

How does your garden grow? For at-home grower, fall is a season for reflection

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To Kiko Teed, her garden is more than just bits of land in the yard — it is a reflection of her inner life. The fruits, vegetables and flowers of her labors nourish her family and her spirit.

The Eastonite and home gardener spends a lot of time thinking about her garden and her part in the process of its evolution. She considers it a perpetual work in progress.

Fall is when she mulls over what she has learned during the newly completed growing season and plans for the next one.

"While it's still fresh in my head, I jot down notes on what worked and what didn't," she said, "so in spring I have it."

Gardens are an expression of life to Ms. Teed, with both the highs and the lows.

"You have to be willing to roll with the punches," she said. "Gardening can be very forgiving. You can move things around."

And she does.

For one thing, Ms. Teed rotates her crops.

She changes the location of vegetables regularly. Sometimes she replaces an area of vegetables with flowers for a while. This way the land gets a chance to replenish the nutrients that vegetables diminish.

She often switches the placement of plants on her grounds from one year to the next to make more efficient use of space and sunlight.

Sometimes the changes work well, but sometimes she feels the need to rethink things the next year.

But there is one element of her garden that stays the same from one year to the next — the lineup of produce.

"I don't really add more crops," she said. "I have my staples."

Tree troubles



The trees in her yard have recently played a greater than normal part in Ms. Teed's gardening efforts.

She and her husband, Geoff, just took down a large maple tree that was dying. Now Ms. Teed has a new area of her property that gets sun, and she plans to expand her garden to that part of her land next summer.

Meanwhile, this fall's freak snowstorm caused Ms. Teed a lot of extra tree-related work.

"Cleanup this year is such a bummer," she said. "There's so much tree stuff to clear off."

Tree debris from the fall nor'easter also caused a casualty in her garden.

"Last year, we ate lettuce until December," she said. "But this year it was smashed during the October storm."

There is an upside, though.

"Luckily," she said, "we use the wood for our fire. And we have tons of kindling now."

Fall is also when she thinks about where she stores her tools.

"I'm always carrying stuff across the yard," she said.

And she takes time to research online and in books for ways to rid her garden of certain insects or make better fencing and lattice.

Reviewing and revising is really just a part of all areas of Ms. Teed's life, though.

"Always in my head, I'm reviewing processes," she said. "That [just] carries over into gardening."

Beginnings

Growing things and being connected to the earth comes naturally to Ms. Teed. Her father had an "amazing" garden while she was growing up.

She began her own garden when she moved to Easton eight years ago with Geoff and their two children, Carson and Caroline.

And in spite of all the "backbreaking work" she has already put into the garden, she not only accepts that there is more to learn, she revels in it.

"I'm still on that learning curve," she said. "It's a learning curve I enjoy."

Working her patch of land is an ongoing achievement for Ms. Teed.

"I like the satisfaction I get," she said. "I know that it matters."

And what happens during winter?

"In winter," she said, "you read seed magazines and dream of fresh fruit."