

Growing a Garden Retreat



It had been many years since Patti Rolfe had gardened. But when she heard about the WISEWOMAN Entrepreneurial Gardening Program she was ready to give it a try. “I thought it would be fun to grow something again, to get outside,” said Patti. “I love the outdoors.” With property that included low spots for spring runoff and trees that limited light, Patti finally settled on a 27’ x 29’ garden down a small hill from her house. For her first year “back in the dirt” she grew produce she knew her family would eat and enjoy – corn, cucumbers, peppers, zucchini, sweet peas and tomatoes. She also started a strawberry bed.

What she didn’t know was how much the garden would become a source of relaxation. “I love pulling weeds,” said Patti. “I had a lot of crab grass that needed to be pulled out by hand. It was so relaxing to go out and start pulling it up. My children told me to take a radio with me, but I told them I loved the quiet of the garden. It’s so peaceful. It’s my personal space.”

“This first year I learned a lot about growing things in pots, weed control and how to better manage my tomatoes,” said

Patti. As a Nutrition Services Aide for a local hospital Patti has been using some of the recipes she learned in the gardening program’s nutrition education classes. The SNAP-Ed nutrition series is required of all first year gardeners and taught by Michigan State University Extension. “I loved the new recipes,” said Patti. And so do the staff and patients at the hospital where she is now preparing some of the recipes she learned.

Her house on a well-traveled road in Lupton, Michigan will be a great spot for the roadside stand she plans to have next growing season. She’s hoping to get other family members who garden to bring their extra produce to sell at the stand. Patti also has her eye on the wild raspberries that grow behind her house and plans to grow herbs. “They’ll both be a great addition to the stand.”

She’s excited about the low tunnels she got this year which will allow her to get an early start on her spring vegetables. “I definitely plan to grow more things and new things next season.”

