

Gardening with Mom (Cynthia Domenghini)



My gardening story began in early elementary school when my parents prepared a large plot in our backyard for me to grow anything I wanted. As I grew up my mom and I were constantly visiting local nurseries and gardening together for hours upon hours. I can still picture the two of us planting herbs in our tea garden outside the kitchen window and fighting with the rock-hard soil as we tried to plant Celosia along our fence line.

The gardening adventures of my adult life have revolved around changing landscapes as we moved frequently for various job placements. Rather than wait to garden until I was certain we would be staying put long-term, I developed the motto to leave a garden when you go as a gift for those who come after you. After all, the garden was more than the delightful blooms and produce harvested. The process of gardening was therapeutic for me. The garden provided solace and safety for creative expression. It was a tool for building relationships with family. It promoted exploration and discovery. When I considered the value of the garden to my life there was really no way I could skip a season and wait until we were settled.

For years I lived many states away from my mom but we continued to share our garden adventures from a distance through pictures and daily messages using online chats. Prior to our most recent move, we lived on a 26-acre farm in Kentucky. We believed this was going to be where we settled and my parents joined us purchasing the farm next door. This provided my biggest garden to date. I grew an abundance of cut flowers and



vegetables which we sold through our 15-member CSA and local farmers market. We also grew hemp and established a small orchard. My mom grew microgreens and the two of us had the best time working together marketing our harvests. Though this entrepreneurial gardening experience was rewarding, it demanded all of my free time. Gardening became a job rather than a leisure activity.

Another career change resulted in leaving farm life behind for a move to Kansas in 2023. We now reside in a suburban neighborhood with minimal yard space. I grow my favorite vegetables in raised beds and enough cut flowers to provide myself and my parents, who relocated just 30 minutes away, with bouquets during the summer. I'm in

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the process of transforming our lawns into pollinator gardens. I am quite fond of plantain lilies and grow many varieties beneath a large tree in our front yard.

Having limited outdoor growing space has prompted me to add to my houseplant collection thus filling a void in my garden calendar brought on by the dreaded winter. I am adding to my collection of carnivorous plants which is a fun challenge. Decorating the porch with containers filled with colorful annuals is a highlight of my spring. I am once again gardening for personal fulfillment.



Though we are no longer business partners, my mom and I continue to garden side by side. Just last weekend we visited a nursery which we do as often as possible. We perused plants together and separately and gathered at the checkout to see what treasures each other found to take home to our respective gardens. We laughed when we realized we had unknowingly purchased many of the same plants.

I am forever thankful for the gift of the garden. My experience with gardening is never the same from year to year except for the connection it brings me to my mom. We likely could have bonded over other adventures, but gardening is the one that resonated first. I recently took my three youngest children to the garden to harvest lettuce setting the stage for the next generation of lifelong gardeners.

Do you know a gardener with a story to tell? We'd love to share their gardening experience through the K-State Hort Newsletter Garden Spotlight. Email cdom@ksu.edu to help us grow together.

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