Only the perfect baby sibling can save these children’s lives. But can their mothers and fathers (and science) produce one in time?

The Race
By Lisa Belkin
SALIENT FACTS: EXTREME GARDENING

The Green Reaper
Something is rotten in the flower bed. Wait, it’s Grandpa.
AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

In the future, of course, all gardening will be done by evil robots with long yellow gloves. A few years ago Prof. Ken Goldberg and Prof. Joseph Santarromana built a garden tended by smart machines and invited Web viewers to "plant, water and monitor the progress of seedlings via the tender movements of an industrial robot arm." They intended the project as a short-lived "dystopian vision" — only to have their subversion bloom, "Springtime-for-Hitler"-like, into a hit. Over the last three years, approximately 30,000 people have planted seeds via modem. "It gets pretty ugly in there," sighs Goldberg. "On the Web site, there's a quote from Voltaire, which basically says, tend your own garden. A lot of people seem to miss that."

Emily Nussbaum