Published on *Kitchen Gardeners International* (http://kgi.org)

It's A Real World/Garden After All

Mon, 06/07/2010 - 09:52 -- Trishka B

It begins with the first seed catalogs in the deepest cold of winter, in the daydreams of good warm soil, colorful seed packets full of potential, strong healthy plants and a few landscape features. This year's garden is going to be the best ever!

You may even draw up a garden plan like I did for our roughly 75' x 25' kitchen garden. In the center, our garden statue of a faery, circled by chives. On two sides would be crescent-shaped beds of lettuce, succession planted. The south side row would have 7 3' x 5' beds, as would the north side and the center would have 5 5' x 5' beds, all accessible and separated by 3' wide paths. At the west end of the garden we would plant corn and on the east end, giant sunflowers. We are ready.

Oh, but life happens. In mid-March my Mom was hospitalized and we spent several days a week visiting her. At the beginning of April we found a local farmer who would till our new garden space at a bargain price. The soil was better than we had expected and we had our blank canvas. Here in the Midwest of the United States we can have freezes and hard frosts up to the end of the month, so we planted seeds in flats and continued to daydream. Mom was released from the hospital and was back at her home again. The dog ate part of my garden plan.

Toward the end of April Mom was back in the hospital. We - my husband digs, I point to where - (oh yeah, I have Fibromyalgia so I plan and point and Ed does the heavy work) planted Tarragon, Asiatic Lilies, Dill and a Tomato plant in the Herb Garden as well as Lemon Balm and Petunias in planters in the Herb Garden. (Lemon Balm - Melissa Officianalis - is a member of the mint family and can spread vehemently, so I always keep it contained in a planter. Sorry, Melissa!) Mom got a pacemaker and went to a nujrsing home to begin healing.

May! After four days, Mom's back in the hospital. Another two weeks and she's back in the nursing home. We're hanging out in the city more, visiting Mom. On the 20th, my big brother passed away and our son had a job interview. He got the job and started work on the 25th - his birthday, the day after my brother's funeral. As you can imagine, the garden has taken a back seat to everything else that's been going on. Somewhere during all this, we got Silver Princess corn planted where we'd planned to put it, decided to put in a row of Strawberries and a rhubarb where the sunflowers were supposed to go, and went ahead and did two long rows of sunflowers anyway. 5 Asparagus went in. We also managed to yank out a bunch of weeds in one part of the now full-of-weeds tilled garden plot and put in six bell peppers, an okra plant, two

eggplants, a jalapeno, a tomato and two watermelons. In totally different places and sized plots than on my garden plan. Oh, and a row of bush beans.

June - It has been hot, rainy and humid. The plants love it! If I were a plant I'd be wilted lettuce. More weeding over the weekend resulted in rows of French Breakfast Radishes, Turnips, Lutz Beets, Okra, (2) bush beans, lettuce, and four hills of Black Beauty Squash. The weeds have taken over the as yet unplanted part - the majority - of the tilled space. Our pug, Mack, chased our cat through the weeds yesterday and it looked like a scene from Jurassic Park. You couldn't see them, just the top of the weeds moving as they ran through. We're going to keep plugging away at it and see what happens. I still have packets of cucumber, pumpkin, carrot, Gold Rush squash, Golden Sunrise Chard, Soybeans, Dragon Tongue Snap Beans, Amarant,h Quillquina and Epazote I want to grow. Mom's slowly getting stronger, Kevin's working and I'm still learning what I can and can't do with Fibromyalgia. Will it be the best garden ever? Yes! Because it is the garden I have and whatever it produces will be fresh, local, organically grown, healthy and what I like or I wouldn't have planted it! (Except for the rhubarb - that's Ed's!)

It's a real world and a real garden. Life happens. Weeds happen. Gardening is a microcosm that teaches us about the cycles of birth, death and new growth. It teaches us persistence. It is a beautiful gift that keeps giving. I hope to can some of our excess produce and donate some to local food kitchens, and carry the vibrancy and peace of the garden with me where ever I am. I wish that for everyone.

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