

## **PDX Garden Stories**

### **Interviews with participants in Growing Gardens Home Gardens Program Portland, Oregon**

#### **Interview with Brandy**

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#### ***Did you do much gardening before growing gardens?***

No, we had done some throughout the years. Sometimes we would just do it for one year and then “aww its too hard” and then stop and then try it again the next year. It was kind of a love/hate relationship because we didn’t really know what we were doing too much. We had success just because its Oregon and things grow here really well. But as far as when do to things, what times to plant certain things and fall gardening and all that kind of stuff we didn’t really know about.

#### ***How did you discover growing gardens?***

My daughter goes to ... school and they had through the Sun community program they had a growing gardens workshop after school; she would learn about growing gardens and then cooking with it. And then one day they had a thing at school where they said “Come and check out growing gardens and we can help you grow your own gardens!” “Oh that sounds interesting! More than just the school thing” I thought and so I got information from them and here we are.

#### ***So has it been a pretty positive experience since then?***

Most definitely! They had like 20 volunteers come out and build our beds, and then workshops, the seeds every year and the plant starts...its definitely been a big help.

#### ***Do they stay in contact with you still?***

Definitely, I get emails all the time. Either just blanket emails like “this is a workshop” and every once in awhile I get an email like “Hey! Hope everything is good! Let us know if you need help!”

#### ***Do you enjoy gardening? Or is it a hassle?***

For the most part it is fun. Sometimes it is a hassle just because of scheduling and I don’t want to dedicate every single weekend hours to gardening. So it is just a matter of learning what times to do it. I probably spend around 4 hours a week gardening.

***Do they [chickens] help out in the garden?***

They do fertilize. They get rid of a lot of the bugs and the weeds. We only have two but they are definitely helpful. They are really easy. We usually get one egg per chicken a day. I'm not a big egg eater but the rest of my family is so it is absolutely wonderful.

***Has the garden affected you in a positive way? Like your diet or has it help supplement groceries?***

It does help supplement groceries. I have two girls and they love being able to eat the fresh vegetables. Especially when the peas come out, they love running out and picking the peas. Right now I've got tomatoes peppers, snap peas, squash, lettuce, arugula, some herbs, basil and then cucumbers, and a couple artichokes.

***Which vegetables help the most?***

The squash and the tomatoes do. They grow so much and they are so good. The ones in the store aren't nearly as good.

***What continues to the fall?***

The fall squash and the lettuce keeps going pretty good.

***Relationship with food?***

We definitely eat a lot more vegetables in the summer time! Definitely a positive impact. Its nice when the kids see where the food comes from and they can participate in helping make that grow and reap the benefits. Though they don't spend as much time in the garden as I'd like them too! My one daughter is almost 11 and the other is almost 6. The 6 year old loves to get down in the dirt but the 11 year old is almost done with it all.

***Has it affected the way you cook?***

We didn't plant the garden for a specific reason. Whatever we like to eat we put it in the ground and then we will figure out a way to cook it. Some people have salsa gardens and things like that. But we just figured we would grow what we liked to eat and go from there. With tomatoes, we have 2 plants this year, but others we have had 8 or 9 which is nice when you have enough you can store away. But we have a busy summer and are gone to music festivals for 4 or 5 days at a time. But there are growing gardens people who will help or neighbors. Help each other out. Also other neighbors that will help out. Bringing community together.

***What is your favorite thing to grow?***

Tomatoes for sure. They are just so fun. Them and the snap peas.

***Do you have to reseed things in the summer?***

I have to reseed everything, but the tomatoes have little starts that I've been plucking. And the swiss chard has done pretty well on its own.

***Are planning on expanding your garden at all?***

Not really, we have other plans like that half-finished fire pit over there. But one reason we built the garden was to get rid of the hours' worth of mowing.