

Loving the land

By Ginny Gregory



The earth shook. The noise of the trees hammering to the ground was almost deafening. We had just moved into our newly built house. We looked at each other in horror. What was going on in the upper woods? A development? This could not be happening! All we could see when we looked out our upstairs window was trees crashing to the ground.

We were new to the neighborhood. We did not know our upper woods neighbors. I felt covered in a cold sweat. We jumped into the car to try and find the road that lead to the noise of destruction. We found it near our house. There was this huge hole in the woods with trees lying everywhere, but it was on the neighbors property and it was only about half an acre that was being cleared. We came back home breathing easier, but filled with curiosity none the less. Lots of trees were down. What was happening?

The next week I saw a women wandering around in our back woods. Since we are on nine acres, I had not planned on seeing anyone. We came to find out that she was on a 'cat hunt'. Her cat was lost and she was calling around trying to hear her. She introduced herself as Lisa and her found cat as Stinky. Over a glass of wine, shared with Lisa and Mars, we found out that land was being cleared for a vegetable garden. I had my doubts but they seemed to know what they were doing and seemed determined. They had drawn out plans for a huge vegetable, berry and fruit tree garden that would be edged with a three foot deep cut flower and herb garden. They were in

their early 50s. I was overwhelmed just listening and very skeptical that their dreams would ever become a reality.

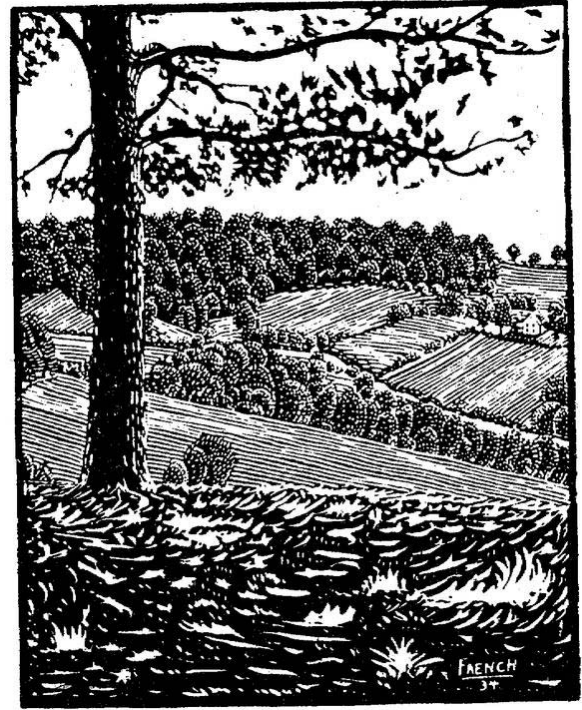
Each visit new additions began to evolve. There was a huge welded wire fence installed around the entire garden. Then there was tilling that seemed to go on for months. Leaves and compost got delivered and tilled. Paths were lined out precisely and then lines were pulled for each row and for each section of vegetables. Before I knew it seeds and plants were being planted and the garden was happening. Each trip up the hill we visited the garden with passionate glee to see what was happening next. Mars was a precision master and Lisa came from a farming family and knew how to make plants grow. It seemed impossible to me that two physician assistants could be out there working like crazy to make a garden for vegetables. Everything had been thought out and planned to the last detail. I was in awe!

Well, it is now eight years later. Our neighbors Mars and Lisa are great friends. The garden they have created is one that you would find featured in Fine Garden Magazine. It is so very beautiful. The entrance is an open walled garden shed with the gate to the garden incorporated into one side. There are built in benches for resting and get out of the sun. It houses the garden tools and yet it is an artful space. The three foot flower/ herb border gets more beautiful each season. The border is planted in big blocks of the same plants so the impact is huge. It is edges with rocks collected around the land and hand set by Lisa.

The entire garden is irrigated row by row designed and installed by Mars. Each fruit tree and raspberry plant is dripped. There is an asparagus bed on one side with bee hives throughout

the garden. There is every vegetable imaginable planted, harvested then frozen or canned with each season. There are jellies and pickles made. Mead is made from the honey. The honey is spun and put into jars with their own printed labels. A root cellar was created to house the jars and the roots crops. They grow so much that sometimes the beans don't get picked in time. No fear. Lisa and Mars gather the dried beans and bag them to later soak, cook and eat. Currently Mars is carefully planning a chicken coop. A rooster will soon be announcing morning.

They cook every night using all of their harvest. They take great pleasure in researching new recipes and trying them out using all of the ingredients that they have grown with their own hands. Lisa and Mars have no hired help ... they be it! They work in the fast paced world of medicine and yet come home to work hard in their garden to make a life that makes sense to them. I sometimes think that they just work too darn hard, but you know they



work in their garden together. Mars does all of the canning as Lisa says she did enough as a child to last her for life. Lisa mows the small amount of grass in the front yard. They have a choreographed dance of labor.

They are a team ... Lisa, Mars and the land. They both love the southern sounds of the wilds, the new plants to uncover and the quiet flow of life. Like all of us, they are learning to consume less, grow more and buy locally.

They are hopeful about tomorrow. Love the land and it will serve you well.

Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail...Creating Gardens and Beyond". For more information, please check www.beyondthepail.net

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