

How Does Your Garden Grow?

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

*One for the pheasant, one for the crow;
One to rot and one to grow! (An old adage about gardening)*



Ready, set, grow. Volunteers ready to plant.



Filling the planting beds at the Tualatin United Methodist Church hilltop community garden.



Corn and cabbage equal good eats!



Tilling the border to plant corn and sunflowers.

But what about:

The slugs, the bugs, the moles and the voles?

Gardening season is in full swing, and several churches in Tualatin now sponsor community gardens. Chad Darby's Neighbors Nourishing Community grows produce for the needy at several business locations. The bounty from these gardens that utilize unused space is such a blessing, both for the growers, as well as those that consume the fresh produce. Where once pesticides were used to boost harvests, organic gardening is becoming more prevalent.

I often wonder what those early Oregon Trail pioneers fed their families when they reached the Oregon country. In 1852 William and Melvina Robbins hitched up their oxen, packed up their children and what belongings they could fit in the covered wagon and joined the famous Robbins wagon train heading for the Willamette Valley. Melvina brought along vegetable seeds. In a letter he wrote back home the following year, William told about the harrowing trip, and how the family fared when they reached the Promised Land.

"We are having a hard time of it, but if I can once get to raising something to spare I think the scale will turn. There is a great many who are much dissatisfied, and complain because they have to pay so high for provisions, which is the very thing that brought them here. Melvina and the children have cleaned off two garden spots, and have a fine crop of vegetables growing, such as potatoes, onions, cabbages, turnips, corn, peas, beans, squashes, carrots, beets, pepper and vegetable oysters." (salsify)

During both the first and second world wars, the government encouraged families to plant vegetable gardens, both to ease food shortages and to boost morale. People at home felt they were helping with the war effort if they grew the food they ate.

I can remember summer meals at our house: mom would cook potatoes either baked, boiled in their jackets, or fried, corn on the cob with real butter, sliced tomatoes, cucumber and onion salad and tender green beans with bacon and onion. To cook the beans she would first chop the bacon, saute it till crisp with chopped onions, then stir in the beans. Then she would add some water and simmer the whole mess till the beans were very tender. How utterly delicious. The resulting pot liquor was so good we would spoon it into

a bowl and drink it! Dessert would be fresh gravenstein applesauce or sometimes a fruit pie, made with whatever tree fruit was in season. On Sundays mom would roast beef, ham or chicken and use the remainder to flavor her dishes all week. She was a great cook, using all the produce we grew in our garden, and I learned to love to cook just eating her meals. It was mom's job to fuel the engines that did the farm work: dad and we five sisters.

The exceptional hear this summer promises a good tomato crop, but when the summers are cool and rainy, tomatoes don't ripen well. So what do you do in the year of the green tomato? Why, relish it, of course.

**William and Melvina's donation land claim was bordered on the east by 65th Avenue, south along Robbins Road, north and west to make up 320 acres.*



Loyce Martinazzi was born and raised in Tualatin and is passionate about Tualatin History. She is currently Lecturer of the Winona Grange, Co-Founder of the Tualatin Historical Society and Co-Author of *Tualatin... From the Beginning*.

William Robbins' entire letter can be read in the Tualatin Historical Society booklet "Life in a New Untamed Land" The booklet, which can be purchased at the Tualatin Heritage Center also contains excerpts from Henry Hayes and Maria Sweek's diaries, and a memoir from Nancy Robbins Ball.



World War II poster.



Jim Serrill teaching children how to plant vegetables at the Hilltop garden.



Chris Tunstall and friend at the Hilltop garden getting produce ready to take to the food pantry.



The historic Mack house along Tualatin Road now houses an animal clinic. The Neighbors Nourishing Communities group have planted vegetables in the flower beds.



World War I poster urging Americans to plant a garden.