

CATALYST

RESOURCES FOR CREATIVE LIVING

In the Garden: Hands On in the Natural World **Maintain your roots with Wasatch Community Gardens**

By Barb Guy

Up on the third floor of my elementary school, I pressed a bean into a little paper cup of dirt with my name on the side. I was about six. Aside from that bean, I never really spent any school time with plants, and I don't recall much about the bean after it finally reached up out of the dirt. Mostly I remember the incessant waiting, checking the cup of dirt each day, while the earth itself was three flights of linoleum and a vast expanse of asphalt away.

Luckily, I lived on Oakwood Street on a half-acre of land. We had an irrigation ditch where I could splash around, sail homemade boats, watch purple-red-green-blue dragonflies, and marvel at the weightlessness of water skeeters. I had rocks to climb on and wild places with tall weeds and grass where I could hide. With my mom, I picked strawberries, asparagus, and rhubarb right outside my back door, ate apricots and cherries while sitting high in the trees, and learned not to touch bees. I sat quietly on the ground, smelling the mint and weaving long stalks into mats for my dolls

to rest on while they ate their mud pies. I ran around until burrs got stuck in my socks; I found robin's egg shells, acorns, and snails. Acorns -- a product of the tree my street was named for. At night, my dad and I would marvel at the stars twinkling through the Russian olive leaves. I knew the natural world, even if from a suburban perspective.

So many kids don't have that Mayberry setting anymore. Even a kid in my old house today would find several new homes instead of my wonderland outside her back door. That's the trend: remove the natural object and name the new development after the thing you took away- Oakwood, Spring, Pine, Hollow, Cottonwood, Meadow. Lots of city kids don't even have a square of yard to call their own. Do kids even learn about plants today? Where?

One place, one really wonderful place, and I admit I'm not impartial, is the Grateful Tomato Garden at 800 South and 600 East in Salt Lake City. It's one of

the gardens run by Wasatch Community Gardens, a nonprofit that aims to keep kids and plants connected. They teach kids that food originates from the ground, not a drive-through window. They let kids grow things in ways far superior to the bean in the cup.

Barb Guy is vice-chair of the board of Wasatch Community Gardens.

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