



Everyday Eats

Feedback

Foraging in my Suburban Garden

by *Natasha Rosenstock Nadel*
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I suppose that if I were a pioneer in early Israel and had to grow and make my food or else I would starve, I would learn quickly. Outside of Biblical times, Jews don't have a reputation for being farmers, as they often were not allowed to own land in the past. Yet, Israelis today more than manage—in a land that is half desert—to supply almost all of their own food as well as export fruits and vegetables to much of the rest of the world.

The early Israeli settlers remind me of the old story of the captain who burned his troops' ship so they would have no choice but to stay and fight as their only retreat option had been eliminated.

Thankfully I don't need to rely on my own garden for all of my food.

I started from a timid place two years ago, two years after I moved into my suburban house with a big yard, two years after I'd said I would start a garden if only I had my own yard—and then I got one. But I still didn't know what I was doing and used a new baby as an excuse for far too long.

Finally, with my mom's help, I planted pots of regular tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, cilantro, basil, lemon verbena, chives and parsley. The big tomatoes were never edible. The herbs were good when I remembered to use them, and the cherry tomatoes were actually sweet.

It was a pleasure to watch my daughter pick and eat "baby" tomatoes off the vine, as she'd done at my mother's house and as I'd done growing up.

This year, my mom had big ideas. She set up raised beds, bought a ridiculous amount of fancy dirt and got to work.

We (I use that term loosely) planted cherry tomatoes, which are just starting to sprout, and adorable baby pumpkins. Our baby watermelons and baby carrots have yet to be seen, and the deer ate the peppers. We got enough peapods to eat some off the stalk and more from a bowl a couple of times, and we enjoyed salad from our homegrown lettuce three times—after I spent an hour washing it.

We planted baby radishes—do you sense the theme here? That's what happens when you only have one small raised bed in which to plant. My husband said he was super excited about the radishes and ate about three before I finally threw out the rest three weeks later.

Did I mention that after she planted everything, my mom went home for a few months?

At the end of the day, I wasn't able to cook much from my own garden. However, as a true suburban forager, I have loaded up on cheap, plentiful and ripe produce from the supermarket. Sometimes, just using all of it makes me feel as if my harvest is plentiful!

Having grown at least some of my own food, I also feel a little more authentic and in tune with the seasons going into the fall holidays, especially *Sukkot*. And when celebrating this harvest holiday this year, I can be pleased with myself knowing that I did have a small harvest, right next to where my *sukkah* will stand.

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Natasha Nadel is a journalist and author focusing on the intersection of healthy food, family and community. She is the author of *Healthy Family*, *Healthy You: The Healthy Mama's Guide to feeding your family well – simply and sanely!* and *The Healthy Family Healthy You Cookbook*. You can find her free e-book, *Five Easy Weeknight Meals: Your 7 Day Family Makeover*, and healthy and creative ideas for your family on her blog.

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