



One of my greatest joys is planting a garden each year. Do all minimalists have gardens? I think not, but there are lots of reasons why I plant and harvest from my garden during the spring, summer, and fall.

Two of my best friends at church were talking with me Sunday about the garden. One fellow agreed that growing your vegetables was the way to go, but another thought it was a lot of work for minimal reward. His opinion was that he could get all the fresh fruits and vegetables at the Farmers Market here locally. While that is true, it does cost money, and you truly don't know what chemicals were used in raising the plants. By growing them yourself, you know exactly what you used and if they are safe to eat.

Advantages of Gardening

Great Exercise

All of us can use a little exercise. I find the time well-spent and feel better after I work for an hour or so in the garden.

Nurturing of Your Soul

I have a feeling of comfort that comes over me when I work on planting the seed and watching them sprout and become fruit-producing plants. The watering and cultivating have a calming effect on me on the sometimes chaotic days at work.

Fruits for Labor

We have the promise that we will reap what we sow it says in the book of James. While that is a spiritual connotation, it is also true in farming and gardening. You plant a few seeds, and you reap a bountiful harvest.

You Control Chemical Usage

As mentioned earlier, it is not good to have chemicals used to kill weeds entering the body. When we control the environment, we know what has been used and when. I try to grow plants without any chemical use, but sometimes Squash bugs may require a bit of Seven Dust. If so, I make sure that we wait a period of time before harvesting the squash and wash it thoroughly.

Tastes Great

I ate my first banana pepper at lunch. It may not have been better than others of the past, but being the first fruits from this year's garden made it super sweet. I think that food grown in the garden is the best tasting food ever.

Teaches Another Generation

I raised my children to help work in the garden, and two of three of them have their own gardens today. Now another generation has passed and I work with my second set of grandchildren (younger ones) to rototill and plant the seeds each spring. It teaches them good husbandmanship and it allows them to make a few dollars working for me in the spring and fall. (When we rototill the garden for winter.)

Gardening has long been in my family. My maternal grandfather used to keep a one-half acre garden each year and he did it with no plows or any kind of tiller. He had a worn-out hoe that he had used in his farming days, and he would sharpen that hoe and work like crazy. If we came over to see him early, he was out watering and hoeing. If we came over late, he was still out there working, even on the 100-degree days. I fondly remember seeing the twenty or thirty large watermelons lined up on my grandparent's back porch, and no one could go home without loading up with a few cantaloupe and watermelons.

What is your first childhood memory? My very first one is sitting in a high chair in our country kitchen in the country near Vera, Texas with my mother feeding me scrambled eggs. I remember it so vividly as I would pour ketchup all over the eggs. It is funny thinking of a 2-year-old eating scrambled eggs with ketchup. It does not sound tasty to me today. However, my second childhood memory is watching my dad (who was a farmer), use a turning plow to prepare our garden west of the house using a Jubilee Ford Tractor.

I was probably 2 ½ or 3 years old, and I was so fascinated to see that dirt turn over as my dad prepared the ground to plant in our orchard. All through my childhood and up into my teenage years, my childhood responsibilities included picking the vegetables, watering, and hoeing out the weeds. (Which I did not really like doing.) But when the vegetables came in, boy I loved eating them. Nothing like homegrown radishes, tomatoes, black-eyed peas, and onions. Fried Squash and fried okra were staples in our home.

The pictures below were taken in my garden this morning. You can see the plants beginning to grow. On the left, you can see squash plants and black-eyed peas on the right. Notice the tomatoes growing on the tomato plant in the second picture.



I have used electric Sun-Joe tillers for the past five years. I purchased a 16" model 3 years ago and replaced it this year with the 12" model which cost less than \$150. It requires less voltage so a 12 gauge extension cord will work, and it is a bit narrower which allows you to plant a bit more closely together and still till between the rows. I just tilled the whole garden this morning in about 30 minutes. I have an eco-friendly water drip system where I drain our washing machine and our shower into two 5-gallon water barrels. This allows the two hoses to dampen the ground slowly over a 12 to 24-hour period.



Gardening is a personal decision that only you can make. If you have decided to try and simplify your life, I think it is a great way to get some exercise and enjoy the fruits of your labor. It can turn into a bit of work, but I find it worth the effort. If you are limited on space, you might consider using pots or bins. Many people use raised bins and grow many vegetables each year, including my daughter and her husband.

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