

The Passion to Farm: One Woman's Story of Why She Works the Land

Written by Anne Morgan

Thursday, 01 December 2011 00:00 - Last Updated Monday, 26 August 2013 14:45

I garden because I cannot thrive without the blessings of working in —and with— nature.

I married into agriculture. Still processing his neardeath experience in Vietnam, my husband Dewane could only say, "I need to farm organically." I was young, in love, and uncertain of my personal destiny in life. "Sure," I replied. "Let's go for it."

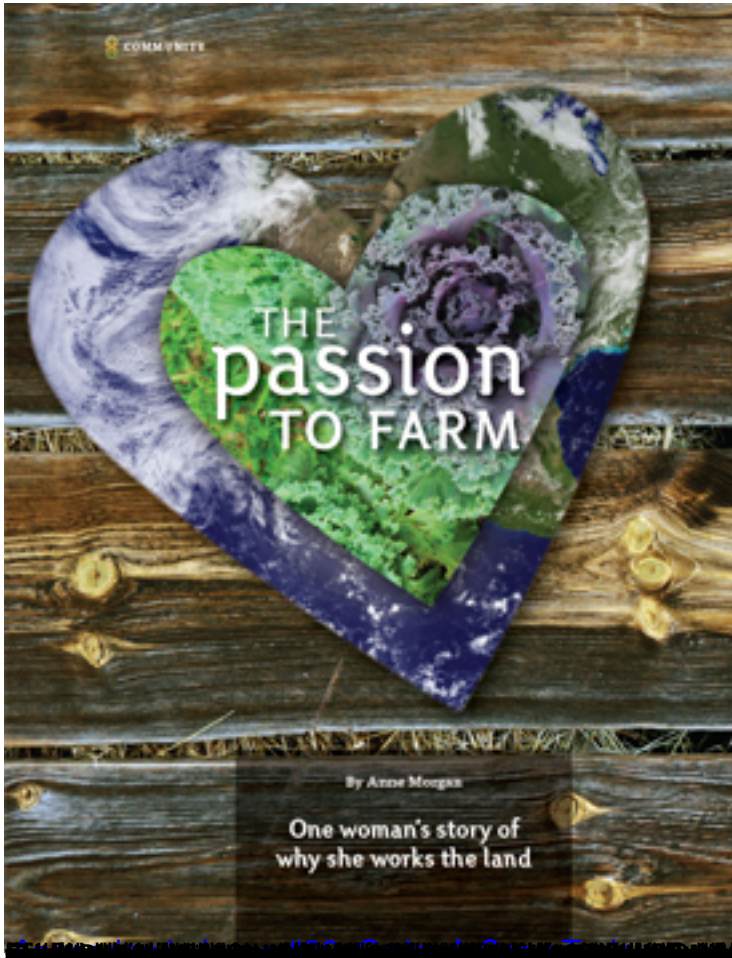
My family was appalled. They knew I liked to cook, but this was not the life they'd raised me for. The pay was sure to be low, the work hard. Horticulture is not an esteemed profession. We outsource much of our food production. We all want cheap food.

But do we? Produce raised thousands of miles away has to be picked unripe; its nutrient profile is undeveloped. Compare a winter tomato to a summer one, and you can taste the truth of this statement. Standards in other countries can be lax. A friend who served in the Peace Corps in Central America in the 1990s related how small farmers applied agricultural chemicals: Double doses meant better results. Tainted pet food and baby formula—we can condemn foreigners, but we have been presented with contaminated peanut butter produced right here in the USA. The pressure for cheap exposes us to risk.

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I married into agriculture. Still possessing his seventh-generation experience in Vermont, my husband Deane could only say, "I need to farm organically." I was young, in love, and uncertain of my personal destiny in life. "Yes," I replied. "Let's go for it."

My family was appalled. They knew I liked to cook, but this was not the life they'd raised me for. The pay was meager, the work hard. Horticulture is not an esteemed profession. We sacrificed much of our food production. We all want cheap food.

But do we? Produce raised thousands of miles away has to be picked, sorted, its constant profile is undeviating. Compare a winter tomato to a summer one, and you can taste the truth of this statement. Standards in other countries can be lax. A friend who served in the Peace Corps in Central America in the 1970s related how small farmers applied agricultural chemicals. Double doses meant better yields. Tainted produce and baby formula—on our continent, however, but we have been presented with contaminated produce produced right here in the USA. The process for cheap requires us to risk.

I learned to garden because I wanted to feed my children wholesome food. I recognized the correlation between highly processed foods and diabetes, pesticides and cancer, nutrition and health. I grew the vitamins, minerals and fiber in a freshly harvested salad of baby greens. I wanted my kids to taste the taste of goodness. I taught them to pop open a pea pod and pick out their green peas, to find perfectly ripe raspberries, how to dig up a carrot, wipe it on their jeans, and take a big bite without fear of soil (or even dirt).

I learned to garden biodynamically through the conviction that I am a temporary steward who will someday have to answer for how I cared for the earth. When I take a walk on my piece of ground and notice it is producing diversity, health and beauty, I am welcoming something of God that has been spoiled. Industrial agriculture focuses more on squeezing cash profits out of the soil without regard for life conditions, for they will grow for one or two microbes. I know in my heart that in the way I serve the best of things is also how I serve Him.

I garden because I prefer to engage nature with external accomplishment. By the time the tomatoes are composted and mulched, I am back in shape.

I garden for a husband/family because Community Supported Agriculture is about relationships. It is about interdependence. CSA members are my support and my community. In fact, I strive to be a source of love, care and truth in a world that is against those things by sharing my life, my farm, and my passion for this work.

I eat locally in the CSA because this is the most just way I have found to no longer feed for money. Members' food dollars go directly to the farmer's wallet, rather

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than to a lengthy and obscure chain of supply that often has widespread and abused agricultural workers on the other end. Share prices are calculated on what it costs to grow the garden. Not more, not less. Everything raised is divided equally between share members. I listen to members and, to the best of my ability place in proportion that reflect their preferences. I do everything I can to bring in abundant crops, and I agree to sell, after all these years when a crop falls short due to weather conditions beyond my control. CSA is the embodiment of my hope and my dream.

I believe in the value of CSA. The best way to maximize your food budget is to cook home products at home. In season, local produce is the best bang for your buck. Families can share more than physical nourishment in the kitchen. It is an opportunity to teach and to learn, to hug and be hugged. Don't have family nearby? Invite a neighbor. Make a new friend.

I keep gardening with an open offer to share what I know, especially with the next generation. I hope they will stand on my shoulders, not repeat my mistakes.

I garden because I cannot thrive without the blessings of working in—and with—nature. I have the years I spent on the road attending therapy food shows. My income was higher, but my spirit suffered. And in the end, spirit is what I will leave with. ☺



Anne Morgan has been gardening for more than 20 years. She also runs The Heart of Garden, her farm-based and urban cooking using all natural, local and seasonal items. She and her husband teach and create agriculture on their farm, and have a CSA. Her essays about her life and gardening have been published in regional and national magazines. Visit her online at theheartofgarden.com. View article reprints and other information here: pathwaysandfamilywellness.org/author/anne.html.

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