

## 2020 - The Year Without Our Garden

It all started with our neighbor, Mac, almost 15 years ago.

He was a farmer at heart, although he owned a gas station to earn his living. Until he moved to Stoney Run in retirement, he lived in an old farmhouse with several acres. He grew corn and tomatoes, other vegetables and flowers for his wife, who loved them.

When they moved, the acreage was gone and Mac was miserable. A day without his hands in the soil, until the ground froze, was a day sad and wasted. So he came up with an idea. There was a large patch of ground, untouched, by the trail and stream, near the Treehouse . He asked and was given permission to cultivate it - flowers only - but he had to maintain it himself.

And so it began. Just a few plants and bulbs the first year. The second year, tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and crocuses appeared in Spring, and all thru the Fall he planted. Several of us watched and admired the beauty he was creating. We chatted and friendships grew. Soon we were setting up picnic tables in the little garden and enjoying our "garden lovers" meals. Slowly, we asked if we could help, not wanting to insult him, but longing to garden too. He was happy to have us join him. Mac loved company and nothing made him happier than watching us lug bags of mulch and topsoil, plant and water our growing little community garden. Soon it became a well known stop on the trail. People and children watched to see things grow - what new things would be added - and even offered to help.

And then, local critters began to visit. The geese and ducks brought their babies. Chipmunks, raccoons, rabbits, turtles, wild turkeys, birds of all kinds and deer became regular visitors! For those of us who loved the outdoors and gardens, we had our own little Paradise and shared taking care of it.

Several years later, Mac died unexpectedly. We were heartbroken. But we knew the garden would continue in his honor, and we added to it every year. It thrived. Last year we planted a small butterfly sanctuary and watched in amazement as the seeds appeared on the butterfly bushes, then the larva, the cocoons, the caterpillar and finally the butterflies!

Last night, on a phone call shared by all the garden group, it was decided that it would not be possible for us to have or maintain the garden this year. It was too much work for one person at a time, and social Isolation made working as a group impossible.

So many terrible things are happening as this pandemic rages on. Certainly, a garden is not on that list. And yet, the impact of this seemingly unimportant decision, was surprisingly painful!

So we mourn the end of Mac's Garden - our little Paradise - fruit of our labor and love.

And hope and pray we will be digging in the soil again next year.

Carole Leskin

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YBAOne.