



The Tenacious Urge to Grow Something



By Eleanor Rodgeron, MD

RECENTLY, WHILE LISTENING to a discussion of the best and worst procedures in planting tomatoes, I was reminded of the urge to garden that is common among so many.

There is something tenacious about this urge and whoever possesses it seems forced to pursue it. One never knows for sure how it will come out.

There was too much shade in the backyard and the dirt lacked nutrients. Even with help, vegetables did not thrive. Much effort produced failure, but desire would not be stifled.

Something had to grow.

Flowers in hanging baskets already fertilized might be helpful. Big, beautiful begonias and dainty little-lady fuchsias soon rimmed the patio, Plants were procured from nurseries and, for one season, they flourished. The application of fish fertilizer made appreciating the flowers a matter of looking through the windows. Then one night a frost descended and they all shriveled.

Such a waste of bits of valuable time! What to do? Vegetables could be found in the supermarkets. So, continue with flowers. Camellias, once planted, prospered with little gardening required. What to do with the gardening tools - the spade, the hoe, the rake, the trowel, the old hat, the gloves, the stained shoes?

There was empty ground in a vacant lot and the nearby neighbor provided water. This dirt was wholesome, full of what plants like, and seeds flourished. A luxuriant green area appeared.

It so happened there were children living in nearby homes, boys and girls. One of the girls planted pumpkin seeds in this garden and jealously watched a pumpkin round up and mature. However, an argument over a trivial happening developed with the boys, and one day the pumpkin disappeared. Only an empty stalk remained. Blame wracked the neighborhood for weeks and there was little peace. The growing pumpkin was gone and nothing could bring it back. No other pumpkins appeared, only many, many small squash.

New ground was offered across the street in a secluded site in a friend's yard and the gardening tools were shifted. Not much came out of it. The spot was neat, the ground well mulched, no weeds. There was satisfaction in digging and interest from the family dog, but not much came of it.

A fascination with oenology developed. Why not grow grapes? Several varieties from slips gathered in Napa valley and mountain vineyards were planted among the camellias. The vines grew, and grapes appeared and were picked and fermented. Some wine was drinkable, most not. Out of that enterprise, though, came an anti-fungal preparation that pleased and cured suffering patients.

The years passed. A house was built on the vacant lot, the friendly neighbor moved, the

grape vines were neglected, and the camellias grew and blossomed profusely. As for the anti-fungal medication, it was so cheap to prepare that no pharmaceutical company would touch it. A television company paid \$100 to use the anti-fungal history in a medical drama of amateur wine making, but the program went off the air.

Still, the gardening effort had filled a need and, in the end, the urge was appeased.

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