are under the tarp in the bow, since they become seasick repeatedly during the bumpy ride. When they arrive at the larger fishing vessel, Stubbs instructs his pirate crew to take the captain aboard, put him with the rest of the ship's crew, and prepare to meet him at the new coordinates while he goes to deal with his stowaways.

Pulling the launch away from the fishing vessel, Stubbs orders Bobby and Chaz to emerge from under the tarp and applies duct tape to their wrists, mouths and eyes. He explains that they no longer use the pirate tradition of walking the plank, and instead he'll just throw them overboard. Stubbs uses his spear gun to force them to jump off the boat's rail, and they land on the rocky shore of the cove beneath Uncle Chester's cottage. Bobby and Chaz remove their duct tape, and before pulling out of the cove Stubbs tells them it's the best pirate prank he's played in weeks. Special Agent Johnson emerges from the surf wearing his wetsuit to express his disappointment that he didn't catch the pirate and drug smuggler, but that he wasn't a human trafficker since he had talked to the people in the cage and they really were ecotourists.

Special Agent Johnson wades back into the surf to try to swim after Stubbs as Bobby and Chaz walk back up the path to Uncle Chester's cottage. At the cottage, they find Uncle Chester talking to Mr. Plonk, who expresses disappointment that they have no loot for him. He tells that the time-released cobra venom was an old trick from his dining club, and offers them a ride in his helicopter back to their car at the ferry landing.

EPISODE: LODGE

Mr. Plonk tells Bobby and Chaz that he's just become a member of an exclusive gentlemen's club located at an old hunting lodge currently undergoing renovation, and that he's sending them there to arrange the landscaping. He tells them that unlike ordinary gentlemen's clubs, this club will allow them to watch people kill each other. To encourage their particular caution in this dangerous environment, he provides them with bracelets that he says are calibrated to each other's heartbeats, such that if they become separated or either of them dies, the other will be fried by a thermonuclear pulse.

The next day, Mr. Plonk's driver delivers Bobby and Chaz blinded-folded to the entrance of the lodge, located in a heavily-wooded area. Lodge Steve ushers them into the lodge, explaining that they need suitable landscaping to match the sophisticated ambience they're creating. They suggest lavender and boulders, and he agrees. He leads them to the lodge's basement where they meet Director Steve, who explains that while the lodge will allow the club's members to watch people kill each on large monitors, it is a carefully choreographed performance involving ex-military people that he's currently training to provide realistic death scenes. Leading Bobby and Chaz to the garden shed where they'll be staying, Lodge Steve tells them that in addition to landscaping help, they would like assistance with the locals, who keep cutting a hole in their perimeter fence next to an abandoned water mill. Before leaving them, Lodge Steve tells them that the only available food in the area is at the general store located down the hill from the lodge's front gate.

Since Bobby wants trail mix, Bobby and Chaz walk down the steep hill leading to the general store. A group of disheveled locals loitering at the side of the general store suggest ominously that Bobby and Chaz will regret going into the general store, so Bobby sends Chaz inside while he talks to the locals. Chaz is heard being harassed by the store's proprietor Frances, who wants to barter for the trail mix, while the locals tell Bobby that they need to stay away from the old mill since it's haunted by a ghost horse, the shadow man and a mean Canadian smuggler named Mad Jacques. The locals also imply that they'll kill Bobby and Chaz if they catch them

in the woods ("down here there's town law, but up there . . .").

Bobby and Chaz are sitting on an old couch in the gardening shed that evening watching local access programming when Mr. Plonk contacts them. Hearing all the things apparently happening at the old mill, he orders them to investigate.

The next morning, Bobby and Chaz trudge down the steamy overgrown path to the old mill pursued by clouds of mosquitos and gnats. Arriving at the abandoned water mill, they discover Special Agent Johnson hiding under a fake boulder. He tells them that the locals are expecting a big delivery of illegal goods soon, and he's hiding there to catch them in the act. When they hear the sound of trucks approaching the hole in the perimeter fence, Special Agent Johnson instructs Bobby and Chaz to hide under his spare boulder so they don't blow his cover. The locals from outside the general store arrive at the old mill in pickup trucks, and Bobby and Chaz overhear that they are expecting a shipment of smuggled Canadian cedar bark mulch tomorrow. They tell Special Agent Johnson about the conversation, and Special Agent Johnson decides that cedar bark mulch must be code for narcotics or heavy weapons.

While walking back up the overgrown path to the lodge, Bobby informs Chaz that he has run out of trail mix, and they'll need to return to the general store for more. Chaz reluctantly agrees. The locals are loitering out front, and Chaz is heard being pressured to barter for his trail mix inside while the locals again warn Bobby to stay out of the woods and away from the old mill.

That evening, Bobby and Chaz are sitting on the old couch in the gardening shed watching local access programming when Mr. Plonk contacts them. They tell him about the events at the old mill, and when he hears that there is supposed to be a big delivery of illegal goods, probably narcotics or stinger missiles, he suggests that he might come up to the lodge to collect his goods in person.

The following morning, Bobby and Chaz walk back down the overgrown path to the old mill. They are talking to Special Agent Johnson when the sound of trucks is heard outside the hole in the perimeter fence. Bobby and Chaz

hide under the spare fake boulder just before the locals arrive in their pickup trucks, followed by Mad Jacques in an SUV. Mad Jacques lifts a tarp to show the locals a small mound of cedar bark mulch in the back of his SUV so they can sample the quality of his goods. When the locals lead Mad Jacques to their pickup trucks to inspect the duffel bag containing their payment for the shipment, Special Agent Johnson runs over to the spare fake boulder and orders Bobby and Chaz to hide in the back of Mad Jacques' SUV so they can gather intelligence on Mad Jacques' home base while he secures the old mill area. They climb under the tarp just before Mad Jacques returns to his SUV, closes the back door and drives away.

Mad Jacques drives to a lumber camp with Bobby and Chaz hiding in the back. Once they arrive, Bobby and Chaz can hear Mad Jacques interacting with the workers more like a seasoned operations manager than a smuggler. They peek out the windows and see Mad Jacques standing with some workers next to a large truck with an open back door revealing a very large amount of cedar bark mulch. When Mad Jacques leads the workers into a trailer office to fetch some paperwork, Bobby and Chaz decide that the illegal goods must be under the mulch pile and run to the truck to hide in the mulch.

Mad Jacques drives back to the old mill, and is surprised to find the area apparently deserted. Soon, however, Special Agent Johnson appears with the ex-military actors from the lodge, explaining that he has secured the site. Mr. Plonk appears with Lodge Steve and Director Steve, and he demands his illegal goods. There is a brief standoff, and they decide to open the back of the truck to determine the nature of the illegal goods. Once the back is opened, Bobby and Chaz emerge from the mulch. Mad Jacques explains that he's not a Canadian smuggler but a wood product producer who uses smuggling as a marketing technique. Special Agent Johnson calls over the locals, who are duct-taped in a circle by their pickup trucks, and they confirm that they are landscapers who use bark mulch for gardening purposes. The locals explain that they menaced Bobby and Chaz at the general store because they coveted the landscaping work at the lodge and were trying to scare them off. Lodge Steve arranges with the locals to perform the lodge's landscaping, and asks Mad Jacques to deliver a load of the bark mulch to the lodge. Special Agent Johnson

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crawls back under his fake boulder in disappointment.
Mr. Plonk leads Bobby and Chaz up the path to the lodge,
telling them that his driver is waiting to take them home
and that they can do whatever they like with their
bracelets since he bought them at a gift shop somewhere.

