The Essence Of The Garden



This week I want to take a step back and talk a bit about the essence of the garden.

You might be thinking: Huh? What are you talking about?

As frugal gardeners—and I think this is true of most gardeners—we look at the garden in a practical, utilitarian manner. How much food can I get out of this small plot of land? How can I maximize my harvest? Can I make my front yard look fabulous on a budget?

But a garden is so much more than just a place to grow food (or plant pretty flowers!)

It's a place to take a breather, to take in the world, to enjoy peace and quiet, to appreciate life, and to watch what's going on around you. I think we forget this sometimes. And it's a shame! Frugal gardeners are all about making the most of what we have on hand, aren't we? So we should make time to appreciate the garden space for all its incredible qualities.

And it's possible to do this even if your garden consists of a single potted tomato.

You don't need to feel bad if your garden isn't frilly and fancy. There's no need to have an extravagant English garden to enjoy your time there. Pull up a chair—the comfiest you have—and spend a moment among the plants.

You don't need to be working every minute. You can appreciate the garden for what it is without toiling away.

This year, I left my garden behind. I planted a few things in the spring, but depression took over and left me with little motivation and energy to do the things I needed for the garden to flourish. I harvested some peppers, cherry tomatoes, and kale, but that's about it. For a brief moment, I thought to myself. Maybe this is it. Perhaps I'm done with gardening.

And I quickly realized that was a nonsense thought. I'm lucky

to have this space full of bright sunlight, teeming with creatures. Whether I return to the full gardening experience or I continue to take an extended break, I'm aware that there's something to be gained from simply going out there and breathing in the fresh air.

The garden isn't just a place where I plant things. It's a place where I observe life in action. Even if I'm not actively planting, there's plenty of action to notice, from squirrels bounding among the branches of the grand maple tree to birds chittering as they make secret plans to head south.

And so my challenge to you this week is to take a moment in your garden where you stop, pull up a chair, and just sit there. Watch the critters take their last nibbles of plants and pollen before the colder weather sets in. Smell the air as it changes from warm to chilly. Feel the sun on your face. And enjoy the essence of the garden.

Whether that's sitting on a balcony, hanging out next to a potted tomato plant, or laying out in the grass.