

A JOSEPH GARDEN

I was asked to share my thoughts on Mary Gardens. I never had a Mary Garden. I desired to have one but instead had to be content with having a Joseph Garden. My father, an immigrant from Italy, would affirm my efforts to plant some flowers around our property but very few. He would remind me with kindness that you could not eat flowers, so we planted tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, lettuce, zucchini, basil. The flowering tomato plants that lined neat rows numbered more than 50. The same was true of the pepper plants.

Zucchini flowers were in fact edible and when fried with an egg batter they were delicious. It took days to ready the soil using a pitch fork since in those days tillers were not affordable and why use one if the family had seven strapping boys.

We had a fig tree in our Joseph garden and each year it had to be wrapped and partially buried to prevent it from freezing. Today second and third generation Italians plant fig trees in large pots on wheels and come winter simply wheel the plant into a heated garage.

Mother Mary would have loved our Joseph garden because she loved Joseph and how Joseph labored to provide for their son Jesus and how my father labored to provide for his seven sons, two daughters and his own Mary.

-Father Leo Polselli, C.S.C.