

The Gardener

Gardening is therapy. My mother loved flowers, and she helped me to love them, too. I just wish that a pretty garden could be achieved without all of the weeding and manuring work. Mom had a list of garden chores for me to do every day after school. I felt a strong urge for freedom from that, but I really enjoyed the variety of beautiful irises and other flowers that filled our yard year every year.

Later in life, I struggled simply to grow grass in a yard that was filled with oak trees and that preferred to propagate moss and mushrooms instead. I was able to grow some flowers here and there, and did pretty well with tomatoes, but was never able to really get a garden or yard going.

Then I married my Soozie, who loved all living things and considered gardening a form of therapy. Her yard also had a lot of bare earth to conquer, which seemed to reject grass of any type. But she approached it all in a different way. This began with a pond, which one of her students put in because he thought so highly of her. The pond, filled with fish, became a center for other life as well. Frogs were born by the hundreds, and the wisteria planted around the perimeter to provide a covering for shade from the sun grew so well that it ultimately crushed the wooden structure that had been built to support it.

She put in another pond in the back of the yard close to the place where sparse grass met a wooded area. I got to dig this one (and all of the others). More fish, more frogs, and more flowers produced an almost jungle environment. She put in many flowers, but also planted bamboo and willows to create privacy barriers.

We are now on our fourth pond, and the most of the yard has been reclaimed from the original dust bowl. I don't contribute much, except to admire the flowers and dig holes wherever she tells me. Soozie puts a lot of art into her garden, and it shows her creativity. It is not so much that there is a design or plan, but that the creative forces are quite evident.

These forces are not limited to the development of ecospheres in our yard. She approaches everything with the same artistic flair. Life with her is always an adventure in barely controlled creative explosion. But it's a great life, after all.

I realized that I am sort of a Master Gardener. I can't grow things that well in the earth, so my main work is to help Soozie blossom. I create the environment that enables her to show all of her creative beauty. I can't control her; I can't make her blooms look a certain way, and I can't make them appear at times of my own choosing, but if I prepare the soil and provide nourishment, I know it will all occur in such a way that makes everyone marvel at the beauty of life.

I can't make Soozie believe a certain way, especially when she has had her feelings hurt by someone. I can tell her things to try to make her feel better, and she may nod her head as though in agreement, but it doesn't always penetrate into her soul. I can only take the parts of her vine that reach way out into space to find a support and gently weave them around something nearby. Ultimately it takes over the yard and makes it flourish.

I also find that it is a great idea to let Soozie interact with other gardens and gardeners. Even here she is the spark that infuses energy into them all. Though she is apart from me, she gains strength through the appreciation of her crowd, and returns to me having gained a good measure of healing. She radiates into a much bigger universe than just myself, and I am proud of her for that.