

PDX Garden Stories
Interviews with participants in Growing Gardens Home Gardens Program
Portland, Oregon

Interview with Nedra

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A little bit of background, what brought you to Growing Gardens and why a home garden?

So, we are in walking distance of Holy Redeemer and for about three summers my kids and I would go on walks and we stopped at their garden all the time and we did tastes and stuff and, you know, melt things and I was able to answer questions like "mom what is that" [...] So, it was more the curiosity of my kids when we would stop by Holy Redeemer's garden and so my son decided one day to ask me "why don't we have a garden?" I'm like, "why don't we? We're homeowners, we have the space." So, just realizing we have the space, we totally did it.

What impact has having a home garden had on you and your family?

The convenience of wanting to have something to snack on and not needing to go to the grocery store. Like, it's so fun to just go and pick some cherry tomatoes and carrots and just wash them and eat them or to sit outside and while we're playing that's what we actually grab snacks from. So, it's totally been exciting. It's just convenient; I think that would be the biggest thing for us.

And your kids, they help with the garden?

Yeah, they helped actually dig it when Growing Gardens staff came, they had their shovels and their gloves on, and they helped pick the weeds, they definitely taste things to let us know, "no, it's not ripe yet" or "that tastes funny, I don't think it's ready yet" So yeah, they help out a lot.

Who works in the garden with you, has the garden brought you guys closer together?

So, my husband has severe allergies, so he's not outside much with us, but, yes, it is a bonding time for me and my kids, they remind me sometimes of "mom, can we go work in the garden?" And I'm like, "I guess we can take time", like, we water on a regular basis, but taking the time out to go pick the weeds or thin out something that's growing [...] So, they'll remind me of things like that, but yeah, it's a time for me and the kids, my husband, he likes to look out the window, so, he kind of participates, but yeah, me and the kids.

What would you tell somebody who's interested in participating in Growing Gardens, a home garden?

Go for it. Try it. I think once someone tries it, they'll realize, "this is beneficial", "this is exciting". Our first year, we started with maybe six or seven items, just because I didn't want to destroy everything, you know? Some people are like "I don't have a green thumb!" I put alarms in my phone to remember to water every other day if it's not raining, or to plant, I'll mark the calendar every second or fourth to remember to plant the next group of items. So, I would definitely say go for it, try it, and if they don't think they're experts, they have classes. I opted to have a mentor in growing gardens. My dad did a little gardening, but I wasn't there to see it, so I was a newbie, and so I definitely opted to get a mentor and she was wonderful. I was able to email her pictures, like "this doesn't look right," or "why is this not happening", and then she was also able to get me resources on where I can get containers because I didn't want the raspberries in the ground, so things like that. Yeah, I would say just go for it. You don't really have anything to lose.

That's a great answer. That's, I feel like, what holds a lot of people back.

Yeah.

Once you tear up your yard, your yard's torn up and like, "what if you fail...?" But it is so much fun.

Yeah. Therapeutic.

What are your future plans with the garden?

Well, I've already expanded, like, three times... I believe Growing Gardens, they put two, maybe 8x5's, and so I did mine kind of long ways back to back and then I did the space between the gate and the garden that they originally helped me start, then I did the back side of the fence, and then I've come by the storage... So, I've completely expanded, so now I'm just trying different things. I don't buy eggplant, I don't even know if my children like eggplant or not, so things like that, I wanna try it, instead of purchasing it "let's grow it", and maybe they'll be more interested to try it because "mummy's never had it, you guys haven't had it, we grew it, let's try it!" It'll be an experimental, ongoing thing.

What has been your favorite part? Or if there was a moment that you decided that you made the right decision?

I think last summer that amount of time, we would come home from the park, and instead of going to the refrigerator [the kids would say] "let's just get something outside". So just seeing how they are interested in what we're growing, I think that was probably the highlight of the garden so far, just seeing how interested they are. [...] Doesn't have to come from the refrigerator or the cupboard, you can just put the hose on, get wet, and eat at the same time.