

Jud Baynes writes.....

Gardening is one of the ways our family has connected through the generations. Sharing the joys and successes, commiserating with some spectacular disasters and often gathering to share the produce and preserves. Gardening is a lovely link of recreation, income and pleasure within our DNA.

It was a beautiful mid-December day and I was treating myself to a catch-up phone call with a dear friend whose mother was dying with cancer. My mother had passed away just a year or so earlier and we were connecting at a whole new level. With three children under 3 ½ years it was quite unusual to have time to tune in and support friends. We were usually the ones receiving help. All was well though. The youngest, Kieran, was asleep and the two toddlers were safely sun screened, had hats on and were making patterns in the stone drive way around the back, yes, life was a gift to be treasured.

Kim had recently become a father. We had been discussing how life changes and that in the busy phase of parenting and family crisis it was vital to hold dear the little things, smell the roses, taste the tea, really look at the view and breathe, yes just breathe. I had explained one of my adaptations to motherhood had been to not 'do the vegie garden' but alter my sense of achievement in terms of rows and small areas. It had worked for me this year and I had one of the best vegie gardens ever. The garlic was weeks away from harvest, beetroot bulbing up, perhaps another month, and my pride and joy leeks for the first time probably half grown. Yes, it really was a case of less is more, by just doing a little scratch around when the opportunity arose I had haphazardly managed to produce food for our growing family. A positive pregnancy test had just confirmed our multiplying love.

As I wished Kim well and signed off I went around the back to check on our little people. The spectacle I came upon is a vision I will take to the grave. Heath, at 4 years old, was showing incredible strength and dexterity by holding a rake in the air safely back from his younger brother and calling out "Aaarck, ya wee beastie, get out o' here or I'll have ya" all in a clear Scottish accent. Archie, the younger brother, was on his hands and knees showing great proficiency in welding the hedge clippers and clear felling the said crops. I heard my voice shriek in a pitch I have never experienced before or since, "**What are you doing?**" Both boys stopped in their tracks and turned around frozen. Heath looked bewildered and said, "I'm Mr McGregor", and Archie chimed in "and I'm Peter Rabbit."

Thankfully no one was hurt and on the next visit Kim got to witness one of the many ways families can connect through the love of gardening. Kim is now a keen forester.