

First Words of a New Generation

By Bonnie McClure

My son said his first real word yesterday. Appropriate that it would be "garden" because when he first came home from the hospital, our small, backyard garden was one of the first things we shared with him. My husband held him up against a squash blossom that was practically his size, and I snapped the first pictures of Micah in the garden.

Yesterday as we gathered the hose to water the garden, Micah squatted next to the edge of the dry, tilled dirt, pointed at the leafy greens and looked up at my husband and I and said, crystal clear in his high pitched voice, "gahden."

Micah comes from a long line of gardeners. My parents had a long, narrow garden that fed more deer and rabbits than people. My dad would string up tin plates to deter the animals, but I imagine they just crept around them, and he didn't mind, it was just as fulfilling to feed the wildlife as it was his family. They might as well have been one and the same.

Just down the road from us was a giant garden, a whole farm, really. Our neighbor, Mr. Crawford, was a career farmer, devoting his life to the land, and making his living by tirelessly tending the one-hundred-plus rows of vegetables. His garden was complete with scarecrows, a plow, a mule named Midnight, and watermelons "with your name on them," as he would tenderly tell us.

My husband's grandfather was a gardener too, the hardest working man he ever knew. Memories of his homegrown tomato sandwiches are the pulsing heart of my husband's childhood.

Nothing can compare to the connection to the earth we feel when we dig into it with our bare hands, bury our hopeful seeds, nurture them with discipline and water, and a few weeks later witness the wonder of growth and eventually, with hard word and patience, taste the sweet yielded fruit. We hope Micah will always think so, too.



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