

temescal farm walk

Debra Hill and Drew Rawles - Avon Street

Drew and I moved to Avon Street 1.5 years ago. Though we were content at our prior abode, the gardening opportunity and some help from the neighbors, lured us to Temescal. We found a garden filled with mature walnuts, figs, grapefruit, lemons, as well as some young citrus and apples. Quite typical of the Northern Italians who lived in this house and area. We were excited to see that their descendants, still living on both sides of us, had beautiful gardens to inspire us. (You can peek at their yards through our fence.) We also encountered a two foot deep layer of morning glory and lots of blackberries covering much of the back part of the yard. We had our work cut out for us. After clearing most of the "weeds", I spent my winter holiday digging an 18" trench down the spine of the yard. I installed a (mostly) drip irrigation system which I continue to adjust with time. We have planted a multitude of fruit trees, many of which are being trained to walls or trellises. We also have a rose tunnel and a perennial/annual flower bed. We have some year round veggies, though the majority of the veggies are planted for the summer heat and become fava beans in the off season. I use methods that I have learned over the years reading books, working on farms in New Zealand, but mostly from just trying things out. I hope in time our garden will be able to produce most of the veggies we eat and hopefully have surplus for the neighbors. We have seven hens and currently have an egg box outside our side gate. We also keep bees. Please feel free to stop by if you have questions, ideas, or just to check things out. (Debra Hill)

Shout Out Collective - 44th Street

I no longer have the small picture of our grand tree in a small bucket purchased from what is now Longs (51st and Broadway). There have been five different names for that place since then. Container gardening followed and then a new mommy (Mischa Lorraine) rotar-tilled one portion of the backyard to give her son a backyard. Later, Anne and a landscape student at Cal, who brought in rotted produce from her job, built the far brick enclosed structure, which now is home to our smaller fruit trees, courtesy of Andrew Nash and Michael Delacour. It is also the site of our herbal spirals. Our large planter boxes came on the scene shortly after the wall was completed when Anne moved. One is now the site for our potato patch and anything that we plant above them, like squash and flowers. The other serves as the Ollah-berry/sage and garlic patch. Valerie Wrisk introduced the concept of perma-culture and Andrew Nash, an arborist, made the move to bring in the grey water system and chicken coop that is home to Gertrude and Matilda our resident leghorns. Che Salas (Landscape) actually began using the key hole system, a technique used in perma culture to access gardening areas. If you have not guessed it yet, we all have inspired each other. From a tree, to container gardening, to organic gardening, to perma culture, it has always been about getting closer to what our forebears did to sustain themselves. We are coming home and taking out the chemical by mimicking mother nature. Every insect not welcomed is removed by another insect instead of chemicals, we compost and use organic fertilizers. We just love what mother nature has done successfully and know that we are just another part of her ecological system. Go Gaia. (Corinne Haskins)

Temescal Commons - 42nd Street

Temescal Commons began as a Christian co-housing community with an environmental consciousness. Their original mission calls: "To care for God's creation we must strive to understand the beauty and complexity of the earth, the plants, the animals, the water, the sun... Our care should lead to the restoration of the world not its degradation. In some small but real ways we should be able to demonstrate stewardship of the creation on our small plots of land and in our buildings." Members decided to garden in order to raise a significant amount of their own food and to enjoy the beauty of flowers. Our gardening efforts have been satisfying and sometimes surprising, but never very organized. Each person in the community has different levels of interest, and we've depended on a few more experienced gardeners like Tom and Mary Prince to guide us. The raised beds were built a few summers ago by Tom and his sons. We've had seasons of really using the garden and getting a lot of food from it, and seasons, like this spring, when we have had to give away what we grow or watch it go to seed. This is largely due to the fact that many of us now subscribe to the abundant River Dog and Full Belly Farms' subscription veggie boxes. Our permanent edible landscape includes several dwarf apple and pear trees and one Fuyu persimmon tree, blackberries and raspberries and a new addition of thornless blackberries. Popular veggies include kale, chard, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, lettuce, carrots, and various peas and beans. One year we thought we had planted miniature pumpkins, but they turned out to be gourds that ran over half the garden. Another year we planted the carrots in so much clay we could not get them out of the ground! We also have jokes about the volunteer purslane that only Lynne considers a salad green. Watering has been one of our biggest challenges. We invested quite a lot of time and materials in setting up an automated drip irrigation system, but regular breakdowns have required us to take turns with the hose. Gardening has been a wonderful learning experience and a beautiful way we all get together, both on scheduled workdays and when we're out casually watering or weeding. It's a thrill for kids and grown-ups alike to eat a snap pea right from the vine. Because our garden runs along the 42nd street sidewalk, we sometimes get an opportunity to chat with folks walking by. We are delighted to have neighbors touring this Saturday and invite you to visit on your own again. (Lynne Elizabeth and friends)

Rick, Mae and Ruby Chan Frey - 42nd Street

We bought this house seven years ago, mainly because of the proximity to co-housing and the potential of the backyard. The first piece of the garden was the raised beds and watering system, which for me, is the foundation of backyard gardening. From there, it was a lot of experimentation, finding what grew well, what we liked to eat, what I had the energy to care for and harvest. Along the way, chickens and rabbits came over, with ducks and turkeys and honey bees at various points in the journey. The manure provided great fertilizer, we ate the chicken and duck eggs and ate the rabbits, male ducks and turkeys. The current shed is home to 11 chickens (black australorps, auracanas and one silver laced wyandote) as well as a one year old female turkey who just started laying eggs. Our bees died off and my bee partner got busy, yet a bee hive is likely to return. Gardening has always included peppers, zucchini, green onions, beets and typically huge areas of tomatoes and white corn (the entire length of the fence with Kelly Moore). Little by little, perennial fruit trees and bushes (blueberry, Olalla berry, raspberry, apple, peach, plum, lemon, orange and avocado) have taken over more space and the corn and tomato plantings are more modest. Vegetable season has grown to include a variety of thai herbs and specialties (eggplants, yard long beans, kaffir lime and thai chilis) as well as a small green house for getting an early start on the season as well as my eternal quest to have some of my pepper plants actually survive the winter. The key factor in the back yard now is our three year old daughter, Ruby. Her eating tastes (berries, corn, tomatoes and apples) guide plant selection and her play needs are blending in along side the garden. We'll see if she turns into the only Oakland member of a 4H society or just enjoys eating fresh fruit and veggies. She loves going to collect chicken eggs and during the season, she loves scouring the bushes for ripe berries, which fortunately, for both our sakes, she has finally learned to distinguish. (Rick Chan Frey)

