

A small stand against a Delaware vegetable ban

Donna Schaper | Mar. 26, 2013 Eco Catholic

I recently stayed overnight with some friends outside of Wilmington, Del., in a "deeded community." I asked them if they grew vegetables in the summer and they said, "No, it was part of the deed that no vegetables could be grown."

The development was built in the 1950s and numbers around 300 homes. They are all the same in structure, different in decoration and are required, by deed, to grow flowers in the front in the summer. "Some color" is required, while all vegetables are banned.

My friend is leading a little internal movement to permit vegetables. She knows that vegetable gardens only look good in seed catalogs, that they have seasons of straggle as well as bounty, and that some people don't keep up their gardens well.

Still, she thinks that we may have changed since the '50s when we thought there was enough of everything.

We now live in the early part of the 21st century where a sense of spiritual and material scarcity reigns. Most suburbanites know that more than one change is needed. She is using what power she has. I honor her for it.

For every grand planner out there saving the planet, there are 100 mustard seeds at work. The seed people will make a larger difference, especially if we can seed seeders and learn to encourage them. Antagonism towards suburban seeders, on behalf of urbane grand schemers, won't change the scarcity of food or energy or "power" that the environment and we face.

We need to learn to use what little powers we have to create a new kind of energy source. We need to learn how to be unafraid of how little power we have, to be less scared of our own power's puniness.

The scariest thing I ever touched was not a spider or a snake or my family's frog or a jellyfish. The scariest thing I ever touched was my own power.

It is a power to choose wellness or illness; happiness or sorrow; chocolate or black raspberry; to sleep longer or to wake sooner; to use a carrot or a stick; to stand my ground or be flexible; to live for myself or others; to tell my boss he is selfish or my father that he is wrong. It is the power to change the land I have been "deeded," even if by one tomato plant at a time, the kind I couldn't help but plant to test the rules of an aging development.

Usually I choose some version of both and become mustard seeded in the process. I do the small thing that makes me feel connected to my power to seed and it changes me, and I then change others.

Deeds matter. Small deeds matter even more. Seeds grow. Seeds develop developments that look like they can't develop any more.

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