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PGC Day 8: Greenest

When thinking about implementing regenerative organic agricultural practices in my own community I thought about Burlington first. The challenge was to research a garden in the community, to meet with them, and discuss their practices. I researched plenty of gardens and farms (Intervale Center being the most prevalent) and many of them used a lot of the practices we learned about on day eight. They had mission statements and factual evidence to back up what they stood for.

I reached out to a few of them, but then it dawned on me: My first community was my family. And growing up we always had a garden in the backyard. Throughout this challenge I've realized how many sustainable practices my parents used my whole life and I never questioned. We brought our own bags into the grocery store, but I just thought it was because my mom liked the bags. I never considered it was to save plastic. Every summer we would go to different farms and pick strawberries and blueberries then freeze some for the rest of the semester. Every week my grandmother, mom, and I took a trip to the town's farmers market for fresh produce.

These things were second nature, and I never asked my parents about it until high school. Even then, not too much. All this is to say, I decided instead to give my dad a call.

I asked him the questions I never thought to ask before. When asked, he loves to explain processes, particularly relating to food and other household things (sounds funky but he's pretty cool).



When we were little we had a bigger garden because we had a bigger backyard. My dad started it himself when we moved in. There were carrots, green beans, tomatoes (both cherry and regular), rhubarb, blueberries, concord grapes and blackberries. The hardest to grow was tomatoes because they require the most attention. If you let them grow too big, too much energy will be put

into the leaves as opposed to into the tomato itself.

He learned about gardening from my Uncle Rick and Uncle Kevin. Uncle Rick always had a really large garden he tended to every year and Uncle Kevin is very knowledgeable about basically anything outdoors (and also indoors now that I think about it). Whenever he had a question they'd be the first people he'd reach out to. Although now, my dad said it's very quick to get questions answered through a Google search or YouTube.

One thing he has never used is chemicals in his garden. The reason for starting it in the first place was to get fresh produce untouched by chemicals. Plus, nothing beats a fresh tomato. Knowing where our food comes from has always been important to my parents.

As far as the ground itself, he takes very good care of it. My dad described how each season he'd plant the tomatoes on a different plot than he did the previous year. During the growing season cut grass and leaves and sometimes manure would be put in the garden to enrich the soil. He explained how the cut grass over the soil kept it moist and increased the nitrogen in it. Not to mention it kept the weeds away.

At the end of each season he would till everything into the ground to mix in all the nutrients and be able to start again for the next season.

After asking him questions about the garden and learning everything he did, I asked him if he knew what regenerative organic agriculture was. He did not, but I explained that it was basically what he was doing. By planting different crops each year he was promoting biodiversity. If he had the same ones he'd move them to a different location, that was crop rotation. He wouldn't over till the soil, he didn't use any chemicals, and he promoted a healthy environment for himself to work, for my sister and I to play near and for our whole family to eat.



He's a fantastic dad and I appreciate everything he has done so much more. He was instilling these practices without knowing, or needing to know the fancy terms for it. He just knew it was right by the earth and right by our family.