

March 14, 2008

Hi David

Here are some words about "How the Lower Garden was made". I enclose some questions about dates & names which maybe you know. If you do, tell me, and I'll fill in the blanks.

Also, here are a couple of small remembrances you may want to keep somewhere.

This story of the Lower Garden doesn't mention the work on the Upper Garden — how we wanted to plant burdock and needed to dig deep to have 2' of loose dirt and ran into those huge sandstone building blocks from the early hotel, and then bedsprings, and had to pull them out and-and-and..... planted & grew burdock and then they built a zenso on top of it all!

I interrupted you on the phone — you were reading my letter to you and got to the part about people not in need but out on the edges. So what is there →

to know about that? I still have the same questions and the same interest, altho I'm not sure if anything need be done about it...??

I wrote to Susan O'Connell - thanks.

So - here's some more lore for the lore keeper.

From

P.S. - Just spoke with my niece in Seattle, the poet, + she suggested I ask a neighbor with a computer to "open a document" + then I could type out this whole thing + e-mail it to you. My neighbors have said I could use their computer anytime. So I'll call you (or vice versa) for the answers to any questions you know the answers to, and then type it (I can do that, slowly) and send it to you via this ethereal no-where non-place system which magically results in reaching people: no paper to hold in one's hand, with nice clear words in handsome type.....
aaarrrgh...

~~about~~ ~~Many~~ some round pits about 2' wide
 and 2' deep in the gravelly rocky ex-stream
 bank, ~~some~~ filled them with good
 soil and compost, and planted sweet
 potatoes. They liked the hot sunny days
 but did not like the cool mountain nighttime
 temperature drop, and they did not thrive.
 I gave up on sweet potatoes. Then I planted
 summer squash, which did well. So then
 I started a real garden.

The start was me with a shovel, starting to
 dig at the lower end of the big space. There was
 some upset in the directorship of Tossjian; Peter
 Schneider, the director, had injured himself & went
 up to San Francisco, & whoever was acting director
~~directed~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ ~~over~~ ~~by~~ ~~directing~~, so ~~there~~ ~~was~~ ~~no~~
~~objection~~ had their attention elsewhere, so
 there was no objection to me doing this work.
 Except that this ~~was~~ place was an old stream

terrace in a narrow canyon in ~~a~~ steep rocky mountains, and as I began to double-dig, I found mostly rocks, ~~in~~ lots of leaning over to pull out rocks, and soon a pretty big rock pile grew up. People walking by stopped to find out what was happening. Then the work leader put a couple of other people on the digging crew with me. Now I had some strong male energy to help dig. We threw the rocks into a wheelbarrow and trundled it over to the creek, dumping the rocks down the stream bank. Then someone had the good idea of making a big rock strainer — a square of 2 x 4's about 4 feet by 4 feet, with heavy wire netting stretched across the square, holes maybe 3/4" square, the whole thing tipped up at an angle with one of the corners facing down, and a gap in the netting there, with the

(pic)

~~as~~ wheelbarrow underneath. We threw
 shovelfuls of rocky earth at the netting;
 the soil fell through the holes, and rocks
 clattered down, fell through the hole at the
 bottom, and dropped into the wheelbarrow.
 What a great contraption! And who invented it?
 I can't remember.

Now there were several people working every
 day, some digging and throwing, some pushing
 the rock-filled wheelbarrow over to the
 creek, and some shoveling the rock-free earth
~~back~~ back into the ditch. We dug across the
 space in rows one shovel wide, back and forth,
 working our way up towards the cabins. Slowly,
 slowly, the garden grew. Once the big rocks
 were out, the soil was thin and sandy, but
 with compost added, it would be fine. We

kept going. Now the "lower garden crew" was a legitimate work designation: "Suzuki Roshie asked that we make a garden here" seemed to quiet the opposition, or those who would rather ~~see the work~~ put the labor to some more "useful" work. It would be nice if a training temple were a harmonious, loving community all the time, but ~~actually~~ there were always arguments about what everyone should be doing.

Up towards the upper end, the rocks got bigger. There was some serious excavation and hauling required. Eventually we got to a couple of huge boulders. The guys from the shop ~~etc~~ drove down the Toyota ^{Land} _{Cruiser} which had a winch + cable in the front. They put the cables around the boulders + pulled them out. wow!

Then, we had a big garden space at a start, hi on the west end, low on the east end. So Bill Shurtleff showed up with a Theodolite (where did he find that?) and he and I made 3 level terraces. One of us looked thru the gadget + the other one held the stake to mark the level, and we pushed the dirt around until each terrace was level, with a slanted bank of dirt between each level. We wanted to see handsome rock walls to hold up each terrace, but by then everyone had run out of enthusiasm + strength, + we left the terraces as they were.

(pic)

Now we had to improve the soil. Compost! We certainly had piles and drifts of maple leaves in the fall. Plus garbage from the kitchen. Another unknown sevier started building rough lumber racks, ~~making the racks~~ in a Lincoln-log style, up by the shop, while I persuaded the powers who decided things to use the big Dodge truck to go down to Carmel Valley and come back with a load of chicken manure, dug out from under the cages of the chickens at Carmel Valley Egg Ranch. Then we piled layers of leaves, manure + garbage as we built up the sides of the racks, up to about 6 or 7'. This was ~~an early stage~~ frontier composting, rough but ready.

The next spring the compost was cooked, and after what we'd done last summer, dumping the good black compost on ~~the~~ our level dirt terraces and digging it in was easy + pleasant work. I don't remember what we first planted, just that

when the first green shoots came up, ~~that~~ ~~that~~
 a war started with the ground squirrels
 who had always lived among the rocks on the
 hillside. Weren't those green vegetables tasty!
 Paul Discal wished that the ~~damn damn damn~~
 "damn lazy cats" would go to work catching the
 squirrels (they didn't); I wanted to kill them
 with rodent poison (voted down) + in the end we
 put up wire fencing. I do remember standing
 one day at the top of the garden, leaning on
 my shovel, when the rattle + swoosh of feathers
 zoomed right over my head and a young golden
 eagle sped over the garden to ~~catch~~ nab a
 squirrel at the other end.

Peter Schneider, who had been director when
 I first ~~got~~ decided to make the garden,
 came back. He said "As a good thing I wasn't
 here then, I would have said this was a

8/19

silly & impossible project, and not allowed you to start" But too late, we now had a thriving garden full of rambling winter squashes, tomatoes, & lettuce which we ate and also served to the guests. Suzuki Postki was happy about it.

On a four day trip to Monterey, buying seeds at Monterey Feed and Seed, I got to chatting with the Feed man, proudly telling him about our efforts at garden making. He scratched his head and said, "That's all backwards. The river carries the dirt out of the mountains and drops it down here, leaving you rocks. The chickens are down here. The milder weather is down here. Here's where you grow vegetables! Haul them up there, not manure, lumber & all that other stuff". Actually, he was right, but then we would have

missed this whole saga. Plus the fun of growing our own and walking among the ~~are~~ scridgly smelling tomato plants, hunting for red ripe ones under the green leaves.

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Years later on a visit to Tassejwa, I was aghast to see that someone had decided to move the road, that ran between the row of sycamore trees and the cabins, up to the other side of the row of trees, on top of about 12 feet of lovely garden soil. A road! Packed down earth, run over by cars & trucks! If that someone had known the sweat & effort put into that piece of lovely garden soil.