

This Back Acre Is No Garden Of Eden

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

I just received an offer from Time magazine and on the outside of the envelope it said in bold black caps- **“DO NOT BEND”**. I wish I had remembered that advice this past weekend because I finally put in the vegetable garden and I’m just now feeling the after affects.

We have a pretty large garden out back- approximately 2000 square feet. I commonly refer to it as the *“Back Acre”* because you can’t help but ending up with that result when you work it, no matter how hard you try.

Now I know in the past I have advised those who are about to undertake some massive physical activity to **stretch those muscles** as much as they can before participating. But there’s a familiar phrase that has been used by many a parent when questioned by their children for not following through on their own mandates- *“Do as I say, not as I do”*.

So, now I’m suffering. But, it’s the good kind of suffering- the kind I used to go through after playing four softball games a day and eight games a week. It’s a price you have to pay to enjoy the results of your labors.

From the softball games I endured the pain to enjoy the camaraderie, the physical activity, playing well and winning games.

From the planting of the garden I endure the pain in order to enjoy all the healthy, organically grown vegetables that we will be eating and sharing in the months to come.

So what’s causing this suffering? It started with the plowing. We have this old BCS that hasn’t run smoothly since the day I bought it. It was a used machine and the person who sold it to us swore by it. I think he was off by only one word because he probably swore *at* it. That’s what I do whenever it won’t work.

This time when I went to use it the throttle cable broke. I ordered the part but couldn’t wait for it to come in. Not when we had this great weather in store for us. So, I decided that a little extra manual labor wouldn’t hurt. **WRONG!**

Although the machine is powered by gasoline, with the throttle stuck in the low position, a pair of oxen would have been more efficient. But where can you find oxen around here?

In order to get it to work I not only had to use the muscles of my legs- the quads, hams, solei, gastrocs, tibiali, but also the muscles of my forearms and arms- the flexors, extensors and brachiali as well as the biceps and triceps. Then there are the muscles of the lower back- the adductors, rotators, the lower lats as well as the glutes, which also played a role in this activity. Some of these muscles haven't been used since last year's plowing.

Once that chore was completed, I set about putting down the landscaping cloth. I wasn't going to use plastic this year because I can't stand the thought of it laying in some landfill for 110 years once I'm done with it. So I was going to just use newspapers instead and do a lot of weeding.

But, in a conversation I had recently with Brian Simmons, head chef at the Yard of Ale, I learned about this special fabric that was more environmentally friendly than plastic and would control weeds as good as newspaper. So I purchased some and was now ready for the actual planting.

This is the part that involved the constant bending and twisting. Those same lower back muscles used in plowing were called upon again to get this year's crop in. I planted , by hand, 36 tomato plants (3 varieties- beefsteak, roma, and cherry) 12 zucchini's, 18 eggplant as well as plenty of basil, parsley, cucumbers, broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, summer squash, peppers. oregano and muskmelon.

I also planted the seeds for lettuce, kale, spinach, swiss chard, carrots and peas. And, I added five rows of sweet corn just beyond the "Back Acre" in order to qualify as a true "gentleman farmer". I'm thinking of expanding the cornfield and then plowing it under and building a baseball field just to see if people will come.

Maybe I can kidnap James Earl Jones to put us on the map.

After canning and freezing for our use, this crop is certainly going to result in some midnight visits to neighboring houses to "share" the fruits (or vegetables) of our labors.

So, that's the pain and suffering I have endured this past week to keep myself out of trouble and enjoy some healthy eating.

Oh, by the way, the correspondence from Time Magazine was an offer of a year's subscription for only \$29 that includes a "senior citizen's discount" of \$302 off the newstand price.

I don't know what made me feel older- the discount offer or the work in the garden. At least I get a desktop organizer if I order the magazine.

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