

For the Love of Gardening

By Maggie Beyer

My father showed me a patch of dirt behind our garage and said, "This is your land to turn into a garden." And so my training began in how to till the soil, fertilize and select seeds for growing. And I have been digging in the dirt since age six.

As an adult and with each new home, I looked at the front, back and side yards and devised a plan that included perennials, annuals, plants and bushes that would look beautiful and cohabitate. I also selected herbs, spices and fruits for jams and jellies.

My children also got the taste for digging in the dirt at young ages. Each adopted a plot of soil at the side of our garage and planted bushes and vines of their choice.

During my years at *The Beacher Magazine*, I wrote feature articles under the title of *Diggin' in the Earth*. Allow me to share a couple of excerpts.

Now is the season of our discontent. Scraggly branches begin to leaf and bud. Now is the season when gardeners, looking about at wayward branches, want to grab those pruning shears and play Edward Scissorhands, shouting "Off with your heads." Do not give in, gentle reader. This is NOT the time to prune flowering shrubs; let the urge pass. Timing is everything when warmer weather has finally arrived.

And another excerpt really gets messy...

Nooooo... I haven't cleaned my pond as yet. I did get as far as the shed to look for my rubber gloves, and when I didn't find them, did go out and buy another pair. So that's a start! However, in the shed, I did find an assortment of fertilizing aids, mostly unopened, and realized that this is also the time to feed. There are hungry plants out there, waiting like a little shop of horrors, to reach out crying, "Feed me, feed me!"

In preparing for this writing, I asked my caretaker to read several of my *Diggin' in the Earth* articles. I was reminded of the extensive research that was required; I learned the names of hundreds of obscure flowers, discovered the wisdom farmers have known for centuries, and became more knowledgeable of the interplay of each season with the process of growing.

My caretaker asked me, "Why did you devote so much of your life to gardening?" My answer is simple: A gardener must till, must plant, must water and weed. Gardening does not only 'get in your blood,' but even more so, it gets into your soul. A true gardener is in a sense driven by a compulsion to join with creation. It is all about our need as human beings to CREATE BEAUTY.