

“M is for the Million Things She Gave Me...”

Mother’s Day is on Sunday, May 8 – a special day to honour and celebrate the many things our mothers do for us.

This week Water Wisdom is all about you, Mom.

Those of you who knew me as a child growing up in Summerland know I am adopted. That’s neither here nor there - I am paying tribute to the woman I called Mom. Even though cancer claimed her 30 years ago (to the day), she will always be my Mom.

I’ll be frank: my Mom and I did not have a very good relationship. At times, she was considerably displeased with my behaviour – at other times her actions towards me made me terribly unhappy.

Fortunately, instead of playing the ‘blame game’, our on again/off again relationship made me more determined to make my way in the world. There are many skills I learned (begrudgingly) from Mom for which I am increasingly thankful in these unsettled times.

Our edible gardening area reflected the size of our family: it was very large. We harvested raspberries, strawberries, a variety of fruit trees and almost every manner of vegetable. Our garden was irrigated by gravity-fed water from the flume up on the hill.

Like it or not (at that time, most definitely NOT!) I learned about organically producing food. How to grow it, harvest it, and cook it. I learned about composting and thinning crops.

Mom taught me about companion planting and crop rotation. Much to my disgust, I learned about tomato hornworms, cabbage moths and what happens if your cherry tree is not sprayed for Western cherry fruit fly.

Through ‘osmosis’ I learned about the importance of polyculture gardening and creating healthy soil.

And, of course, I learned about preserving. How to can fruit, freeze vegetables, and dry apricots in the sun. How to make pickles, jams and jellies, and succotash. I learned how to overwinter potatoes, root crops and apples.

We also had chickens, so I learned how to care for them, collect their eggs, discourage nesting, clip their wings, and protect them from coyotes. I never did learn how to eat one of them though. (It’s difficult to eat a named ‘pet’ that you fed that morning!)

Some of Mom's gardening instruction is practiced differently today. For example, moving from single-row gardening to an intensive gardening method to get the maximum harvest from limited space. Or, using raised beds and 'perfect', friable soil instead of rototilling and amending the soil every spring.

Rather than overhead sprinklers broadcasting water over plants and weeds alike, drip irrigation is a much more water-efficient method and is better for your plants as well.

But many more things I learned from Mom still hold true today. Like the value of passing on knowledge, setting boundaries, establishing achievable expectations, and communicating with your kids. Thanks for all you did, Mom.

**Happy Mothers Day** to all Moms, Moms-to-Be, surrogate Moms, foster Moms, birth Moms, and all women who nurture and support others whether it be their families, communities or Mother Earth.

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Want to learn more about 'getting back to basics' and self-sustainability? Join us at Grasslands Nursery on May 20 - 21 as Gordon Hiebert of Element Eco-Design (Vernon) leads a two-day Permaculture Crash Course. Visit [www.elementecodesign.com](http://www.elementecodesign.com) for more details or to register.

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*Toni Boot is the founder and owner of Grasslands Nursery in Summerland, a nursery specializing in sustainable gardening. Comments and suggestions for future Water Wisdom columns may be directed to her at [grassnursery@telus.net](mailto:grassnursery@telus.net) or through [www.grasslandsnursery.ca](http://www.grasslandsnursery.ca)*