

Jiyeong Kim
A Life in the Field

The wet, warm, and dark soil was covered by various green herbs which had names I didn't even know. My grandma's small hoe passed through the rows of the garden every day. Almost every country house in Korea has its own vegetable garden. Taking care of the vegetable gardens was not only their pastime, but also a pride of frugal old ladies in the town. They would not buy anything for themselves, but for their grandsons and provide the food ingredients for their dinner table from the garden.

The old ladies in my town usually gathered in the entrance of the second alley. They would bring the plates of steamed corns and potatoes, or sweet little oriental melons from their gardens in every summer night. Whenever it was too hot to go to bed or they wanted to talk about what happened to whose sons or daughters, they gathered under the bright summer moon.

Old women's gardens were not like those of the Romans, which were adorned with decorative elements derived from the domestic interior: sculpture, painting, and mosaic (Stackelberg 25). Herbs, grape, and beans. My grandma's garden was so abundant and full of those fruits. The garden was practical rather than decorative.

The fruits and the talks that the gardens gave the old country ladies made me always want to have a field for myself. I was lucky enough to fulfill my little wish in the last year of my elementary school. Even though I was not able to buy a patch of field, I could raise my own tomatoes. It was so impressing that I could raise something and it bore fruits. It taught me more than just agricultural knowledge.

In my last year of elementary school, I sowed three tomato seeds in the flower pot which was made of a used tire in the back yard of the school as a class activity. I couldn't bring a seed so I had to borrow some from my classmate. It made me feel ashamed but I was even more excited. When all of the students finished planting and watered the seeds, all tires in which different seeds were planted seemed the same. I could not see the fruit the seeds, which were not seen, would bear.

I wondered if the tomatoes could grow well. No matter how weak it looked at first, I loved those fragile seeds and watered those every morning. Next day, the ground was the same as before. The next day, there was nothing on the ground too. The ground did not seem to have anything happening.

To my surprise, the sprouts finally came out of the ground. The green little fingers said hello to me. Once the tomatoes shoot the sprouts, they grew rapidly. However, I was a girl who was just in the sixth grade of elementary school, and I did not know what I should do for growing tomatoes. According to Ashworth who wrote the book, *Seed to Seed*, tomatoes bear more fruit if its flowers are shaken to increase the amount of pollen falling down the anther tube. The wind can do this work (Ashworth 156).

Fortunately, my tire pot was not in a greenhouse and I did not need to use fan to make artificial wind. However, I should have tied up the stems not to make my tomatoes to keep my pot neat. I was not an agricultural expert, and I did not know what I should do with the stems. However, I never let weeds around the tomato vines, and went to see them every day.

I started to go to school earlier than any other student did, watered my tomatoes, removed weeds, and stared at the plants for a while. After the classes, I went to the pot again, watered the plants, sat by the tire, and told them I care for them and I love them. I was so bashful to say this out loud, but I whispered instead. There was no way other than saying it to make those know that

I care for the little lives. I kept doing it every day.

One day, I went to see my plants as usual, I saw some unexpected round green smiles hanging on the stems hiding behind the leaves. Once I saw the little fruits, I cared for the plants even harder. I was expecting to pick the very first fruit that I raised. Next day, however, I couldn't pick the tomato my efforts bore. Someone already took it away. I was so sad, but I could not be depressed all the time. I started caring for other fruits.

I could not even explain the feeling I had when I held the first tomato I picked myself in my hands. It was so precious, I had to carry it with both of my hands until I arrived home. I could not look at anything else.

Eleanor Perenyi says in his book *Green Thoughts*, a writer who gardens is sooner or later going to write a book about the subject (xx). In the same context, Stackelberg also said that the vegetative detail of the Flora panel connects the imaginative space within the painting to the physical space outside. It was a touch paper to the Roman imagination, triggering associations between the gardens of myth and literature, and the gardens of personal and public experience (1).

Certainly, a garden inspires people and lets them create. It is because the garden has so many things to do with human life. A garden shows the fragility of life and the strength that makes plants and people keep growing. When I see a seed, I see a human life in it too. When people see a seed, they do not know what kind of products it will bear. Just as one of the numerous seeds, it can be hard for you even to now who yourself are, what you want, what you need, and what you will be. You may not even know that you have enormous potential in you. The fear of the future might be an obstacle against your shooting sprout. Even though it is easier to remain as a seed itself, when the seed makes a move, it can become hundreds more than what it used to be.

Some seeds are sowed in fertile land, but what about you? No matter how rough the ground is, once the seeds start to put down their roots, they survive even in a crack on paved roads. The less water they have, the deeper their roots go down. These deep roots will keep them safe even if the hard wind blows. When they seem to be so exhausted and do not even have power to stand alone, they will find the most precious fruit behind their leaves.

Looking back myself, I feel like I am a little sprout that is building up a shape of the stem and putting down the roots. Even though now I do not have any fruit and my root is not put deeply enough, I am keeping growing. My emotions and thoughts are maturing. I had some growing pains too, but I came here, to the bigger pot, and I can bear those pains grow better.

I learned many things in my elementary school: addition and subtraction, reading books competitively, being polite to the elderly, and not being arrogant. Among them, the most vivid memory and the most worthy lesson for my life are little red tomatoes. It became a warm and sweet memory, and when I look back, I feel it fresh. In my grandma's vegetable garden, I learned something more important.

Works Cited List

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