

WSU Ferry County Extension
350 E. Delaware Ave. #9
Republic, WA 99166
Phone: 509-775-5225, X1116
tammy.folks@wsu.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Grateful Gardener
By Twinflower Wilkie, WSU Ferry County Master Gardener

One thing I've learned about gardening is how much there is to learn about gardening. On the other hand, I've learned that if I put enough seeds in the ground, something will grow. For that, I am grateful. And if there's just one state of mind that keeps me willing to keep gardening, gratitude is it.

I have to cultivate gratitude just as much as I cultivate peas or corn. As I battle the weeds, the weather or the earwigs, it is easy to forget to look up at the sunset, to listen to the goldfinches in the sunflowers, to remember my dear parents who passed along the gardening gift- Mom's love for flowers, Dad's curiosity about one more variety of tomato. When the list of chores is long with no end in sight, I often forget that I don't just garden so I'll have food. Gardens sustain life in many other ways as well, including the lives of the squirrels who stole my hazelnut harvest and the robins who scolded me for raiding their strawberries and those plum eating chipmunks. (Did you know chipmunks love plums?)

On sunny mornings, I step outside, coffee in hand, for a few minutes with my husband to enjoy the colors together and discuss what needs done-I mean, to tell him what to do.

Some days, children come to visit. They run to see if there are berries to pick, or they ask if we can gather a bouquet for "Mommy". They run back to me with some discovery- a bug or a pretty rock. Gratitude comes easily when looking through children's eyes.

They even like to help, at least for awhile. My grandson has taken over the lawn mowing. Last summer I had to spend quite a lot of time teaching him, but now that he's learned, he'll be able to mow for many summers to come. I'm so grateful.

Of course, all visitors are sent home with an armload of rhubarb, carrots, or other extras. I also took apples to the Curlew and Republic People's Pantries. Sharing the garden with others brings more joy, both to me and to them. I was so grateful not to have to put up all those apples! The shelves of canned goods and the freezer were already crammed full.

I like to arrange a fall harvest display to remind myself of the bounty the land has provided. The centerpiece this year is a huge pattypan. I'm saving it for seed, but first I intend to enjoy it for its green, bumpy, bizarre beauty. (My daughter-in-law gave me the seed, for which I'm grateful.)

If the gifts the garden brings don't excite your enthusiasm, curiosity, and especially your sense of gratitude, all that work will overwhelm you and you will lose interest. If you continue to garden, but only perfunctorily, you may get food, but your garden won't sustain you. To garden well, you must cultivate

gratitude. Yes, even for the labor that sends you to exhausted sleep. Even for the rodents and insects the garden harbors. Even for children who need direction but don't always wait for it.

At the Republic library, I checked out a children's book, Giving Thanks, edited by Katherine Patterson. It has very pretty paper cuttings by Pamela Dalton for illustrations. I will end with this blessing from the book:

Be a gardener,
dig and ditch,
toil and sweat, and turn the earth upside down
and seek the deepness
and water the plants in time.
continue this labor
and make sweet floods to run
and noble and abundant fruits
to spring.
Take this food and drink
and carry it to God
as your true worship.

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)

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Twinflower's beautiful fall harvest display with large pattypan centerpiece