

Stolen Strawberries or Bountiful Blueberries?

Staying grounded in our principles whether we're working, playing, parenting... or out in the garden

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My garden never fails me: when I remember to go outside for a while, “the answer” always comes.

Not long ago, I was feeling ineffective and unproductive – and not being very nice to myself about it. So, the other day, not particularly gracefully, I stopped and went outside. I was rewarded with beautiful sights, a cool breeze, a colander full of luscious, thumbnail sized blueberries warm from the sun – and an important reminder.

For several years the blueberry bushes have been growing in a low part of the yard that many other plants consider “an undesirable neighborhood.” They are so happy there this year that their branches were bent to the ground.

As I picked off and discarded the dozens of berries that had been nibbled by the birds I almost laughed out loud. A month earlier I had been caught up in “strawberry wars.”

Our strawberry bed is only a year old and, per instructions from a local landscaping expert, thirty-six tender young plants were protected with cages, surrounded by mulch, strong-smelling soap and mothballs before being covered by a fine mesh net.

If you read my parenting columns, you're probably expecting to me to go on about the perils of overprotection. For that I want to honor you by saying “I considered it... and I may come back to it sometime.” For now I'm focused on staying grounded in our principles whether we're working, playing, parenting... or out in the garden.

First, would you like to venture a guess as to how many strawberries that new, carefully tended, over-protected bed gave us? About ten. Not ten boxes – ten berries. The chipmunks and the red squirrels got the rest.

So, after fussing about the strawberries and being amazed by the success of the blueberries I may have figured it out: “Plant more strawberries and let the critters eat their fill.”

And that's what made me laugh. How many core values and success principles are wrapped up in that little lesson from the high bush blueberries? I've come up with eight so far.

1. Do your best -- then let go.
2. When in doubt give more.
3. Add value.
4. Generous feels better.
5. Don't confuse activity (the cages and such) with results.
6. Obstacles may make you reassess just how badly you want to achieve a certain goal.
7. There's always something else to try.
8. I can always choose my attitude.

I'm going to plant more strawberries and, maybe the humans will actually be able to eat some next year. But if not please help me remember that I choose to enjoy feeding the animals - and that there are always plenty of blueberries!



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