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The Baltimore Sun > Life > Home & Garden > Garden Variety



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MAY 11, 2010

Garden writing



The welcome sign to "Mr. Leroy's" city garden still stands.

Photo credits: Baltimore Sun/Susan Reimer

"Mr. Leroy," as he was known, was a gardening inspiration in the Baltimore neighborhood of Reservoir Hill.

He chiseled a patch of dirt out of the cement parking pad behind his house and planted vegetables there. And there were sunflowers and morning glories around the edges of what passed for his backyard.

He was Eleanor Justice's neighbor, and her inspiration, too. If he could grow his own food in the cement world of the city, she could, too.

"I live just a couple of skinny Baltimore rowhouses down from Mr. Leroy's garden. As I stand at my window, looking from his garden onto the cement below my window, I'm inspired. I could grow our groceries in that little patch of sun, and I dream of raised beds brimming with herbs and vegetables, and of sharing the bounty with our neighbors. I could turn that wasted space into something productive, and raise our quality of life more than I know how to articulate."

This was part of an award-winning essay Eleanor Justice composed and her reward arrived Tuesday: a planter vegetable garden installed on the parking pad behind her house by Burpee Seed. Co. The "dream garden" essay contest was run in Baltimore only last summer, and drew about 80 responses, the company said.

"This little patch of cement is about to be turned into a little garden oasis," Eleanor said Tuesday morning as she excitedly waited for the containers, soil and plants to arrive.

About Susan Reimer



Susan Reimer has spent 16 years writing about raising kids - among other topics - in her column for *The Baltimore Sun*. And every time son Joseph or daughter Jessie passed another milestone - driver's license, college, wedding or a move to a new military duty station - she has planted another garden. Now she will be writing about those gardens - and yours - here on Garden Variety.

Susan isn't an expert gardener, but she wasn't an expert mother, either. Both - the kids and the gardens - seem to be doing well in spite of her.

She lives in Annapolis with her husband, Gary Mihoces, who loves to cut his grass but has noticed that there seems to be less of it every time the kids pass another milestone.

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Wake up, it's a Chelsea morning

"I offered the jack-hammer the cement out of here, but they said it would be fine," she said.

While Jessica Atchison and Brenda Connolly of Burpee filled the cedar planters with potting soil and lobster compost and with about 30 vegetable seedlings, Eleanor took visiting media to the community garden across the alley from her new garden.

She had written in her essay about Mr. Leroy's passing last year, and the resurgence of the community garden that mysteriously followed. After years of languishing, it is returning to life and gardeners were working there even while the Burpee gardeners were working in Eleanor's yard.

"While Mr. Leroy was alive, the community garden was largely abandoned; vandalism and disuse had taken it's toll. Maybe it's Mr. Leroy's spirit looking over it that's helped to make such a big difference, but for the first time in god knows how long, every plot is taken and many people have been turned away."



Eleanor Justice's "dream garden" was installed Tuesday.

From The Baltimore Sun

Susan Reimer's On Gardening column

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May Day



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Plant of the week



Eleanor knows the risks of urban gardening. An heirloom tomato plant she was growing last summer disappeared -- along with its enormous and very heavy planter.

"I grew it from seed," she said. "I try to be positive and think that maybe if they took that much trouble to take the whole planter, they took the trouble to take care of the tomato plant and maybe its seeds are growing this year."

Burpee also gave Eleanor a \$100 gift card to Home Depot, about a dozen packets of flower seeds, and an extra bunch of plants to plant in the community garden across the alley.

"I specifically asked for cherry tomatoes," said the freelance graphic designer. "That way the kids can eat them when they pass by. Just like candy."

Here's the list of herbs and vegetables planted for Eleanor Justice:

Selection of Herbs

Bean Climbing Blue Lake

Cucumber Burpee Hybrid

Pepper Burpee Red Delicious

Pepper Costa Rican Sweet

Pepper Flavorburst

Squash Peter Pan

Tomato Burpee Napa Grape

Tomato Lemon Boy

Tomato Tomatoberry

Zucchini Burpee Hybrid

Gardening resources



Farmers' markets



Map: Public gardens



Garden Q&A

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White Flower Farms
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John Scheepers Kitchen Garden Seeds
Digging Dog Nursery
Park Seed Co.
Jackson & Perkins
High Country Gardens
Logee's Tropical Plants
North Creek Nurseries
Shady Oaks
Gilbert H. Wild & Son
Old House Gardens
Brent and Becky's Bulbs

Information

Maryland Cooperative Extension Service
Dave's Garden
University of Connecticut plant database (for Mid-Atlantic plant research)
The National Arboretum
The New York Botanical Garden
The U.S. Botanic Garden

Equipment

Gardeners Supply
Smith & Hawken

Birding

Duncraft: Birdfeeding at its Best

Magazines

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Garden Design magazine
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Herb Quarterly



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Posted by **Susan Reimer** at 12:36 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(2\)](#)

Categories: [Garden contests](#)

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Comments

Congratulations on a new start!!

Posted by: **NotableM** | **May 11, 2010 4:41 PM**

This is wonderful. I wish more city dwellers would take the initiative to plant a garden however they can. I do believe it's in most peoples' blood.. considering the majority of humankind evolved with their hands in the soil for many thousands of years. I think the fact that modern people are cut off from growing our own food is one main cause (of many) of modern discontent, disconnect, and depression. To be able to grow some of your own food these days, even in the smallest way... is truly a revolutionary act!

Well said!--Susan

Posted by: railroadopalminor@gmail.com | **May 11, 2010 10:27 PM**

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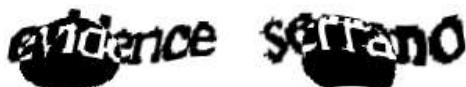
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