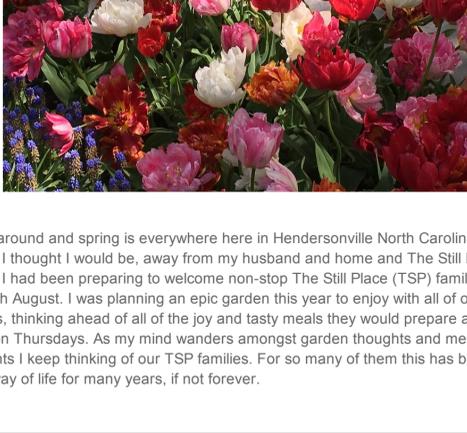




The Still Place

FOR FAMILIES WITH SERIOUSLY ILL CHILDREN

Bloom...where you are planted!



I look around and spring is everywhere here in Hendersonville North Carolina. Not where I thought I would be, away from my husband and home and The Still Place where I had been preparing to welcome non-stop The Still Place (TSP) families through August. I was planning an epic garden this year to enjoy with all of our little visitors, thinking ahead of all of the joy and tasty meals they would prepare at Iron Chef on Thursdays. As my mind wanders amongst garden thoughts and medical thoughts I keep thinking of our TSP families. For so many of them this has been their way of life for many years, if not forever.



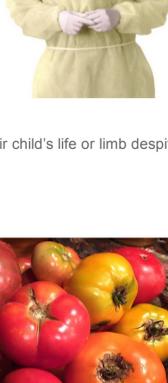
The Usual

Here is how my garden usually grows. I prepare the soil, plant the seeds, some germinate some don't. I get busy once the last frost is gone and then before I know it the weeds grow bigger than my tender seedlings. My garden turns out like a Where's Waldo scenario with weed whacker in hand I sort out the good from the bad. Thankfully those years of helping dad out in the garden come in handy to identify the leaves and I keep it simple with tomatoes, squash, cukes and basil. Ms. Muriel was right, I have to pull out the wild morning glories. They are weeds too and despite their pretty fall blooms they will choke my tomatoes to death. Soon the little plants blossom and the veggies start to form just in time for the summer drought. Harry Su, Craig and I tend the droopy plants, hauling water from the creek at just the right time of day to not bake the plants in the clay ovens the soil here becomes. Before long it's late July and I stop on my way home from the hospital to see how Harry Su and Ms. Muriel and our little garden is coming along. They have tended my garden while I was away and every surface on their back porch is covered with my tomatoes, zucchini and yellow squash.

It might not be as uplifting as a walk through my Southern Appalachian Garden but here's what I am thinking about my garden in this, the season of Coronavirus-19.

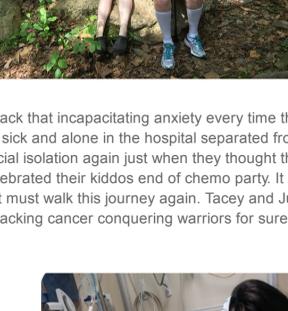
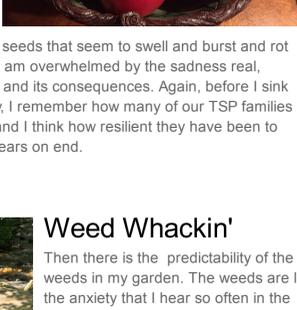
Preppin'

Preparing the soil and planting the seeds reminds me of all the precautions we have to take today. Take my clothes and shoes off the minute I hit the door. Wash my hands for 20 seconds. Stop hugging. Don and doff (that word makes me laugh) my yellow gown, blue gloves, N95 and plastic mask. Don't forget your phone needs to be cleaned, Dr. Dawn. No need for perfume. I prefer eau de rubbing alcohol and bleach these days. And don't forget to plant those seeds 6 feet apart. I then take a breath and think of our families with immunocompromised children, constantly vigilant to the stray virus, bacteria or fungus that could steal their child's life or limb despite their vigilance.



Hope and Tomato Pie

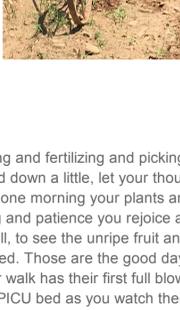
Some days my thoughts are like my tiny basil and tomato seeds filled with so much stored up energy. Thoughts of my cast iron skillet filled with tomato basil pie to eat on the porch after a swim at the lake as the fireflies come out to play. But then, there are days where my thoughts are like those "d-word" okra seeds that seem to swell and burst and rot before they sprout. And just like that I am overwhelmed by the sadness real, imagined and possible from this virus and its consequences. Again, before I sink into my stinky compost bin all the way, I remember how many of our TSP families know this cycle of hope and despair and I think how resilient they have been to weather such emotion for days and years on end.



Weed Whackin'

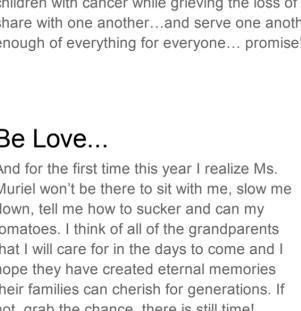
Then there is the predictability of the weeds in my garden. The weeds are like the anxiety that I hear so often in the voices of friends and loved ones. I have been blessed so far not to have much anxiety...maybe I already spent my lifetime supply taking care of so many sick and dying patients. More likely it will come when I am back on the frontline in a few weeks. Yet again, the stories our families tell me have taught me they have to weed

whack that incapacitating anxiety every time their child has a scan or a fever. And now to be sick and alone in the hospital separated from the rest of their family or to go through social isolation again just when they thought they could go back to a new normal having celebrated their kiddos end of chemo party. It is a kind of PTSD, they have gone before us but must walk this journey again. Tacey and Julia above are some of my anxiety weed whacking cancer conquering warriors for sure!



Tending

Tending the garden. The gentle watering and hoeing and fertilizing and picking off bugs. This is the quiet time when you let your guard down a little, let your thoughts wander to that tomato pie. Then suddenly you see one morning your plants are all limp and lying on the ground. After careful watering and patience you rejoice at seeing the droopy stalks plump up again by nightfall, to see the unripe fruit and to know you are still getting closer to your hope realized. Those are the good days when your child who was never supposed to talk or walk has their first full blown tantrum and you rejoice. Or, you sit at your child's PICU bed as you watch them battle between life and death and chemo in pain; but, then you see that tiny twinkle return to their eye and by morning they are asking for Lucky Charms again. Despair does give in to hope some days.



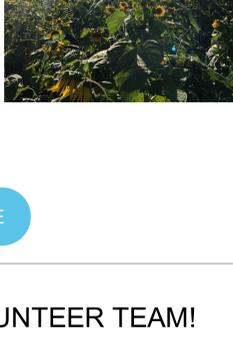
Serving it up

If it weren't for my friends Harry Su and Ms. Muriel most of my veggies would rot on the vine. In these Covid-19 days I realize how many beautiful friends, colleagues and people are in my life. They hold me in their prayers, thoughts, and I miss being able to dine, shine, laugh and play with them. Lately I have learned from our TSP families

that serving one another is one of the most potent agents we all have access to for our own healing. How is it that a mother can create a non-profit to serve other children with cancer while grieving the loss of her own son? Love one another... share with one another...and serve one another and there will be more than enough of everything for everyone... promise!

Be Love...

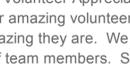
And for the first time this year I realize Ms. Muriel won't be there to sit with me, slow me down, tell me how to sucker and can my tomatoes. I think of all of the grandparents that I will care for in the days to come and I hope they have created eternal memories their families can cherish for generations. If not, grab the chance, there is still time!



And so it is with my garden and my life a hope, a reality, a death and a new cycle starts over again to bloom where I am planted.

Be safe, be strong, be love...

Dr. Dawn



WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEER TEAM!

Volunteer Appreciation

The week of April 19 is National Volunteer Appreciation week. While we don't need a special week to appreciate our amazing volunteers we do want to take this opportunity to tell them how amazing they are. We are blessed to have over 50 volunteers on our growing list of team members. Some help weekly and some are able to help less often but all are a critical part of The Still Place. This team accomplishes, among other things, property maintenance, cleaning and preparing the house for guests, cooking, hiking, creating art, playing games, welcoming Gnomes, organizing cabinets, donating paper products and art supplies, laundry, shopping, and more.

During this time of "social distancing" our volunteers aren't able to "do what they do" and we miss them terribly! We want to thank them as they continue to support us! To our volunteer team and to you, stay safe, stay healthy and we hope to be together again VERY SOON!

By Kelli

Series: Our Excursion Partners

There is no doubt a retreat at The Still Place is layered with love, joy, and of course lots of fun and activities! But we couldn't do any of it without our amazing partners, like Ms. Donna Gains of the High Mountain Meadows Creamery.

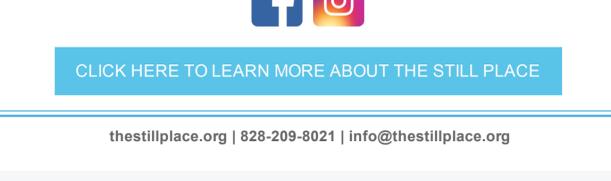
We absolutely LOVE to go over to Ms. Donna's goat farm. It is always so precious to see everyone in awe over the many goats surrounding them, or the fact that they can pet Henrietta the turkey. Yes, you read that write; she has a real-life turkey that you can pet. Crazy I know! One of my personal favorite parts of our time on the farm, is learning the delicate, timely process that happens in the creamery. Believe me, no piece of cheese goes untouched by love. However, the biggest showstopper for everyone are the baby goats. If you have never seen a baby goat, I highly recommend that you look them up. They will absolutely melt your heart!

But what Ms. Donna provides our families with goes much deeper than just the animals or the creamery. She teaches what it means to be a shepherd. A shepherd tends to their flock. They provide adequate food, pastures, protection, and care. A shepherd is a leader and a teacher and a shepherd provides hope. Ms. Donna creates an environment where her flock can thrive and grow to their fullest. An environment where the flock is always safe, loved, and where health can be restored.

This relationship between the shepherd and the sheep goes far beneath the surface of what one might think. It is a good reminder of how we should live our lives. Of course, most of us reading this don't have much experience being a literal shepherd, but what I'm sure we all have experience with are hard times. To have someone that can shepherd us through difficult times is such a blessing. Someone to love, encourage, guide, and give hope. During this time in our world, I encourage you to be there for someone; let's all be shepherd leaders to those in need.

We are so thankful for Ms. Donna and the love and wisdom she brings to The Still Place family!

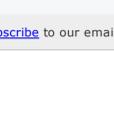
By Kayla



WATCH FOR

"The Still Place LIVE"

coming next week!



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