

Garden Lights

A season of gloominess, initiated by a pandemic, seems to have covered our world with an aura of uncertainty, isolation, and fear. A pursuit of gardening has provided me with the opportunity to help others find light in this encroaching darkness.

Gardening gives one an insight into the cycle of life: emergence of the seed as it first breaks the soil and forms its leaf, growth to a mature plant, the tiny embryo of fruit, its maturity and harvest, and finally the return to seed. One becomes a part of something remarkable – God’s creation - which in effect lifts shadows from the heart.

These past months have attested to bare grocery shelves, lockdowns, and shuttered schools; as well as low morale and spirits. During this time, I noticed more families, some for the first time, were planting gardens. They garden not only to support their children’s science education for at-home learning, but also to supplement their food sources.

The extra seeds I started in January – initially intended to sell to offset the cost of my garden and the tuition for a Master Gardener course – became my way of assisting families in growing their own gardens. I also assisted them in seeking research-based answers for their many gardening concerns. As the season progressed, I was happily surprised to learn that some children’s plants were outproducing my own!

Elderly gardeners also received help from my husband and I as we prepared and sowed their plots. My own eighty four-year old Mother experienced the joy of growing tomatoes - for the very first time!

Throughout spring and summer, I continued growing and sharing. It was during this time, that I began volunteering at the Cape Fear Botanical Garden (CFBG). The garden received an award to grow food for the community through the "Urban Agriculture Resilience Program" American Public Gardens Assoc. and U.S. Botanic Garden. Many hands and hard work cultivated a cornucopia of vegetables for the Second Harvest Food Bank and other local community centers. Many in-kind items, including seeds and plants, were also donated, with volunteers receiving remnants from pruning and thinning of plants. These bounties were used to plant and share with others, however; the greatest bounty gained was knowledge and a sense of well-being,

A ray of light was extended to senior vets by way of the ‘Home Instead Senior Care’ grant CFBG received this year. This grant provided them with planting kits containing everything they needed to start growing. It was a delight to be able to personally deliver two of these kits.

Providing food in a time of need is an act of charity; better still is providing the means and know-how for people to grow their own food and spreading a light of community, confidence, and joy.

Many gardens have lighted my life this year; I find hope within each seed. So – in times like these, come into the garden - and perhaps you will find a light of your own.

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